

Migration, Motherhood and Subjective Wellbeing: Experiences of Transnational Mothers in Johannesburg

'...yes, I am a mother, but I am not a mother ... because my own rules they do not have... and they do not know... I am just a mother because I send them things that they want because they know that this thing was bought by my mother yes, I am a mother, but I am not a mother...'



Thulisile Zikhali

Supervisors: Professor Jo Vearey and Dr Rebecca Walker

African Centre for Migration & Society

University of the Witwatersrand

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Migration and Displacement.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, for a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Migration and Displacement. It has not been submitted in part or in whole to any other Institution or University as a requirement for a degree or any other qualification.

T. Zikhali

Thulisile Zikhali

Johannesburg

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Abstract

The discussions on feminisation of migration have renewed research interests into the gendered nature of migration experiences. This highlights the implications of cultural norms and values on migrant women. Despite that there is a longstanding history of people migrating to Johannesburg from within the Southern African region, little is written about the experiences of cross border migrant mothers who leave their children behind. This study explores the intersections of migration, motherhood, and subjective wellbeing in Johannesburg inner city, drawing from the experiences of twenty women: originating from Zimbabwe (comprising 15 women), Ghana (consisting of 3 women), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (involving 2 women). Participant observations and semi-structured interviews are methods that were used to collect data in the following three Johannesburg inner city areas: Hillbrow, Berea, and Yeoville. These are migrant-dense urban spaces in Johannesburg. The study used matricentric feminism and constructivism as its philosophical resources. It also utilised concepts of precarity, embodied transnationalism and subjective wellbeing as analytical tools to examine transnational mothers' experiences.

Findings indicate that familial social history and cultural gender norms play a crucial role in shaping perceptions of motherhood and in determining what are seen as "acceptable" ways of mothering. The study also found that there were tensions and contradictions in mothers' perceptions of motherhood: their convictions on meanings of motherhood and the roles that mothers are expected to play in families were not in alignment with their own contemporary realities.

Contrary to studies that have been conducted elsewhere, for example in North America and Europe, this study suggests that transnational mothering strategies in Johannesburg inner city are largely mediated by localised contextual factors such as lack of documentation, unstable jobs, xenophobia and crime. These factors undermine mothering strategies by creating an environment of uncertainty which makes it difficult for mothers to fulfil their mothering obligations, for example, sending remittances on time, maintaining regular cross border communication and regular visits to home.

This study contributes to conceptual advancement in transnational motherhood research by bringing the aspect of wellbeing to the fore. It does this by uniquely considering the use of subjective wellbeing in understanding mothers' experiences and how migration was beneficial to their mothering goals and aspirations. Findings indicate that mothers demonstrated agency in dealing with various challenges. They found migration as emancipatory and they were determined to provide for their children as well as to secure their future.

Key Words: Migration, Transnational motherhood, Matricentric Feminism, Constructivism, Precarity, Subjective Wellbeing, Embodied Transnationalism, Johannesburg.

Dedication

To my daughter, Nonhle Dudu Zikhali

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Acronyms

AUC	African Union Commission
CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education
CBD	Central Business District
COMESA	Common Market for East and Southern Africa
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CoRMSA	Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IMF	International Monetary Fund (IMF)
ILO	International Labour Organisation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
WFP	World Food Programme
ZDP	Zimbabwe Dispensation Project
ZEP	Zimbabwe Exemption Permit

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and Background

1.1. Migration

1.1.1. A brief global overview

Migration is an integral part of the current global political economy. The process of globalisation and its associated neoliberal structural economic policies such as the reduction of the welfare state, privatisation of public services, and global liberalisation of trade, has been instrumental in facilitating the increase in the number of migrants globally (Bastia & Piper, 2019; Castles & Miller, 2009; Foresti & Hagen-Zanker, 2017). Some economic programmes that have been implemented for economic recovery in Africa have had unintended consequences such as high levels of unemployment and inflation (Adepoju, 2008). For instance, in the most parts of sub-Saharan Africa, the economic structural adjustment programmes that have been implemented by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have facilitated emigration of people that are escaping: economic hardships, unemployment, and civil unrests (Adepoju, 2008; 2006; Crush & Tevera, 2010; Kihato, 2018; McGregor, 2010; Mlambo & Raftopoulos, 2010). Many people in sub-Saharan Africa now rely on migration for pursuit of employment or better economic opportunities. In some cases, people are also forced to leave their home countries due to political repression, war, or political violence (Crush, 2008).

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA] (2019) estimated that the number of people who were residing in a country that is not their country of birth reached 272 million in 2019. However, at a global level, there are disparities in the distribution of migrants. For instance, in 2019, 56% of international migrants resided in developed countries, while 44% resided in less developed countries (UNDESA, 2019). Concerning refugees and asylum seekers, UNDESA (2019) estimated that by the end of 2017 approximately 29 million people were involuntarily displaced globally, and this was due to human rights violations, generalised violence, or persecution. Up to 83% of the total population of refugees and asylum seekers resided in less developed regions while only 17%

resided in developed regions (UNDESA, 2019). Out of the 272 million of international migrants, as estimated by UNDESA (2019), 47.9% were women. However, the proportion of women migrants varies across global regions: in 2019, in developed countries women migrants accounted for 51.5% while in less developed countries they accounted for about 43.3% of the total women migrants (UNDESA, 2019).

Migration research acknowledges that obtaining timely, accurate, and disaggregated statistical data on migration is problematic due to methodological and political challenges (Hennebry et al., 2016; IOM, 2018; Pearson & Sweetman, 2019). The International Organisation for Migration [IOM] (2018) notes that data on migration is limited owing to three challenges, which are: (1) lack of availability – many countries do not have or report on migration statistics, hence there is insufficient data on crucial migration issues, (2) comparability – international migration data is often collected at national level, the methods used to collect data and the ways in which migrants are defined vary significantly across nations. This makes it difficult to compare and harmonise data obtained from different countries. (3) frequency of data – it is a challenge to obtain timely and accurate data because some migration trends can only be analysed retrospectively. This has implications for appropriate and timely responses to migration issues (IOM, 2018).

Besides technical and methodological challenges, politics significantly influences how migration data is collected and disseminated. This is because in the current global scene, migration is a highly political issue (Pearson & Sweetman, 2019). For instance, Hennebry et al. (2016) noted that what counts as relevant data may be purposely constructed to meet certain decisions about migration policy – mostly to reinforce restrictive policies that tend to hinder family reunification.

1.1.2. Migration and development

The 2030 Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) recognises international migration as an important part in the attainment of the global SDGs (IOM, 2018). Out of the 17 SDGs that were adopted by the United Nations member states in September 2015, 11 of them speak directly to migration (IOM, 2018). This means that there is recognition of the role of migration as an important contributor to economic growth and development in countries

of; origin, transit, and destination (UNDESA, 2019). Hence there is a call for member states to cooperate and implement migration policies that facilitate and support safe and responsible international migration (UNDESA, 2019). Several goals and targets have been put forward to address migrant women's specific situation. For example, the SDG 5 on gender equality states the need to protect and empower women, and SDG 8 on decent work advocate the need to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all, including women (Hennebry et al., 2019). This will ensure that the benefits of migration such as remittances, are realised.

Remittances play a crucial role in economic development of both the country of origin and the host country. Governments in sending countries now recognise that remittances play a more important role in development compared to official development assistance and foreign direct investment (World Bank, 2016). However, the role played by remittances on development does not fully benefit women migrants because migration policies often overlook that migration is gendered. That is, women and men's experiences of migration differ regarding their aspirations, settlement, and work (Hennebry et al., 2019). Migration and development policies that do not recognise the difference between migrant women's and men's experiences, fail to pay sufficient attention to protecting migrant women's human rights (Piper & Lee, 2016).

The developmental role that migrant women can play in their families is often constrained because most of them face gender-based discrimination, exploitation, and health risks at various stages of migration. This treatment of women emanates from their social positions that are in relation to their class and ethnicity (Hennebry et al., 2016). Research has shown that after women migrants settle in destination countries their aspirations for sustainable jobs and better livelihoods are often constrained by the global neoliberal governmentality dictates, which subject women to, casual, and informal jobs (Bastia & Piper, 2019; Hennebry et al., 2019; Yeates, 2012). Women migrate for various reasons including to seek education and highly-skilled jobs.

However, based on various historical contexts, there is still a large number of women who migrate to work in care and domestic sectors. This is now more so in regions where there are lower economic opportunities and women's choices are constrained. For example, in the

global North, immigrants are often employed in precarious conditions within the agricultural and care industries. In these sectors, work related vulnerabilities and rights violations are compounded by having an irregular migration status for those who fail to obtain legal documentation (Hennebry et al., 2016).

Migrant women who live separately from their children and families, often find it challenging to reunite with their children due to restrictive immigration policies (Bastia & Piper, 2019). This is largely because many host countries do not implement migration policies that are gender sensitive, to facilitate family reunification and to meet the social needs of cross border migrant women (Hennebry et al., 2019; Pearson & Sweetman, 2019). It may take expansive amount of time for families to manage living together in the host country. This undermines their rights to family life and social protection because their ability to actively participate in their families and communities at home countries is compromised by immigration policies (Castles, 2004). Unlike the movement of people across international borders, transnational capital and businesses move across countries to identify locations where profit can be realised with relative ease (Castles & Miller, 2009; Pearson & Sweetman, 2019:). There is no global agreement on how countries should govern migration. Therefore, each country sets its own rules on who has the right to enter their country, and what rights can they access while they are in their country (Castles & Miller, 2009; Hennebry et al., 2016; Hennebry et al., 2019; Koslowski, 2011). The lack of global agreement on migration management makes it difficult to enforce the protection of international migrants' rights. Against this backdrop, this study explored the intersections of migration, motherhood, and wellbeing using the experiences of transnational mothers who were living and working in Johannesburg inner city.

1.2. Migration in Africa: a continent on the move

1.2.1. An overview

In Africa, migration takes place under diverse socio-economic, political, and cultural conditions (Adepoju, 2008). The need for individuals to migrate from their countries of origin is influenced by several factors. The factors include the rapidly growing populations – which has implications for rates of unemployment, retrenchment of public sector workers due to the adoption of economic structural adjustment programmes, poverty, persistent political

instability, violence, war, and environmental degradation (Adepoju, 2011). In 2019, the estimated number of Africans living in another African country significantly increased to over 21 million from an estimated 18.5 million in 2015 (IOM, 2020). In 2015, Africa was home to about 7.3 million refugees and asylum seekers (IOM & African Union Commission [AUC], 2020). This means that in 2015 Africa was home to about 25% of the total number of refugees and asylum seekers in the world, which was at a total of about 28.7 million (IOM & AUC, 2020). In 2019, the number of migrant women was estimated to be about 47% of the total number of migrants in the continent (IOM & AUC, 2020).

The migration of African women and children who often partake in perilous journeys to enter Europe continue to attract media attention. However, politicians and sensationalist media coverage on migration tend to perpetuate a usually inaccurate discourse that there are floods of African migrants who are constantly being apprehended while attempting to get into Europe. Yet research has shown that migration in Africa is mostly within the continent (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016; IOM & AUC, 2020; Schoumaker et al., 2015). For instance, the sub-Saharan region has a long history of migration between regional countries and this migration dates back to pre-colonial times when movements were not sanctioned or managed by any legislation (IOM & AUC, 2020).

1.3. Causes of migration in Africa

1.3.1. Ethnic and cultural ties

The different forms of migration in Africa are influenced by various reasons which include the colonial development of national political economies. For example, the development of plantation agriculture in Ivory Coast, the discovery of minerals in South Africa, and the DRC all attracted migrant workers into farming and mining respectively (Andall, 2018). The movement of people across different countries was and continues to be facilitated by shared cultural heritage, social relationships, and colonial legacies, despite the distinctions such as internal or international, and legal or illegal migration (Adepoju, 1998; 2011). For example, the shared culture and language amongst the Venda and Ndebele speaking people on either side of the Beitbridge border post, makes it easier for cross border migrants to integrate with the local communities. Therefore, colonial powers' imposition of national borders in Africa

did not stop cross border movements, that are mainly driven by shared historical, cultural, ethnic, and economic factors. Resultantly, Africa has observable sustained patterns of cross border movements (IOM & AUC, 2020).

Examples of observable and sustained cross border movements in Africa are the 2020 estimate of up to 30 000 migrants who were processed daily in the border between the DRC (Goma) and Rwanda (Rusizi), (IOM & AUC, 2020). Similarly, the seemingly porous and busy border in Central Africa between Uganda and the DRC has long been a central area for regional migration (Bedford & Akello, 2018). In Southern Africa, the Beitbridge border between Zimbabwe and South Africa is the busiest border post which experiences daily cross border movements of people who are moving mainly for trade purposes (IOM & AUC, 2020). Among those crossing the border more frequently are Zimbabwean women who conduct cross border trading such as selling souvenirs and crafts in South Africa, and buying goods for resale in Zimbabwe (Muzvidziwa, 2012). These women cross-border traders have long been engaged in petty trading to support their families. For example, women in Zimbabwe and Zambia buy a variety of merchandise from the DRC which include clothes and cosmetics for resale in Zambia or Tanzania (Andall, 2018). In this way circular migration is a common feature in the Southern African region.

1.3.2. Circular migration

Circular migration is a form of human mobility which involves repeated and non-permanent movements within a country, between the neighboring countries, or across the regions (Núñez, 2009). Literature notes that circular migration can either be regulated, for example countries can manage it through short term labour migration programs or it may be unregulated, thus, taking place outside official national migration policies (Schwenken, 2013). In relation to cross border migration, Schwenken (2013: 1) notes that circular migration, "... is for many migrants a lived transnational reality..." that is not controlled by any state or agency. As such, research on migration in the Southern Africa region, suggests that what may be perceived as an increase of immigration into South Africa, may in fact be an increase in circular cross border migration between South Africa and neighbouring countries (Crush et al., 2005; Posel, 2006; 2020).

Studies have noted that circular migration patterns in and into South Africa can be attributed to the apartheid state and its policies on migrant labour (Crush et al., 2005; Posel, 2020). The recruitment of male migrants from neighbouring countries to work in South African mines significantly contributed to South Africa's socio-economic development (Posel, 2006). The labour contracts given to migrants were designed in such a way that migrants could not have permanent homes in urban areas, and they were prohibited from bringing their families to places of work. For this reason, migrants established their homes in rural areas or in their home countries where their families and children remained (Posel, 2006; Posel & Van der Stoep, 2008). This has implications for family structures and parenting (Hatcha & Posel, 2018; Posel, 2020).

In South Africa, parenting is influenced by a complex interplay of factors that are related to the country's transition from apartheid to democracy. Some of the factors that influence and complicate parenting in South Africa are issues related to race, ethnicity, and labour migration (Posel & Devey, 2006). Labour migration affects, and at times, determine parenting roles. Labour migration may also lead to or promote father absence and mothers may have to contend with being lone parents (Townsend et al, 2006). Several studies show that, partly, owing to labour migration, many African children are more likely to grow up without a father (Hall & Posel, 2018; Posel & Devey, 2006). For example, in a nationally representative household survey which was conducted by the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit in 1993, findings indicated that 63% of all African children did not have a co-resident father. Another household survey on the National Income Dynamics Study, conducted in 2014, found that the percentage of children who were growing up without their fathers had increased to 77% (Hall & Posel, 2018). Some authors have highlighted the role of education and formal employment as instrumental in changing attitudes towards marriage and childbearing.

Changing attitudes have seen many women, globally, choosing to be single parents rather than having children within the confines of a marriage (Hall & Posel, 2018; Kalule-Sabiti et al, 2007). This could explain the increase in the number of single parent families in South Africa. In a similar vein, Mahati et al. (2016) note that in Africa families are often not co-resident and they rely on kinship networks for childcare. For example, in West Africa, separation of fathers and husbands from their children and families is not a new phenomenon because of sustained

intra-national and cross border migration (Coe, 2011). Literature on migration notes that internal or cross border circular migration in South Africa did not cease with the demise of apartheid. It is also important to note that intra-regional movements in the Southern African region were also facilitated by the demise of apartheid and the incorporation of South Africa into the Southern African Development Community [SADC] (Crush et al., 2005).

Like any other form of migration, circular migration is gendered as it affects men and women as well as their social relationships differently (Schwenken, 2013). Women participate in cross border circular migration as a livelihood strategy. Many of them migrate to conduct informal trading or to seek employment as domestic workers, therefore, there is a need to understand migrant women's experiences in relation to their gender roles. This is important especially when migrant women are mothers and leave their children behind when they migrate.

Posel (2006) notes that in some cases, migrant mothers may choose to leave their children behind due to various reasons including concerns about safety and safer spaces to raise their children. Posel and Van der Stoep (2008) also note that mothers can choose to leave their children behind due to precarious employment, poor accommodation and high cost of living in host countries. Therefore, migrant mothers may leave their children under the care of other family members such as aunties, sisters and grandmothers. Studies note that, biological mother absence and children being raised by other family members, has been a common phenomenon in low-income households in South Africa (Hatch & Posel, 2018; Moore, 2013; Posel & Van der Stoep, 2008)

1.3.3. Regional organisations

In addition to colonial legacies and cultural relations across different countries in Africa, regional economic organisations influence the ways in which migration is governed and managed in the continent. Examples of regional economic organisations that influence migration governance are SADC in Southern Africa and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in West Africa. However, the challenge is that these organisations are often dominated by countries whose economies are more developed compared to other countries within the same organisations, for example, South Africa and Botswana in Southern Africa, Kenya in East Africa and Nigeria and Ivory Coast in West Africa (Adepoju, 2011).

South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana's influence in SADC can be seen early in history, following the demise of apartheid. The country's membership in SADC facilitated promising social, political, and economic integration across the Southern Africa region. For instance, the Draft Protocol on the Freedom of Movement within Southern Africa in 1995 sought to allow free movement of people for work across different regional states (Crush & Dodson, 2007). However, the 1995 Draft Protocol on the Freedom of Movement was promptly rejected when South Africa, Namibia and Botswana strongly opposed it. The three countries argued that unhindered movements of people across states may threaten their sovereignty and security (Crush & Williams, 2005; Maunganidze & Formica, 2018).

In addition, research has shown that despite the changing patterns of migration, thus an increase in the number of women who partake in cross border migration, the South African immigration policy pays little attention to how gender intersects with migration experiences (Chisale, 2015; Crush & Dodson, 2007; Farley, 2019; Mbiyozo, 2018). Moreover, not much attention is given to the politics of gender as it remains focused on men as labourers and women as victims. An examination of South Africa's various visa categories including the work permit and special skills permit shows that migration policy is biased in favour of male migrants. A few migrant women can meet the requirements of these visa categories, given the required levels of education and skills (Chisale, 2015).

Furthermore, only a few work permits bring associated rights to work and reside in South Africa for spouses or relatives (Crush & Dodson, 2007). The lack of migration policies that are supportive of migrant women has dire consequences for women's needs and aspirations in relation to migration. Dodson (2001:7) argues that migration policy should avoid using gender neutral terms such as, 'persons', 'entrepreneurs' or 'labour units,' because these neutral terms tend to obscure the social context in which migrants are embedded and their biological relationships. Instead, migration policy should be conceptualised in household terms that pay attention to how individuals are positioned in the family for example, as wives, husbands, daughters or sons (Dodson, 2001). Such an understanding of gender in migration policy, as suggested by Dodson (2001), can shade light on the needs of cross border migrant women who are mothers to children that they left behind in their home countries.

Regional economic bodies such as the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have introduced protocols to facilitate the free movement of people between their member states (Adepoju, 2001; Flahaux & De Haas, 2016). However, such protocols have not been sufficiently implemented because member states continue to adhere to more restrictive migration policies because countries reassert their sovereignty by securing borders to mark their territories (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016). The IOM and AUC (2020) note that the African Union's migration policies are progressive on paper but poorly implemented. This is because member states are not forthcoming, concerning active cooperation and information-sharing on migration: this could be owing to the unequal power dynamics between member states (IOM & AUC, 2020).

1.3.4. Socio-economic deterioration

The deteriorating socio-economic conditions in many African countries have led to migration of individuals to other countries, in search of employment and better economic conditions. The adoption of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund's structural economic reforms has led to governments reducing spending on public services by privatising health, education, and social services. Privatisation reduces most of the population's access to services, and the most affected are the poor (Adepoju, 2008). Many breadwinners and heads of families have been left without jobs as governments in sending countries sought to reduce the size of the work force in public services (Adepoju, 2008).

The absence of jobs and sustainable livelihoods has led to the migration of many young, educated individuals for greener pastures in other countries within the continent or abroad (Adepoju, 2011). The worsening socio-economic conditions in many countries within Africa has been associated with unstable politics and civil unrest. State collapse, war, and political violence in many African countries, including the DRC, Mozambique, and Sierra Leone has exacerbated socio-economic decline such that people are compelled to leave their homes and seek refuge in safer countries (Adepoju, 2008). Research suggests that one of the defining features of contemporary migration in Africa is the increase in the participation of women as autonomous migrants in search of jobs and better economic opportunities (Adepoju, 2008; 2011; Andall, 2018).

1.4. Feminisation of migration

Migration studies now recognise ‘feminisation of migration’, as conceptualisation that describes an increase in the number of women who partake in independent migration (Bastia & Piper, 2019; Pande, 2022; Piper, 2008; 2010; Tittensor & Fethi, 2017; Vause & Toma, 2015). Previously, migrant women were framed as, ‘associational migrants,’ which means they were not considered to migrate independently and autonomously. Women migrants’ reasons for migration have been mostly associated with a man migrant to whom they depended or followed, for example in cases of family reunification. The framing of women as, associational migrants has changed because women are now recognised for their role as primary migrants in search of economic opportunities (Bastia & Piper, 2019).

Over the past few years, there has been an increase in women independently migrating for work in feminised labour sectors, which typically reproduce gender specific roles, for example in the care industry (Hennebry et al., 2016). However, the attention given to the feminisation of migration in migration studies has been contested. Palmary (2009) notes that studies on feminised migration tend to emphasise difference rather than politics in conceptualising gender. In this way gender has been studied as a depoliticised demographic variable such that power relations and the context influencing the experiences of women as migrants is often overlooked (Palmary, 2009). Furthermore, in migration and development policies gender is often not conceptualised as a central analytical category (Bastia & Piper, 2019). Hence the implications for the organisation of women’s social lives and gender specific global labour markets are often not sufficiently understood in both sending and receiving countries (Holliday et al., 2019; Piper, 2006).

Research shows that international migration is not uniform across different regions of the world due to factors such as geography, political economy, and demography (IOM, 2022). Therefore, sustained patterns of, ‘migration corridors¹’ have developed over time: people are migrating from less developed to more developed regions. Migration research has also paid attention to the Eastern and Southern African migration corridors (Alberola et al., 2018; Ayalew, 2017; Castles et al., 2014; Estifanos & Freeman, 2022; Estifanos & Zack, 2019; Zewdu,

¹ ‘A migration corridor is the hypothetical connection between two places, through which people may or may not migrate’ (Carling, 2010: 2).

2018:). While there have been regional bodies to promote and facilitate regular migration, such as the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA), there is generally a lack of political will to implement these effectively (Castles et al. 2014). In the last few decades Ethiopia has attracted the attention of migration scholars as simultaneously the major sending and a transit country for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in the Horn of Africa (Zewdu, 2018). Due to restrictive migration policies in various states within the Horn of Africa, studies show that migration from and through the region often takes place through unofficial points, for example through the smuggling networks involving various actors across states (Alberola, et al. 2018; Estifanos & Freeman, 2022).

There are three main smuggling routes that have been identified in literature on migration in East Africa, and these are: the Northern Route, the Eastern Route, and the Southern Route (Alberola et al., 2018). Of importance to the current study is the Southern Route which originates from Ethiopia to South Africa. The route comprises mixed migration flows including refugees and asylum seekers passing through multiple transit countries such as Kenya, Mozambique, Malawi, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. They are different ways in which migrants move, some use official pathways while those who may not have the required documentation such as a valid passport and a visa, they rely on smugglers' services. With the help of smugglers, migrants may pass through these countries to South Africa or use South Africa as a transit point to Europe and North America (Estifanos & Freeman, 2022; Mbeve & Ngwenya, 2022). However, the smuggling processes and networks which may include both formal and informal institutions have become highly complex and dynamic that they defy simple explanations (Ayalew, et al. 2018; Tinti, 2017).

One example of the complexity is that, due to increased border control measures in Kenya and Tanzania there is an emerging route to South Africa where migrants often use boats on some parts of their journey via the Indian Ocean (Alberola et al., 2018; Estifanos & Freeman, 2022). Literature also shows that the migration processes and smuggling networks along this corridor extend into settlement in destination countries, where smugglers may assist with safely crossing the border, providing knowledge about transport and communication infrastructures, accommodation, and knowledge about formal and informal transnational money transfers (Ayalew et al., 2018).

Despite the above-described services research have shown that migration experiences for some migrants can be unpredictable and perilous (Tinti, 2017). Studies have indicated that sometimes crossing borders can be difficult such that repeated attempts will have to be made. In this case migrants would have to be smuggled in haulage trucks and containers over long distances (Estifanos & Freeman, 2022; Mbeve & Ngwenya, 2022). Even though the use of smugglers is often voluntary it puts migrants in vulnerable positions. Studies have noted that migrants, especially women experience various forms of physical abuse often perpetrated by smugglers themselves, including gender-based violence, sexual abuse, human trafficking and forced labour (Ayalew, 2017; Ayalew et al., 2018; Grabska, 2016; Mbeve& Ngwenya, 2022; Triulzi, 2013). In addition to this, migrants are often charged exorbitant prices for smuggling services (Tinti, 2017). Studies have also reported that the vulnerabilities that migrants face on their way to Southern Africa have implications for their health and wellbeing – they will need psychological support and access to health services when they arrive (Ayalew, 2017). This can be a challenge especially for those who may not have the required legal identity documentation, such as asylum seekers. This also means that they will be employed under precarious conditions where income is unstable, and finding sustainable jobs can be nearly impossible.

Studies show that the increase in women migrating independently, may be lauded as a form of asserting women's independence and reversing traditional gender roles as women become breadwinners (Batisai, 2016; Batisai & Dzimiri, 2020). However, women often have to contend with various forms of precarity and intersecting vulnerabilities during different stages of the migration process (Jinnah, 2020). Studies show that migrant women in the global North often find work in the domestic care industry where their welfare is not guaranteed because this kind of work is dependent on individual family arrangements (Kambouri, 2013). Hence challenges such as sexual exploitation, violence, physical abuse and poor working conditions have been reported in many studies that focus on migrant women (IOM, 2022).

Literature on the feminisation of migration, with a focus on women who move in search of domestic care work in the global north, has noted that these women also contend with exploitative migration policies which are rooted in gendered policy frameworks (Jinnah,

2020). For example, the *Kafala* system² in the United Arab Emirates which binds domestic workers to their employers such that migrants are inevitably indebted to migration brokers for their entire migration project (IOM, 2022).

Kambouri (2013) argues that working without any contract and under unclear work conditions is often standard in the political economy of care and domesticity. Silvey and Parreñas' (2019) study on domestic workers who migrated from Southeast Asia to work in the Middle East, found that these domestic workers were embedded in what they call 'precarity chains'. They argue that these workers experience forms of precarity in three ways: firstly, the precarity of migration which is facilitated by recruitment agencies that leave migrants with little or no choice in terms of their employer and country of destination. Secondly, the precarity of labour where migrants are offered limited-term contracts under poor working conditions, and thirdly the precarity of the future where goals remain elusive because of low levels of income and savings (Silvey & Parreñas, 2019).

1.4.1. Migration and societal norms

Research has shown that women's migration experiences are largely influenced by prevailing gender norms both in countries of origin and in countries of destination (Andall, 2018; Toma & Vause, 2013). Societal norms and values influence how migrant women experience migration. For example, cultural gender roles such as child nurturing as well as gender identities that they are assigned such as wife or aunty play a critical role in women's migration trajectories. These cultural roles and assigned gender identities influence their aspirations and the work that they do in countries of destination (Pearson & Sweetman, 2019).

The gendered nature of migration is particularly illustrated when women who migrate are mothers. In many cases mothers are forced by various circumstances to leave their children in their countries of origin. Some women give birth in countries of destination and then send their children back home because of lack of affordable childcare options and sometimes because of work demands (Pearson & Sweetman, 2019). Migrant mothers who come to South

² 'Under the kafala system, rather than the migrant taking responsibility for themselves through local regulatory frameworks and employment processes, the migrant's sponsor assumes this responsibility for the period of the migration and pays a sponsorship fee to the government as a form of "surety", to ensure the migrant does not break any laws or breach regulations' (Wu & Kilby, 2023:149)

Africa may choose to leave their children behind at their countries of origin due to the fear of xenophobia and violence (Moorhouse & Cunningham, 2012). When mothers are separated from their children owing to migration, this may be viewed as special separation of families. In these cases of spatial separation of families, women often assume breadwinning roles as they economically sustain their families.

Research has also shown that migrant women also continue to play roles that are associated with gender norms in their countries of origin (Pearson & Sweetman, 2019). One of the key gender roles that migrant mothers maintain at their countries of destination is providing emotional care to their children across borders through various internet technologies, such as WhatsApp and Facebook (Boccagni, 2012; Lutz & Palenga-Mollenbeck, 2012). Adepoju (2008) notes that in Africa the increasing migration of independent women that are in search of better livelihoods has been necessitated by the persistence of economic hardships in many counties. Therefore, lower skilled women often migrate to find work as cross border petty traders and hair dressers (hair stylists and braiders) in host countries (Dodson & Crush 2004; Muzvidziwa, 2012; Oyedemi, 2016:). Sex work may also offer a viable means of earning income that some migrant women use to support their children and families. However, the criminalisation in host countries of sex work means that women who sell sex can face high levels of violence and risk (Oliveira & Vearey, 2015; Walker, 2017; Walker et al., 2017).

Andall (2018) notes that migrant mothers often struggle to reconcile family care responsibilities together with the need to economically provide for their families. When children are left at the migrant mothers' home of origin, the migrant mothers also need to organise and manage care arrangements. As such, in reconciling their productive and reproductive roles, migrant mothers must negotiate their existence between two countries: being physically present in the host country as well as managing expectations and relationships at their home of origin (Hennebry et al., 2016). Having to take responsibilities between the two spaces (country of destination and of origin) raises important questions on the implications for their wellbeing, perceptions on motherhood, and mothering roles in the context of migration. It is against this background that this study seeks to contribute knowledge on transnational motherhood, by exploring the intersections of migration, motherhood and subjective wellbeing in Johannesburg inner city.

1.5. Significance of the study

Research on transnational motherhood highlights the emotional distress that mothers experience because of being separated from their children. Migrant mothers are reported to experience difficult emotions such as anxiety, guilt, and depression that is associated with mothering their children who they left at their home countries, while they are in the host country (Carling et al., 2012; Dreby, 2006; Fresnoza-flot, 2009; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Meyers & Rugunanan, 2020 Moorhouse & Cunningham, 2012; Zentgraf & Chinchilla, 2012). While recognition of these emotions is important, studies often assume that these emotions are experienced mainly because of mothers' separation from their children. This tends to overlook mothers' agency and the structural contexts from which mothering strategies are enacted. Moreover, research on transnational motherhood has focused mainly on the experiences of women who migrate in search of better economic opportunities in developed countries. Most studies on transnational mothering have noted that the demand for female workers in the care industry has facilitated and sustained the migration of mothers from less developed countries to more developed countries. An example of this migration trajectory is women from Philippines and Mexico migrating to the United States and Canada (Bohr & Whitfield, 2011; Leifsen & Tymczuk, 2012; Millman, 2013; Muñoz, 2019; Parreñas, 2010; Schmalzbauer, 2004; Tolstokorova, 2010; Tyldum, 2014;).

In African academic literature, there is less attention paid to transnational motherhood. The lack of literature is despite a rich history of people in Southern Africa migrating to Johannesburg. There is less literature that uses the framing, 'transnational motherhood'. Instead, migrant mothers are merely considered as mothers, having left children behind, or they may be discussed using other concepts except transnational mothers. Although the literature on migrant mothers exists, less is written about their experiences of leaving children in their home countries. Among the existing literature on migrant mothers' experiences most is focused in developed countries, but studies conducted in developed countries may be of little value in understanding transnational motherhood within developing countries, because there are structural differences.

The current study contributes to discussions and understanding of transnational motherhood. By using the concept of subjective wellbeing, this study brings out a broader understanding

of wellbeing in transnational mothering experiences. In addition to subjective wellbeing this study also draws from the concepts of precarity and embodied transnationalism to explore mothers' subjectivities in terms of their needs, motivations and aspirations. Constructivism and matricentric feminism inform my ontological and epistemological orientations.

1.6. Research aims and objectives

The aim of this study is to explore the intersections of migration, motherhood and wellbeing using the experiences of transnational mothers living and working in Johannesburg inner city. The broad research question guiding this study is: What are the transnational mothering experiences of Zimbabwean, Ghanaian, and Congolese migrant women living in Johannesburg inner city?

To answer this broad question, the study uses the following objectives:

1. To examine how precarity shapes transnational mothers' perceptions of motherhood and mothering roles in the context of migration.
2. To examine how work-related insecurities shape transnational mothers' lives and mothering strategies in Johannesburg.
3. To explore participants' interpretations of subjective wellbeing in their mothering experiences in the context of precarity and work-related insecurities in Johannesburg.
4. To make a conceptual contribution to understanding transnational mothering in Southern Africa

1.7. Outline of the thesis

Chapter Two discusses various ways in which motherhood has been understood in existing global literature. This is followed by a discussion of transnational motherhood which highlights salient themes on the topic. Some of the key discussions are on how economic imperatives across different countries motivate mothers to migrate across the borders in search of employment and better livelihoods. The section also discusses various strategies of 'doing' transnational mothering and challenges that mothers face, as portrayed in different

studies. Chapter two also introduces Johannesburg inner city where this study was conducted. It provides some background about the city, in relation to cross border migrants and the challenges that they often face. The chapter ends with discussing factors that have given rise to sustained emigration from Zimbabwe, Ghana, and DRC.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the key concepts that are used in this study, which are precarity, embodied transnationalism, and subjective wellbeing. The chapter explores ways in which precarity has been defined and used in literature. It then shows how precarity is useful in understanding participants' experiences in Johannesburg inner city. The chapter moves on to explain how the concept of embodied transnationalism is useful in understanding migrant mothers' emotions and feelings while navigating life across different countries. This is followed by a discussion on subjective wellbeing which explores how the concept has been used in migration studies. The chapter then shows how the dimensions of the concept of subjective wellbeing can be useful in understanding participants' agency, motivations, and aspirations.

Chapter Four presents the methodology adopted in this study. In summary, the study used a qualitative approach to understand the complexity of the lives of participants in Johannesburg inner city. Through matricentric feminism the study seeks to illuminate the experiences of migrant mothers and understand their mothering strategies. Chapter Four also details the recruitment of participants and data collection. The chapter introduces participants and provides their demographic characteristics, that is, their age, nationality, marital status, and the number of children they had. This chapter also shows how data was coded and then analysed using some of the techniques that are used in constructivist grounded theory. Chapter Four ends by discussing ethical considerations that were made for this study.

Chapters Five to Eight presents and discusses the findings for this study. Chapter Five explains the researcher's positionality in relation to the current study. In this chapter, I show how my social history and biographical information, for example, age, migration status and marital status may be relevant to the ways in which I conducted this project. I illustrate my positionality with reference to my choice of the research topic, interaction with participants during interviews and how I interpreted the data. The chapter also discusses relevant

literature on reflexivity by focusing on how reflexivity has been defined and practised in qualitative research.

Chapter Six presents empirical findings for this study in which it examines how precarity shaped participants' perceptions on motherhood and mothering in Johannesburg inner city. The chapter illustrates the disjuncture between participants' convictions about motherhood and their real-life situations. For example, while participants were enacting their mothering strategies across borders, they firmly believed that mothers should share the same geographical space with their children. They also emphasised that socialisation of children into their cultural norms and values is best done by mothers, yet they were not in a position to do so physically because they do not stay with them. Participants also argued that a place in which the biological mother is not physically present cannot be considered a home. This is despite the fact that mothers played an important role in their families in financially supporting their families.

Chapter Seven examines how challenges in finding secure employment and better livelihoods mediated participants' mothering experiences and strategies. For example, participants noted with concern that having unpredictable work and lack of a reliable source of income compromised their ability to make long term financial commitments at their place of origin. Key to transnational mothering was found to be the ability to maintain constant communication and visiting home regularly. However, the scarcity of jobs meant that participants struggled to maintain regular communication across borders. The cost of making international phone calls and travelling can be prohibitively high. This may compromise their relationships with children and caregivers. In addition to these challenges, participants needed to come to terms with challenges that were associated with accommodation, crime, xenophobic violence, and being a cross border migrant in Johannesburg inner city.

Chapter Eight explores the determinants of subjective wellbeing in participants' experiences. It discusses participants' agency in the midst of their challenges by bringing out their goals and aspirations in relation to motherhood and mothering strategies. Most importantly, this chapter highlights that even though participants faced a number of challenges in Johannesburg inner city, they did not perceive themselves as victims. They found ways of dealing with the challenges, for instance, in addition to regular work, some participants

engaged in petty trading to supplement their incomes. They also managed to maintain social relationships across borders even though they could hardly afford to spend much time on the phone and could only travel once a year.

Chapter Nine concludes this thesis by highlighting this study's key findings and arguments. The chapter highlights that this project brings to the fore a broader understanding of wellbeing in transnational motherhood studies. It highlights the researcher's contribution to conceptual advancement in transnational mothering research. It also shades light on some of the assumptions that have been made on the role of communication technologies in transnational motherhood literature. While communication technologies have been lauded for their role in facilitating transnational mothering strategies in the global north, this has not been the case in this study. The cost of communication (through cell phones and via the internet) is prohibitively high. Likewise, even though Johannesburg is within Africa and relatively closer to participants' home countries, the cost of travelling is also high, participants could not afford to travel frequently. The chapter concludes by making suggestions for future research and highlighting implications for migration policy.

CHAPTER TWO

Motherhood, Transnational Motherhood, and Migration

2.1. Introduction

The concept of motherhood has been a subject of interest in different cultural contexts since time immemorial. It is often imbued with mythical and spiritual meanings in some religious and indigenous traditions (Akujobi, 2011). Across Africa the idea of motherhood has also been of great value to the development of nations. For instance, it has often been deployed as a symbol for nation building to mobilise patriotic sentiments as seen in such words as ‘motherland’ in nationalist discourses, especially during liberation struggles (Akujobi, 2011:2). Mothers are also lauded for being selfless nurturers, creators, and goddesses with great influence in their children’s lives (Olayiwola & Olowonmi, 2013). Thus, the relationship that mothers form with their children from birth is considered very important in preparing them for adult life.

Even though motherhood may have different meanings to different women, literature recognises that the dominant ideology of motherhood across societies and times remains the same (Swift, 2015). The overriding assumption in motherhood is the, “...belief that all women need to be mothers, all mothers need their children and all children need their mothers...” (Oakley, 1986:67). Therefore, motherhood has been presented as the ultimate sense of purpose for women and is instrumental in shaping their identities (Oakley, 1986). While increasingly recognised as a complex identity also often motherhood remains an identity that many women strive for in various cultures.

Even though there are changes in gender stereotypes as well as gender roles, and more fathers are now participating in the work of nurturing children, research on motherhood suggests that parenting remains largely associated with women (Arendell, 2000; Swift, 2015; Verma & Negi, 2020). While motherhood may bring fulfilment to those who self-identify as mothers (both biological and non-biological), it may also be a source of many challenges, especially for those who practice mothering in difficult circumstances (Middleton, 2006). It is also important to note that emotional attachment or detachment is not simplistic or

prescribed but it is based on individual experiences, mostly in contexts where mothering happens in non-normative ways, an example of non-normative mothering may occur in cases where the mother is incarcerated (Kearney et al., 1994). In relation to migration, when mothers leave their children at their home countries in search of better livelihoods and employment opportunities elsewhere, motherhood and mothering take on complex meanings to accommodate spatial and temporal separations (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Millman, 2013).

Research on transnational motherhood has shown that mothers display agency and resilience when they seek to redefine and maintain their mothering roles across borders while they concurrently economically sustain families that they left at their home countries (Contreras & Griffith, 2012; Horton, 2009; Lutz & Palenga-Mollenbeck, 2012; Madziva & Zontini, 2012; Millman, 2013; Muñoz, 2019). Scholars have also noted that transnational motherhood can compromise the mothers' health and wellbeing because it can be marred by conflicting emotions, contradictions and dilemmas (Bohr & Whitefield, 2011; Carling et al., 2012; Contreras & Griffith, 2012; Parreñas, 2001; 2005; Tyldum, 2014). Yet, the wellbeing aspect of transnational motherhood has not yet been extensively problematised.

Migrant mothers' wellbeing has so far been narrowly framed, where it is assumed that negative emotions emanate only from mothers' separation from their children (Bohr & Whitfield, 2011; Madziva & Zontini, 2012; Millman, 2013; Zentgraf & Chinchilla, 2012). Moreover, literature on transnational motherhood has prioritised its focus on experiences of migrant mothers who are working in the USA, Italy, the United Kingdom (UK), and Canada (Bohr & Whitfield, 2011; Carling & Drotbohm, 2012; Chib et al., 2014; Leifsen & Tymczuk, 2012; Madziva & Zontini, 2012; Tyldum, 2014). Therefore, there is limited knowledge on the intersections of motherhood, migration, and wellbeing on the experiences of transnational mothers who migrate within Africa. Hence in Africa there is a knowledge gap concerning migrant mothers' wellbeing because conclusions that are drawn from research outside Africa cannot sufficiently explain transnational motherhood in the Southern Africa context.

In the following section I review literature on motherhood, transnational motherhood, and transnational families. This is followed by a discussion on migration and key drivers of migration in Africa, with most focus on factors that have encouraged migration from

Zimbabwe, Ghana, and the DRC. After this section I provide a contextual background on this study's research setting, which is Johannesburg inner city. In this section I focus mainly on challenges that are faced by cross border migrants. The last section concludes the chapter.

2.2. Motherhood

Literature suggests that motherhood and mothering are both dynamic and socially constructed concepts. Some scholars have considered motherhood and mothering to be relational, subjective, and contingent, based on the mothers' definitions (Collins, 2000; Millman, 2013). Globally, scholars highlight that motherhood and mothering are social constructs that are linked to the history and familial culture of different women (Bassin et al., 1994; Glenn, 1994; Risman, 1998).

2.2.1. Motherhood as relational

Some feminists problematise definitions of motherhood that attempt to view women's mothering experiences as universal (Craig & O'Dell, 2011). Some of these feminists argue that mothering is an individual project, which is experienced by various women differently, based on their unique circumstances. Millman (2013) argues that, motherhood is a relational concept, which is dependent on cultural and social contexts as well as individual perceptions. Therefore, conceptualisations of motherhood cannot be static: they evolve and take on different meanings based on unique situations.

Arendell's (2000) literature review on motherhood in North America identifies two approaches that have been used in researching motherhood and mothering. These are particularistic approach and the universalist approach. The particularistic approach is individualistic and it views motherhood and mothering as subjective concepts that have different meanings and implications for different women (Arendell, 2000). Arendell (2000) acknowledges that mothers do not nurture their children in the same way and that, in fact, not all women take on the gender role of mothering. Therefore, conceptualisations of what motherhood or mothering means depend on who is defining the term. Bassin et al. (1994, p.2) argue, "...motherhood is tied to infantile experience and relates to complex, ongoing, deeply personal feelings."

2.2.2. Dominant ideologies on motherhood

Literature demonstrates that there are certain similar activities that mothers undertake in different contexts. The activities include the raising and nurturing of dependent children, as well as teaching the children norms and values of their culture, to prepare them for adult life (Arendell, 2000; Glenn, 1994; Ruddick, 1989). The nurturing and caring for dependent children take on various forms, which include physical labour of caring for children such as cooking, feeding, and bathing. Thus, mothers are normatively associated with the “...ritualised practices of everyday life” (Falicov, 2007, p.159), such as teaching children basic hygiene, cooking, and ensuring that children eat their food. These activities may form the foundation of familial emotional connections (Falicov, 2007). Mothering includes emotional labour, where a child makes “moral claims” of the mother (Arendell, 2000, p.8) – the mother is then obliged to be present for the child, and provide day to day care and support in times of distress.

Mothering activities are historically and culturally informed, they are also consistent with a society’s cultural beliefs in relation to gender (Arendell, 2000; Glenn, 1994). Additionally, intergenerational processes within families influence how women perceive motherhood. Mothers may reflect on how themselves were mothered to judging their own mothering strategies (Heisler & Ellis, 2008). Therefore, mothering experiences are shaped by mothers’ continuous interaction with their own ideas, definitions of family, childhood, children, and their individuality (Ribbens, 1994).

2.2.3. Intensive mothering

The ideology of intensive mothering was coined by Hays, (1996). Hays (1996, p.8) argues that in intensive mothering, “...the methods of appropriate child rearing are construed as child centred, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labour intensive, and financially expensive.” Furthermore, Hays (1996) theorises intensive mothering in three key assumptions, that are:(1) biological mothers as the primary care givers to their children and as being the only people who, in the family, are better positioned for the mothering role. (2) Mothers are to dedicate ample time and energy on raising and nurturing their own children, and (3) mothers are to protect their children and put their needs and desires ahead of their own personal needs and goals (Hays, 1996). In this Hays’ (1996) description, mothering is conceived as child

centred, where a mother gives unconditional love and dedicates much of her time to child nurturing. It is also important to note that this form of mothering requires enough financial resources so that a mother can afford to spend quality time with her children at home.

However, the above Hays' (1996) framing of mothering is problematic and is not aligned with working mothers (Collins, 2000). However, research has shown that the ideology of intensive motherhood, although middle-class in origin, plays a key role in shaping women's behaviour and attitudes towards motherhood and mothering, regardless of race, class, or ethnicity (Arendell, 2000; Blair-Loy 2003; Craig, 2010; Glenn, 1994; Hays 1996; Johnston & Swanson 2007; Stone, 2007). Intensive motherhood is used as a yardstick by different women to evaluate their own mothering strategies and censure strategies of the other (Arendell, 2000). Resultantly, migrant mothers who do not follow the intensive motherhood ideology because they are working away from home, must come to terms with the judgements of others and their own feelings of guilt and ambivalence (Walzer, 1997).

Therefore, mothers who do not carry out their mothering role on full time basis, which is perceived from the intensive mothering perspective as a normative way of mothering, are frequently subjected to negative perceptions. Those who tend to be subjects of the negative perceptions based on the intensive mothering perspective are: migrant mothers whose children remain in countries of origin and single mothers who must work to provide for their children (Arendell, 2000). Literature also indicates that in places such as North America and Europe where mothers are less likely to live separately from their children, they find it hard to fulfil the requirements of intensive mothering. This is because intensive mothering's demands do not align with the needs of working mothers (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; O'Brien Hallstein, 2006; Walls et al., 2016:).

Moreover, scholars have noted that the ideology of intensive motherhood views White women's mothering strategies with high regard, whilst sanctioning mothering strategies of Black women in the USA, it also frames Black women's mothering as non-normative (Collins, 1994). Collins (2000) argues that mothering in Black African American communities has not always been the sole responsibility of the biological mother: it also involves other female relatives in the extended family (Collins, 2000). Collins (2000, p.180) argues that, "Other

mothers can be key not only in supporting children but also in helping blood mothers who, for whatever reason, lack the preparation or desire for motherhood.”

Collins (2000) imply that mothering strategies are influenced by broader societal structures. Thus, the dynamic interaction of societal categories such as race, class, and gender with political positioning of mothers shapes their perceptions on motherhood and their mothering strategies (Collins, 1994; 1995; Lamphere et al., 1993). In the case of migrant mothers, the variety of options for the resources that they need for mothering may increase if they had access to legal documentation and to financial resources. For example, documented migrant mothers and mothers who have access to financial resources may have better access to child care services. While mothering options can be limited for those who have an irregular migration status and are lower skilled migrants who work in the informal sector. These mothers may have to rely on other family members to help them with mothering duties. This lack of a reliable source of income can be stressful to mothers and presents many obstacles to successful child rearing (Hofferth, 1995).

2.2.4. African perspectives on motherhood

Ideologies on motherhood and migration are two highly dynamic factors that influence the ways that motherhood is understood. Hence the understanding of motherhood may shift based on the social and geographical contexts in which it is undertaken or scrutinised. Therefore, it is virtually impossible to coin a universal understanding of motherhood which could be purely influenced by African ideologies. Hence to ascribe one African continental perspective on motherhood and mothering will be overgeneralisation of a complex concept especially in a continent (Africa) of high and complex ethnic and cultural diversity. Moreover, what is considered ‘African’ does not necessarily belong only to the continent, because there is high international migration across different continents. Nonetheless, the impact of colonialism and contemporary changes in the global political economy, such as, globalisation on social constructs of motherhood across African societies cannot be underestimated (Kruger, 2006; Walker, 1995). To explore the complexity of the concept of motherhood in Africa, some scholars have analysed how mothers are characterised in songs, poems, African proverbs, and literary novels (Akujobi, 2011; Schipper, 1991). Fictional novels such as, “So Long a Letter,” (Bâ, 2012), “The Housemaid,” (Darko, 1998) and, “Joys of Motherhood,”

(Emecheta, 1994) are widely quoted in conceptions of African motherhood. Some scholars have traced and illustrated how historical changes in economic and political structures have influenced the discourse on motherhood and mothering over time. Hence, some studies have shown how, since the apartheid era the understandings of motherhood have evolved in South Africa (Iwelunmore et al., 2010; Walker, 1995). Posel et al. (2008) argue that institutional discrimination during the apartheid era had an impact on the ideals of mothering within African families. The apartheid system did not allow Black families to permanently settle in urban areas. Therefore, mothers who were working in the city had to contend with living separately from their children who had to remain in rural areas. By this separate living, apartheid necessitated complex perspectives on the meaning of motherhood in Black families. However, it is noteworthy that in most African communities, motherhood and practices of mothering may have varying meanings for different women (Akujobi, 2011; Kruger, 2006). In the following sections I discuss some of the main themes that are found in the literature on African perspectives on motherhood and mothering.

2.2.5. The centrality of motherhood in African women's lives and families

Literature on social constructions of motherhood from traditional African perspectives suggests that motherhood is viewed as an important part of women's lives, families, and communities. In the African continent, mothers play a pivotal role in the lives of their children and other family members (Campbell, 1990; Oyewumi, 2001; Walker, 1995). Oyewumi (2007, p.7) argues that many African societies consider motherhood and mothering as, "...an attractive and desirable goal to achieve". This suggests that motherhood provides women with a sense of pride, purpose and fulfilment (Kruger, 2006; Magwaza, 2003; Mamabolo et al., 2009; Richardson, 1993). Therefore, in many African communities motherhood is portrayed as a rite of passage to womanhood (Akujobi, 2011; Olayiwola & Olowonmi, 2013). Thus, womanhood is often conflated with motherhood, such that it is often considered a misfortune for a woman to marry and not bear children (Akujobi, 2011; Mamabolo et al., 2009; Olayiwola & Olowonmi, 2013). Hence, due to these societal standards and norms, mothers are expected to play an important role in the socialisation and general nurturing of their children. In the work of socialisation, the mother is often expected to transmit to her children, the society's cultural values and beliefs associated with gender and kinship relations (Walker, 1995).

2.2.6. Mothers as primary care givers, nurturers and custodians of culture

Literature suggests that in many African communities, mothers are lauded for their reproductive roles of care giving and nurturing children (Adeyabo, 1996; Akujobi, 2011; Iwelunmor et al., 2010; Olayiwola & Olowonmi, 2013). Adebayo (1996) notes that mothers are expected to exhibit virtues such as patience, self-denial, and resignation when they perform their mothering roles. In this way society expects mothers to have solid relationships with their children. The relationships are expected to be marked by love, affection, and careful guidance, so that children can successfully meet their developmental needs (Littlefield, 2007; Magwaza, 2003).

Furthermore, in African communities, the emphasis on the importance of the mothering role in children's lives is demonstrated in many idiomatic expressions such as, in the Yorùbá language in Nigeria, there is a proverb that says, "Iya ni wura, baba ni jigi," which translates to English language as "Mother is gold, father is mirror." This proverb means, 'A mirror is fragile and unreliable because it may break at any time. Gold is solid and stable — just as the mother is, closer to the child than the father is expected to be' (Schipper, 1991, p.37). In Rwanda they say, "The child who has a mother does not drivel," meaning that the child who has a mother, "is not neglected" (Schipper, 1991, p.39).

2.2.7. Mothers as providers

Research also shows that mothering roles in Africa are not confined to rendering daily care to children; mothers are also engaged in economic activities to financially support families and children. Similar to African-American understandings of motherhood and mothering, being a breadwinner, contributing to the family income and self-reliance are valued attributes of being a mother in African communities (Collins, 2000; 2001; Walker, 1995). Campbell (1990) also notes that African mothers often take on the crucial role of managing scarce family resources in many working-class families. Writing on the discourse of motherhood in South Africa in the 20th Century, Walker (1995) notes that mothering in many Black communities does not necessarily mean women being involved in the day-to-day care of children. Instead, Walker (1995) argues that, the discourse of motherhood in South Africa puts more emphasis on mothers' ability to financially support their children.

For middle class women day-to-day care of children is often taken up by domestic workers, female relatives or grandmothers (Walker, 1995). This is similar to what Collins (1990, p.176) refers to as, “othermothering,” where Black African American mothers share the roles of mothering with their female relatives and communities. Writing on Asante ideals and practices of family relations in urban Ghana, Clark (1999, p.719) argues that the Asante ideology underlines, “...the importance of economic support in enacting motherhood, as a continuation of childbirth itself.” As such, “...the good, self-sacrificing Asante mother does not stay home with her children, but goes out working hard for them” (Clark, 1999, p.719).

It is important to note that the dominant ideologies of mothering, where a mother is perceived as selfless and attending to children’s needs tend to be disempowering, restrictive and elusive to women (Craig & O’Dell, 2011; Middleton, 2006). In many cases, normative perspectives on mothering conceal women’s agency especially for those mothering in difficult situations. For instance, motherhood takes on complex meanings in the context of conflict and political violence when children are abducted, murdered, or forced to become soldiers. While mothers may continue with their traditional roles of care and daily household chores, they may also become the main income generators for their households (Walker, 2010; 2011). Therefore, in terms of reconciling reproductive roles and productive roles, the intensive mothering ideology presents challenges to working mothers as it tends to discourage their participation in the professional public space (Hallstein, 2008).

In South Africa during the apartheid, migration laws facilitated family separation by restricting male labourers to bring their wives to urban areas. This meant that women remained with children in the homesteads. Women left in the homesteads assumed both parenting and breadwinning roles as they economically provided for their children, mainly through subsistence farming (Pillay, 2008; Ramphele & Richter, 2006; Spjeldnæs, 2021). Thus, the way motherhood is constructed by dominant ideologies may have little alignment with the lived experiences of mothers (Johnston & Swanson, 2003). Indeed, ‘othered,’ mothers are constructed in terms of idealised versions of mothering which are often used as standards for judging what is normal and what is not (Phoenix, 1987; Phoenix & Woollet, 1991; Urwin, 1985).

2.2.8. Motherhood and wellbeing

Contradictions in dominant mothering ideologies create tensions in mothers' perspectives on motherhood and their mothering strategies. They often must deal with emotional tensions that arise from how they feel and behave as mothers, and how they ought to behave according to prevailing cultural beliefs (Middleton, 2006). As Akesson et al. (2012) contend, in all social behaviour, there is often tension between what individuals feel that they ought to do and what they actually do. However, Akesson et al. (2012) argue that this tension is heightened in connection with motherhood because motherhood as a social construction is heavily laden with moral attitudes and it plays a key role in shaping one's identity. Mothers who do not have adequate financial resources and access to childcare options may find it difficult to meet the demands of intensive motherhood (Middleton, 2006).

Scholars argue that while motherhood and mothering can be a fulfilling experience, for many mothers it is marred with tensions. Oberman and Josselson (1996, p.344) aptly express the tensions that are inherent in mothering experiences, as:

"Mothering can confer both maternal power and an immense burden of responsibility: the life-giving aspects of mothering may be determined by the rage and aggression it inevitably elicits: the isolation it may impose on a woman can coexist with her invitation into the maternal community..."

Being morally obligated to care for dependent children brings feelings of personal development and freedom, and also feelings of being subordinated and oppressed (Roxburgh, 1997). In this way, motherhood is often associated with negative psychological health issues such as anxiety and depression (Ryff & Selzer, 1996; Thurer, 1993). It is important to also note that nurturing and having relationships with children inspire different kinds of emotions in mothers – emotions which should be managed (McMahon, 1995). Given the fact that normative conceptualisations of motherhood often assume that mothers nurture their children within the same physical geographical space, mothers who are separated from their children through migration tend to struggle to enact emotional care across borders.

Arendell (2000, p.2) notes that, mothering experience is embedded with its symbolic connotations, which represents, "...the ultimate in relational devotion, affection and

importance.” This is partly due to cultural expectations which tend to portray women as the ultimate givers of care who must effortlessly nurture their children to adulthood (Barlow & Cairns, 1997). Such expectations may be difficult to meet and sustain, given the fact that many women participate in public life in pursuit of work and career opportunities. The rise in neoliberalism has also forced mothers to engage in productive work to economically sustain families. However, cultural expectations of child nurturance and roles of mothers can cause feelings of resentment, indifference, and guilt in mothers who fail to live up to such expectations (Barlow & Cairns, 1997).

2.3. Transnational motherhood

Migration challenges normative ideas about societal structures such as the family and gender roles (Parreñas, 2005). As discussed in the previous chapter, migration is gendered and men as well as women experience migration differently (Fresnoza-flot, 2009). This is particularly evident when women migrate across the border, in search of work or better economic opportunities leaving their children behind. This participation of mothers in independent cross-border migration brings to the fore questions about their perceptions on motherhood and mothering roles in the context of migration – with implications for normative interpretations (Andersen, 2006).

Studies have emphasised that when mothers migrate, even though they leave their children behind they do not abandon their care-giving responsibilities and obligations partly due to traditional gender ideologies (A° kesson et al., 2012; Boccagni, 2012; Carling et al., 2012; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Parreñas, 2005). Therefore, mothers often feel compelled to recognise their roles by providing acts of care to maintain intimate, emotional ties with their children from a distance, in various innovative ways (Dreby, 2006; Fresnoza-flot, 2009; Lutz & Palenga-Mollenbeck, 2012; Menjivar, 2012; Parreñas, 2005).

Consequently, the growing and relatively new area of research has now been of interest to various disciplines in the social sciences that focus on mothering experiences for women who migrate to other countries and leave their children behind (Boccagni, 2012; Bohr & Whitfield, 2011; Carling et al., 2012; Contreras & Griffith, 2012; Dağdelen, 2018; Juozeliūnienė & Budginaitė, 2018; Madziva & Zontini, 2012; Meyers & Rugunanan, 2020; Millman, 2013;

Muñoz, 2019; Parreñas, 2010; Phoenix & Seu, 2013 Tyldum, 2014). The growth of research interest on mothering in the context of migration has resulted in conceptualisations of a discursive form of mothering, known in migration literature as, 'Transnational Motherhood,' which considers the spatial and temporal aspects of separation of mothers from their children across international borders (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997, p.548). Transnational mothering strategies contests normative interpretations of motherhood which are often based on the experiences of women who have access to financial resources and can afford to share the same geographical spaces with their children (Cheng, 2004). In the current study, I consider the concept of, 'transnational motherhood,' not as physical circuits of migration per se but, as, "...the circuits of affection, caring, and financial support that transcend national borders..." including the thoughts and nurturing practices that mothers exert from a distance for their children (Fresnoza-flot, 2009; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997, p.550).

Even though research on transnational motherhood has been conducted in various contexts, countries, and regions, there are some common themes emerging, for example, economic imperatives as motives for migration, the logistics of care arrangements for children left behind the role of communication technologies in facilitating contact and intimacy between mothers and their children. Studies have also shown that transnational mothering is not without challenges. Noteworthy, is the emotional distress that mothers experience while living separated from their children, and strained relationships with their children which may be as a result of prolonged separations, sporadic visits or inadequate communication.

However, what is missing in the migration and mothering literature is the qualitative analysis of transnational mothers' wellbeing using subjective wellbeing interpretations. Subjective wellbeing interpretations of women's experiences give a nuanced account of their experiences in specific localised contexts in terms of wellbeing, aspirations, and subjectivities. Studies have highlighted challenges that are related to wellbeing, for example, the emotional distress that mothers experience due to living separated from their children. This is often linked to separation from their children while the context in which mothers live and work in host countries has not been given much attention. As will be shown in the discussion of findings chapters with the aid of participants' voices, studies have shown narrow conceptualisations of mothers' wellbeing in the transnational social field.

2.3.1. Economic imperatives

While women's migration reasons may vary, most studies highlight the fact that economic imperatives serve as the primary motivation for most women. Declining economic opportunities in less developed countries such as the Philippines, Ghana, Mexico, Ukraine, or Zimbabwe, and the demand for female migrants to work in the care industry in more developed countries like Canada, the UK, Italy, and the USA has facilitated and sustained cross-border migration of many women (Bohr & Whitfield, 2011; Leifsen & Tymczuk, 2012; Madziva & Zontini, 2012; Meyer & Rugunanan, 2020; Millman, 2013; Tolstokorova, 2010; Zontini, 2010).

Mothers migrating to economically sustain their children and families, challenge and redefine the meanings of motherhood in the context of migration. These migrant mothers emphasise their roles as breadwinners in families instead of the role of nurturing, and rendering daily care to children, roles that are often assumed to take place in close geographical proximity to their children (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Parreñas, 2005). Studies have revealed that the defining role for transnational mothering is the ability for mothers to provide financial support for their children by regularly sending remittances that can work as material provisions, and support health, as well as education needs for their children (Erel, 2002; Parreñas, 2005).

In many studies mothers do not contest the moral obligation of normatively nurturing and putting their children's needs first, but they actively find new meanings and ways of doing this in the transnational context (Erel, 2002; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Juozeliūnienė & Budginaitė, 2018; Leifsen & Tymczuk, 2012; Madziva & Zontini, 2012; Tyldum, 2014). Tolstokorova's (2010) study on Ukrainian mothers who work in Italy found that mothers sought migration, as one of the few livelihood strategies that are available, to ensure that they provide basic needs such as food and clothes to support the wellbeing of their children (Tolstokorova, 2010). However, Tolstokorova's (2010) participants also noted that remittances sent for the benefit of their children in Ukraine were sometimes misused by care givers or children themselves.

Tyldum's (2014) study on Ukrainian mothers in Italy shows that even though the migration of mothers who leave their children behind in search of work in Italy is stigmatised due to criticism in the media and the general population in Western Ukraine, women continue to partake in migration to Italy as a survival strategy to support their families who experience economic difficulties. Therefore, mothers in Tyldum's (2014) study spoke of their migration as a form of sacrifice for the wellbeing of their children. Similarly, Contreras and Griffith's (2012) study on mothers who migrated seasonally from Mexico to the USA on temporary work visas to pick meat from blue crabs in coastal factories in North Carolina, also reveals that the overriding motivation for mothers' migration was to ensure that their children have a better future and a higher quality of life, something that they were not able to provide when they worked only in Mexico.

Research also shows that while remittances are economic resources, they are imbued with symbolic and social meanings (Carrasco, 2010; Fresnoza-flot, 2009; Moorhouse & Cunningham, 2012). Remittances play a significant role in maintaining emotional ties as expressions of maternal love from a distance (Dreby, 2009; Madziva & Zontini, 2012; Zentgraf & Chinchilla, 2012). Remittances are not just monetary transactions but serve as a way of maintaining a sense of family and relations with those left behind (Carling et al., 2012; Menjívar, 2012; Parreñas, 2005; Zentgraf & Chinchilla, 2012). For example, Fresnoza-flot's (2009) study on Filipina mothers that were working in France, found that remittances are also a way to solidifying migrants' relations with the extended family, their children, and care givers. In Fresnoza-flot's (2009) study, participants sent money to children's primary care givers to be used for family celebrations or to buy something for a special family event.

Moorhouse and Cunningham's (2012)'s study on Zimbabwean mothers in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, found that remittances that were sent by migrant mothers were not merely economic transactions but were laden with emotional and symbolic meanings of love and care from a distance. Through remittances, mothers assured their children of their love and asserted their positions in families that they left in their countries of origin (Moorhouse & Cunningham, 2012). In a study on Peruvian migration to Chile, Carrasco (2010) also noted that, for transnational migrants the, "...objects sent back home are embedded in a social grammar of loss," that needs to be understood as a way of filling in the void created by migration (Carrasco, 2010, p.190). Remittances also ensure upward social mobility for

children and families that would be left in migrants' country of origin, as children are able to attain good quality education which can help them secure better jobs in the future (Contreras & Griffith, 2012; Parreñas, 2001; Zentgraf & Chinchilla, 2012). Therefore, the provision of remittances and economic necessities is highly valued by mothers and an important part of their mothering strategies (Schmalzbauer, 2004).

Noteworthy, the need to provide for their children forces women to undertake migration as a survival strategy even if it means migrating using informal/illegal routes and contending with multiple precarities of being an irregular migrant (Madziva & Zontini, 2012; Tolstokorova, 2010). Thus, the ability to find jobs, and to obtain legal documentation to be able to work, influence the frequency, methods, and number of remittances that migrant mothers can send. For example, Madziva and Zontini's (2012) study on Zimbabwean asylum seekers in the UK found that even though transnational mothers were permitted to reside in the country, they did not have legal rights to work and provide for their families. Therefore, they struggled to send money back home to their children and care givers, which was something that care givers found hard to understand (Madziva & Zontini, 2012).

2.3.2. Care arrangements

Research on transnational motherhood also highlights that in the absence of biological mothers, care arrangements are done so that children that are left behind are under the supervision of adults from extended family or trusted family friends, until such a time that they can be reunited with their mothers (Madziva & Zontini, 2012; Millman, 2013). In some cases, older siblings may take up the role to care for others in the family. Studies have also noted with concern that those who are tasked with the responsibility to manage the everyday care of children that are left behind are usually females, such as, grandmothers, sisters, and aunts, even in cases where the father remains with the children (A° kesson et al., 2012; Boccagni, 2012; Fresnoza-flot, 2009; Parreñas, 2001; 2005; 2010; Schmalzbauer, 2004). This raises important questions in relation to gender equality and normativity. While transnational mothers are contesting normative ways of childcare, these normative ways of nurturing remain the same and are reinforced in their home countries (Contreras & Griffith, 2012; Millman, 2013; Parreñas, 2001; 2010). This may also be due to gender ideologies that place women as main actors in reproductive care work (Carling et al., 2012).

Literature suggests that social relationships that transnational mothers establish with care givers that they left in their home of origin need to be well managed for the benefit of children (Carling et al., 2012). In many cases, care givers are compensated, in the form of material provision and money, for doing the work of raising children that are left behind (Fresnoza-flot, 2009). The care that transnational mothers extend to their children often extends to care givers and their families. Several studies have shown that care networks are complex and are not without challenges. Thus, problems that are related to care givers must be dealt with swiftly so that they do not interfere with the wellbeing of children.

In countries where independent migration of women who leave their children behind is frowned upon, care givers often resent transnational mothers for seemingly neglecting their mothering duties and burdening them with care responsibilities (Tyldum, 2014). Parrenas' (2010) study on migration from the Philippines, which focused on how those who were left behind perceived transnational parenting, notes that sensationalist media reports on children who are left vulnerable to social ills such as abuse, rape, drugs or gambling. Thus, this is painted as owing to that their mothers have chosen to leave the country in search of work elsewhere. But this kind of media have influenced the public to build a negative perception of migrant mothers.

Resultantly, transnational mothers are vilified in the media and public discourse for seemingly abandoning their care responsibilities and facilitating moral decadence (Parreñas, 2010). Mothers can also be vilified in host countries for the work that they choose to do, for example, migrant mothers who sell sex may be viewed as, "...bad or irresponsible mothers" (Walker, 2016, p.12). They are judged and shamed despite that they economically sustain families in their country of origin. Under conditions in which migrant mothers are vilified, it becomes easy for care givers who are left at the country of origin to criticise and stigmatise the migration of mothers as a way of avoiding their maternal duties (Boccagni, 2012; Tyldum, 2014). However, in some cases mothers are not always criticised by relatives, especially if those relatives survive on the remittances that mothers send (Parreñas, 2008).

In some cases, studies have shown that children who are left behind might develop strong emotional attachments with care givers rather than their biological mothers (Carling et al., 2012). The children left behind tend to view care givers as their biological mothers in the long

term, especially if the periods of separation are prolonged and visits are not consistent. While biological mothers send remittances and material provisions for both care givers and their children, care givers may fail to understand that at times mothers will not have enough money to remit. For example, Madziva and Zontini's (2012) study on Zimbabwean asylum seekers in the UK reveals that mothers struggled to find work so that they could send some money back home. This was not understood by care givers who felt that mothers were neglecting their responsibilities (Madziva & Zontini, 2012). It is important to note that, even if transnational mothers manage to find capable adults to take on the roles of foster mothers, they continue to worry about their children's wellbeing and often feel guilty of not being able to provide physical nurturance (Millman, 2013). They can never be sure if their children are being properly supervised, concerning, moral guidance, educational support and if remittances are indeed spent on the children (Boccagni, 2012; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997).

2.3.3. Communication technologies

To maintain contact with care givers who oversee the day-to-day care of children and stay updated about their children's lives there is need for transnational mothers to have access to communication technologies. Research on transnational motherhood recognises that communication is key in the maintenance of social relationships and mothering strategies across borders. Research, conducted in highly developed countries suggest that communication through the internet, using technologies such as Skype, emails, video calls, and the social media facilitate transnational mothering strategies (Baldassar, 2007; Carling et al., 2012; Dreby, 2006; Fedyuk, 2012; Leifsen & Tymczuk, 2012; Lutz & Palenga-Möllenberg, 2012; Tolstokorova, 2010; Wilding, 2006; Zentgraf & Chinchilla, 2012). Through the internet, technologies mothers may seek to discipline their children, ask about their wellbeing and monitor their progress at school (Carling et al., 2012). Both mothers and their children can be actively involved in each other's lives and provide emotional support to each other in an attempt to achieve what Wilding (2006, p.125) refers to as, "virtual intimacies." Constant communication is also required so that mothers get to know what material provisions are needed at the country of origin and how remittances must be spent.

However, it is important to note that due to unequal levels of development between migrant sending countries and the host country, in most cases the host countries are better developed

and have better access to the internet compared to the sending country. Furthermore, migrants often have better access to economic resources compared to their families that they left in the home country. Therefore, migrant mothers usually have the responsibility to initiate and maintaining communication (Fedyuk, 2012; Parreñas, 2001). Maintaining active transnational communication may be challenging for families that are located in rural remote areas which do not have the required facilities (Parrenas, 2005; Tolstokorova, 2010).

It is important to note that, maintaining regular communication depends on migrant mothers' access to financial resources, in form of employment (Madziva & Zontini, 2012; Parreñas, 2005; Tolstokorova, 2010; Zentgraf & Chinchilla, 2012). This determines the quality and frequency of communication between mothers and their children. According to Parreñas (2005, p.318), "...the compression of time and space in transnational communication is not a uniform condition, but a varied social process shaped by class and gender." Parreñas (2005) conducted a study on how Filipina migrant mothers and their adult children in the Philippines manage long distance transnational intimacy. Parreñas (2005) found that middle-class Filipina migrant mothers were able to regularly communicate with their children while those who were employed as domestic workers struggled to maintain regular communication due to limited economic resources. Thus, although communication technologies facilitate contact and connections between migrant mothers and their families, those who are computer illiterate and those who do not have access to technological facilities are excluded from connecting with their children and families (Carling et al., 2012; Zentgraf & Chinchilla, 2012).

2.3.4. Some trade-offs: "Negotiating Contradictions"

Scholars warn against idealising the experiences of transnational mothers (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Menjívar, 2012). These scholars recognise that there are challenges that transnational mothers face in their transnational social fields. As discussed above mothers can show a great deal of agency in their perceptions of motherhood in the context of migration. They redefine motherhood to include breadwinning roles, make use of communication technologies to achieve emotional intimacy from a distance and rely on other family members to provide every day physical care to their children. Yet when mothers visit their children back home, they often must navigate difficult relationships with their children who often feel abandoned. Mothers also must deal with their own emotional distress of living

separated from their children (Boccagni, 2012; Millman, 2013). This section discusses the emotional distress challenges that are faced by migrant mothers.

2.3.4.1. Strained relationships with children

Relational closeness and maintaining parental authority tend to fade away over time, especially if it is not complemented with consistent regular visits (Leifsen & Tymoczuk, 2008; Zentgraf & Chinchilla, 2012). Research on transnational motherhood highlights that although mothers may communicate regularly with or occasionally visit their children, relationships still remain strained (A° kesson et al., 2012; Bohr & Whitfield, 2011; Tolstokorova, 2010). The length of time that mothers and children spend while living in separate geographic spaces determines the strength of the relationship between the two.

Studies have demonstrated that transnational motherhood is marked by inherent contradictions that deeply become entrenched in the daily experiences of transnational mothers (Contreras & Griffith, 2012; Millman, 2013). Transnational motherhood is paradoxical in nature: mothers acknowledge that working in distant places is a necessity to financially provide for their children, however, it is stressful for them since they cannot offer the physical and emotional care that they wish for their children (Millman, 2013). Studies have revealed that older children tend to comprehend their mothers' decision for migrating, compared to younger children. Therefore, younger children tend to reprimand their mothers more frequently than their older siblings (Tolstokorova, 2010).

Tolstokorova (2010)'s study on the gendered effects of labour migration and transnationalism in Ukraine, found that younger children struggle to understand the economic hardships that force their mothers to live separately from them. Sometimes they would refuse to talk to their mothers over the phone because they believed that they abandoned them. Even when their mothers returned from Italy, to their homes in Ukraine, they realised that families had changed in their absence and children had formed closer relationships with their care givers (Tolstokorova, 2010). Studies have illustrated that, the strained relationship between mothers and their children is more challenging when the number of years spent apart is substantial, even if there is regular communication.

A study on the reunification of adults who were left behind in the Caribbean as children when their mothers migrated to work in the United Kingdom, reported that some children had lived separately from their mothers for up to 14 years (Phoenix & Seu, 2013). When they finally reunited in the United Kingdom, children struggled to recognise and connect with their mothers. Children had emotional struggles and guilt of leaving their caregivers whom they were attached to. Phoenix and Seu (2013, p.6) contend that, in establishing relationships with their mothers upon reunion, participants negotiated, "...strangerhood' in the process of doing or resisting, daughtering."

Similar to Phoenix and Sue (2013), Falicov (2007) argues that, despite attempts made by mothers to keep their relationships while living separately, when they finally reunite with their children, it feels as if they are meeting strangers than it being a true family reunion. This strangeness may be intensified by added life complexities. The mother may be living with another partner who is not the biological father of the children left behind, or she may have had a new child. Children may also have experienced various development stages such as puberty, adolescence or pregnancy in their mother's absence (Contreras & Griffith, 2012). Additionally, research indicates that in cases where both parents migrate and leave children behind, due to traditional gender norms and expectations that assign women as primary caregivers, children struggle to understand the reasons for their mothers' migration. They anticipate that their mothers will continue providing them with emotional care across borders (Parreñas, 2005). Although mothers remit and economically support families, their children often blame them for seemingly neglecting their roles and abandoning them (Lutz & Palenga-Mollenbeck, 2012; Menjívar, 2012; Parreñas, 2001; Zentgraf & Chinchilla, 2012).

Fresnoza-flot's (2009) study on Filipino migrants in France, found that migration status in relation to documentation determines how often mothers will visit their children. Those who were formally documented were able to visit more frequently and had the privilege to reaffirm their kinship belonging and maintain their social networks back home (Fresnoza-flot, 2009). However, undocumented mothers could not regularly visit their children, hence they tried to compensate for their prolonged absence from home by sending remittances and gifts more frequently compared to documented mothers. In addition, mothers may have to face other challenges in the host country such as lack of documentation, unemployment and xenophobic sentiments.

Nevertheless, in Fresnoza-flot's (2009) study, most participants highlighted that despite having remitted more often, communicated frequently and sent various gifts, when they reunited with their children, they struggled to connect with them emotionally (Fresnoza-flot, 2009). Migrant mothers who leave their children behind have been criticised in some sending countries (Tyldum, 2014). The media, policy makers, and educators in these countries contend that, migration of mothers promotes: anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol abuse, anxiety and depression, in children left behind (Zentgraf & Chinchilla, 2012). In a literature review that focused on transnational families in research and media articles that were published between 2004 and 2014, in Lithuania, Juozeliūnienė and Budginaitė (2018) argue that, the negative stereotypes of transnational parenting are notably gender-biased; there is a tendency of focusing too much on mother-away families than father-away families. This biased discourse portrays families where mothers migrated in search of job opportunities as an anomaly, and mothers are often accused of pursuing their own personal goals at the expense of their moral obligations of nurturing their own children (Juozeliūnienė & Budginaitė, 2018).

It is crucial to emphasise that children do not experience separation in the same way. Circumstances vary depending on factors such as the children's ages at the time of separation, their psychological development and their relationships with their caregivers (A° kesson et al., 2012; Carling et al., 2012). In cases where mothers leave their infants or toddlers behind for prolonged periods of time, these children may struggle to remember their biological mothers, except through narratives shared by their caregivers and other family members (Schmalzbauer, 2004). Conversely, when those left behind are grown up, they may experience the separation from their mothers as traumatic, when they reminisce about the times when they lived with their biological mother (Carling et al., 2012).

2.3.4.2. Emotional work

Studies conducted in diverse contexts demonstrate that transnational mothering can interfere with mothers' emotional wellbeing. Studies have also highlighted the emotional work that is involved in maintaining transnational mothering strategies and experiences (Carrasco, 2010; Juozeliūnienė & Budginaitė, 2018; Muñoz, 2019; Parreñas, 2001; 2005; Tolstokorova, 2010; Verma & Negi, 2020). Emotions work is involved in almost every aspect

of transnational mothering, it includes managing relationships with children, care givers and other family members that are left at the home of origin. Mothers often feel anxiety, hopelessness, regret, and guilt for living separately from their children. Moreover, it can be emotionally draining for mothers when they know that they cannot be physically present to monitor their children as they grow (Bohr & Whitfield, 2011; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Horton, 2009; Madziva & Zontini, 2012; Millman, 2013; Muñoz, 2019; Parreñas, 2001; Schmalzbauer, 2004; Zentgraf & Chinchilla, 2012).

Since transnational mothering is not aligned with gender normativity in most sending countries, mothers must contend with moral judgements from families, relatives, care givers or their own children (Juozeliūnienė & Budginaitė, 2018). Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) argue that when mothers embark on this radical gender transformative migration, they must cope with stigma, guilt, and criticism. Moorhouse and Cunningham's (2012) study on Zimbabwean mothers who were living and working in South Africa, but left their children in Zimbabwe, found that mothers actively resisted integration in the host society because they did not have their children with them. These mothers missed their children and found it emotionally challenging to adjust to new way of life in the host country. They explained how they experienced constant headaches and stress due to separation from their children (Moorhouse & Cunningham, 2012).

Psychological theories such as the attachment theory, emphasise the importance of the bond that mothers form with their infants as primary care givers (Phoenix & Seu, 2013). The theories emphasise that the emotional bond that mothers form with their children as they nurture and attend to their needs, is crucial for healthy social relationships as they grow (Bowlby, 1969). Therefore, disruptions to this bond in form of prolonged separation of mothers from their children, lead to challenges in relation to the child's socio-emotional development in later stages of life (Bowlby, 1969). The mother-child relationship is significant since it helps the child to develop a healthy personality and social relationships (Verma & Negi, 2020). Therefore, separation of mothers from their children through cross-border migration may be detrimental to children and mothers' wellbeing.

Bohr and Whitfield's (2011) study focused on Chinese immigrant mothers in Canada, and explored mothers' decision-making process before sending their children to China due to

unavailability of affordable childcare options in Canada. Bohr and Whitfield (2011) found that the Chinese mothers in Canada regarded their decision to send children to China as a difficult and emotionally taxing one. In their analysis of mothers' narratives, they found a recurring theme of tolerated ambivalence. Mothers acknowledged that it was painful for them to separate from their children although this was necessary, for them to be able to provide (Bohr & Whitefield, 2011).

2.3.4.3. Feelings of guilt

Studies have demonstrated that, migrant mothers' daily experiences include moral judgements that they receive, from the media, their children or relatives. They also have to constantly manage negative emotions such as regret, guilt, loneliness and despair (Carling et al., 2012; Fresnoza-flot, 2009; Horton, 2009; Muñoz, 2019; Parreñas, 2001). Parreñas' (2001) study on Filipina domestic workers, who were transnational mothers, living in Rome and Los Angeles, found that the mothers employed three coping mechanisms to manage negative emotions. The coping mechanisms were: the commodification of love, repression of emotional strains and the utilisation of regular communication methods which was viewed as reducing the distance from their children (Parreñas, 2001).

In commodification of love, mothers consciously or unconsciously overcompensated for their absence using material goods (Parreñas, 2001). They ensured to timeously buy and send to Philippines everything that their children desired for. To repress their emotional strains, mothers coped with separation through acknowledging that they could not afford to confront their feelings (Parreñas, 2001). They focused on working for their children more than nursing negative feelings brought by separation. Remaining in contact with their children using regular communication through writing letters and phone calls was used to rationally reduce the distance between themselves and their children (Parreñas, 2001).

Dreby's (2006) study on transnational Mexican mothers and fathers in central New Jersey, in the United States of America also reported that mothers expressed guilt and feelings of helplessness when they talked about their children who they left in Mexico. In Dreby's (2006) study, participants explained that they struggled to settle in the United States of America during the first few months of their arrival. The longing for their children was too profound

that it led to a loss of appetite, numerous body aches, insomnia, depression, and difficulties in concentrating on their work (Dreby, 2006).

In addition, Meyers and Rugunanan's (2020) study which focused on Somali mothers who left their children in Somalia while they live and work in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, participants described their migration without their children using terms such as: heartbreaking, difficult, sad, and emotional. They also regretted being unable to physically care for their children on a daily basis and celebrate special occasions with them (Meyers & Rugunanan, 2020). Contreras and Griffith's (2012) study focused on Mexican mothers who seasonally migrate to work in coastal factories in North Carolina, United States of America, under temporary work visas. The study found that to cope with the emotional distress of being separated from their children, some participants resorted to seeking spiritual guidance and support from local churches in the United States of America.

As noted earlier, some migrant mothers may be undocumented and this may be connected to heightened negative emotions. Thus, undocumented migrant mothers may struggle to fulfil their primary reason for their migration – to provide for their children. Being undocumented may lead to a lack of access to financial resources or reliable employment, which entails that mothers are barely able to provide for their children, they may not efficiently communicate with them or visit them at home as often as they would love to. This may compromise their relationship with their children. Muñoz's (2019) study focused on analysing oral histories of Zimbabwean domestic workers in Johannesburg and Latina domestic workers in California, United States of America. The study found that mothers struggled to meet financial expectations from their families back home due to low income (Muñoz's, 2019). However, instead of contextualising this economic failure as part of broader societal structures that are associated with capitalist neoliberal development policies, they internalised it as personal failure. Therefore, they felt guilty for being unable to provide for their children. Consequently, their children resented them for seemingly failing to meet their mothering obligations (Muñoz, 2019).

Having discussed transnational motherhood and challenges that transnational mothers face when they leave their children behind, it is important to consider the role of fathers who are in these transnational spaces. The discussion on fatherhood and transnational fatherhood

below illuminates societal perspectives, norms and values which render mothers particularly vulnerable to emotional distress and anxiety, in relation to their identities and roles as mothers when they leave their children behind. It also raises important reflections on social positions, gender roles, and normative convictions on who is responsible for providing childcare.

2.4. Fatherhood and transnational fatherhood

The concept of fatherhood or fathering tends to evoke descriptive and normative assumptions which often homogenise the experiences of fathers located in different social, political, and physical positions (Hubin, 2013). Common assumptions which often underlie understandings of fatherhood and fathering can be discerned in various studies that have been carried out in various contexts. For example, in their review of cultural stereotypes associated with motherhood and fatherhood outside the dominant North American Caucasian cultural discourse, Valiquette-Tessier et al. (2019) found that studies made five key stereotypes associated with fathers. Fathers were presented as financial providers, disciplinarians, caregivers, protectors, and moral teachers who acted as role models to their children. These social constructions were persistent in fatherhood studies despite the racial and ethnically diverse groups that were represented (Valiquette-Tessier et al., 2019).

Literature also points that understandings of fatherhood may be incomplete without a consideration of how masculinities shape meanings, experiences, and strategies of fatherhood (Hunter, 2005; Morrell, 2001; Reeser, 2010). These social constructions of masculinity are seen as diverse and fluid and detect how men are supposed to behave as fathers (Hunter, 2005; Morrell, 2001). For example, fathers are viewed as having to be authoritarian, brave, in control, protect and provide for their families. These constructions have a great influence on how fathering is conceived and practiced in different settings depending on factors such as race, ethnicity, and class.

However, literature in Europe and North America during the late 1960s and 70s, shows that attitudes to traditional fathering roles were beginning to change and men were taking up roles that were traditionally associated with women, for example, childcare and domestic chores (Wall & Arnold, 2007). This change in normative understandings of fatherhood assumed that with the increase in women participating in the labour market, involved

fathering would be inevitable and male authority would gradually decline (Wall & Arnold, 2007; Williams, 2008). However, some scholars have been sceptical about this change, noting that even though they may be changes in fathering attitudes and normative understandings, changes in fathering practices have been very slow (Dowd, 2000; LaRossa, 1988). Although fathers may now be more involved in their children's lives compared to during the 80s, cultural stereotypes continue to limit their involvement in parenting roles that they believe are meant for women (Williams, 2008).

As will be shown in the current study, roles associated with childcare and nurturing continue to be associated with mothers and other female relatives within families. Even in cases where both parents are working in South Africa while their children remain behind, it appears to be the mother who worries the most about making sure that children are well taken care of across the border. It is important to also note that participants' understandings and experiences of motherhood and mothering were not constructed in relation to fatherhood. This shows that society's normative understandings of gender roles assume that childcare is not the responsibility of fathers.

In the current study, participants struggled to maintain emotional intimacy with their children across borders and make sure that they had amicable relationships with female relatives taking care of these children. This required concerted effort and sufficient financial resources so that communication and visits across the border could be maintained. Given their low incomes in Johannesburg, mothers struggled to meet their moral responsibilities. It is also important to note that most participants were single, hence they were breadwinners and provided for their children and families. However, they still believed that mothers should be present in their children's lives so that they can nurture them and teach them societal values. This had implications for the ways in which mothers believed good mothering should look like. Consequently, transnational mothers felt inadequate, because they did not share the same physical space with their children.

In the context of migration, fatherhood takes on new meanings. Fathers learn new ways of parenting that may conflict with the way that they perceive fathering according to their culture. For example, fathering may be challenging for migrants who move with their children to settle in a foreign land due to differences in what may be considered as normative fathering

practices in the new country (Salami et al., 2017). Studies on parenting in the African context have highlighted that the use of physical punishment, such as spanking or slapping is normal in most African countries (Akintayo, 2009; Levi, 2014; Sossou & Adedoyin, 2012; Tachble, 2010; Williams et al., 2013). While many still believe in physical punishment as a way of maintaining discipline and controlling their children, there have been changes and fathers are adapting to new ways of instilling discipline (Salami et al., 2017).

While migration may result in better economic opportunities for families, it can also increase social vulnerability. Families may have limited access to, social support from their kinship networks, decent housing, and funded childcare services (Blaikie et al., 2014). Due to these challenging circumstances fathers may choose or be forced to leave their children behind in their home countries and practice transnational fatherhood. However, as will be shown later in the current study, fathers are not subjected to the same social criticism that mothers face when they leave their children behind. When fathers migrate, childcare arrangements are often made with female relatives (aunties and grandmothers) while fathers assume their traditional roles of breadwinning. The implications of fathers' migration for childcare are often not considered or have received little attention.

In a similar vein, literature on transnational families recognises that studies have privileged the experiences of transnational mothers with men's gendered experiences as transnational fathers being understudied (Parrenas, 2008; Poeze, 2019; Souralova & Fialoval, 2017). Migration scholarship has only recently started to pay attention to the role of fathers and the effects of father-child separations and their perspectives on meanings and strategies of fathering (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). The lack of interest in constructions of fatherhood in the context of migration can be attributed to normative gender roles which position mothers as associated with caring and providing emotional support to children. On the other hand, fathers are associated with being breadwinners who have to ensure that they provide for their families, often while far away from them (Hondagenu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997).

The ideology that men have to be financial providers for the family presents father absence as a part of normative gender roles, whilst mother absence is perceived as problematic and detrimental to children's growth and wellbeing (Åkesson et al., 2012; Palenga-Möllenbeck 2013; Parrenas, 2008). Therefore, mothers' migration without their children warrants social

scrutiny. As will be discussed later in this study, participants worried about how their absence would affect their children. They worried about the loss of the mother-child bond due to separation. Some participants also noted that they faced criticism from their families when they made the decision to migrate. This led to mothers experiencing conflicting emotions and anxiety about their roles in families and children left behind. As Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila's (1997:552) groundbreaking work on transnational motherhood succinctly puts it, that when women migrate leaving their children behind, "... they are embarking not only on an immigration journey but on a more radical gender transformative odyssey...in doing so, they must cope with stigma, guilt and criticism from others." Moreover, children tend to blame mothers for being away from them more than they blame their fathers (Dreby, 2010).

The growing body of literature on transnational fatherhood explores how gender ideologies, norms, and values inform meanings and strategies of fathering at a distance (Dreby, 2006; Menjivar, 2012; Parreñas, 2008; Poeze, 2019; Souralova & Fialoval, 2017). Some of the themes that emerge from this literature include fathers as breadwinners and as disciplinarians regarding their relationships with children (Mahati et al., 2016; Palenga-Möllnbeck 2013; Souralova & Fialoval, 2017). In the context of shifting ways of looking at fatherhood in high income countries, some scholars have begun to critic the portrayal of fathers as distant, uncaring, and not involved in their children's lives (Poeze, 2019). Therefore, beyond looking at fathers as breadwinners, studies have also explored the emotional impacts of living separately from their children, especially if they cannot afford regular communication and visits back home (Dreby, 2006; Schmalzbauer, 2005). For example, Poeze (2019)'s study which focused on childcare relationships and networks of care among Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands found that participants viewed themselves as good fathers when they could afford to provide material support to their children. When they could not afford to provide for their children, they perceived this as failure or as signs of being a 'bad' father (Poeze, 2019).

Mahati et al. (2016) conducted a study on transnational fathering practices of Nigerian and Ghanaian men who were living in Johannesburg while their children remained in their home countries. Mahati et al.'s (2016) study illustrates strategies that fathers employed to be involved in their children's lives beyond materially and financially providing. While participants revealed the importance of being breadwinners, they also highlighted that they

continued to provide moral support and guidance to their children. They also made use of internet communication technologies to build intimacy with their children and families left in their home countries. For example, some of the participants indicated that they prayed in the mornings with their children, they exchanged photos regularly over the phone through WhatsApp and phoned their children on special days such as birthdays (Mahati et al., 2016).

2.5. Transnational families

International migration has implications for normative understandings of families (Mazzucato & Schans, 2008; Parreñas, 2005). Migration might initiate changes in gender roles and family relationships between parents, children, and spouses (Mazzucato & Schans, 2008). This change in gender roles is highlighted when mothers migrate and leave their children behind. The change in traditional gender roles may be necessitated since fathers who are left with children would have to take on childcare roles (Millman, 2013). However, when mothers migrate in search of better employment opportunities, so that they can provide for their families, they often encounter challenges in trying to reconcile their reproductive roles with productive roles (Mazzucato & Schans, 2008).

Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) describe transnational families as families that do not share the same physical geographical space. Thus, families who are separated by state borders, yet maintaining a feeling of collective welfare and unity. Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) also highlight that these transnational families are not just biological units but are social constructions or imagined communities. When individuals migrate to another country for a better life or in search of employment opportunities, they often leave behind children and family members. However, family ties are maintained during these spatial temporal separations through mutual relationships based on moral obligations of care (Baldassar, 2007). Recent developments in communication and transport technologies make it easier for family members who are living in different states to connect with each other (Schmalzbauer, 2004). Participants in the current study can be described as members of transnational families. The concept of transnational families provides the means to comprehend the nature of interactions that participants have with their children and families that they left at their country of origin.

In the following section I discuss some of the political and socio-economic factors that encouraged emigration from the three countries that are relevant to the current study. The majority of the current study's participants came from Zimbabwe, while the rest came from Ghana, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. They were all living and working in Johannesburg while their children remained in their home countries.

2.6. Understanding emigration from Zimbabwe, Ghana, and the Democratic Republic of Congo

2.6.1. Zimbabwe

Studies have demonstrated that the ongoing political and socio-economic crisis in Zimbabwe is complex and cannot be simplistically explained, they require a multifaceted analysis (Besada & Moyo, 2008; Chimhowu et al., 2010; Clemens & Moss, 2005; Dansereau, 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006; Zamponi, 2005). Literature on Zimbabwe, acknowledges several political and socio-economic factors as instrumental for the progressive economic decline, leading to a rise in unemployment and undermining of the underprivileged within the country. However, for the purposes of the current study, I will discuss the factors that have a significant impact on the notable rise in the migration of Zimbabweans out of their country, to neighbouring countries and abroad, in search of employment opportunities, better living conditions, or political refuge. Since the precolonial era, Zimbabwe experienced varied forms of migration, it has been a country of origin, transit, and destination (Crush & Tevera, 2010; Maphosa, 2010; Mlambo, 2010).

Migration to neighbouring countries, such as South Africa was male led and dominated due to work contracts in the mining industry that favoured male migrant workers (Crush et al., 2015; Tevera & Zinyama, 2002). However, recent studies on cross border migration have revealed that there is an increase in number of women participating in independent migration since the late 1990s (Crush et al., 2015; Crush & Williams, 2005; Dodson, 2000; Gadzikwa & Jones, 2020; Gouws, 2010; Hungwe, 2015; Mutambara & Maheshvari, 2019; Thebe & Maombera, 2019). This feminisation of migration has seen women migrating from Zimbabwe for various reasons, such as seeking refuge from political persecution or in search of employment, career opportunities and better living standards (Crush et al., 2015).

Many women have become breadwinners for their families in response to household poverty and starvation (Batisai & Manjowo, 2020; Mutambara & Maheshvari, 2019; Zack et al., 2019). In recent years, Zimbabwe has increasingly become a country of transit and unprecedented emigration, due to ongoing economic and political challenges (Madebwe & Madebwe, 2017). The continuation of Zimbabwe's political and socio-economic deterioration since 1990 has resulted in increasingly complex patterns of emigration that is composed of brain drain and irregular migration (Zanamwe & Devillard, 2009).

2.6.1.1. Economic decline

Economic decline emanating from adopting some economic policies, such as the controversial land reform programme and the economic structural adjustment programme in the 1990s, affected agricultural production, access to education and health, employment, and livelihoods in Zimbabwe (Basada & Moyo, 2008; Zamponi, 2005). White commercial farmers and farm workers were displaced during the fast-track land reform programme (Alexander, 2006). This volatile macro-economic environment was characterised by foreign currency shortages and intermittent droughts, which resulted in severe shortages of basic commodities such as maize meal, hospital equipment, and medical drugs (Zanamwe & Devillard, 2009). Furthermore, the working conditions for employees including nurses and doctors, significantly deteriorated. This led many healthcare professionals to explore better employment opportunities in neighbouring countries such as South Africa, Botswana, and abroad – an emigration process that can be categorised as brain drain (Chikanda, 2010). Brain drain had implications for the developmental needs of Zimbabwe, since the quality of health was and remains compromised due to inadequate number of trained medical staff (Besada & Moyo, 2008; Crush & Tevera, 2010; Dansereau, 2005).

The Zimbabwean education sector also lost many professional teachers as they migrated to neighbouring countries due to poor working conditions and low salaries that were also affected by inflation (Madebwe & Madebwe, 2017). Thus, the current context of emigration from Zimbabwe is driven by a complex set of historical and remaining factors that are interrelated. Such factors include high levels of unemployment, informalisation of the economy, high cost of living, human rights violations, and volatile prices of basic commodities (Bloch, 2008; Madebwe & Madebwe, 2017). Due to these economic hardships, Zimbabweans

are increasingly partaking in migration as a survival strategy, to diversify their sources of income through sending remittances and other household goods (Bloch, 2006; Madebwe & Madebwe, 2017; Zanamwe & Devillard, 2009).

2.6.1.2. The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP)

In 1990, the government of Zimbabwe, supported by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund launched a neoliberal economic restructuring programme known as the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). The programme was to embark on macro-economic adjustment, trade liberalisation, export promotion, reduce government expenditure on social services and food subsidies (Dansereau, 2005; Kanyenze 2004; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006; Sachikonye, 1995). According to Kanyenze (2004), ESAP sought to achieve sustained growth and economic recovery through the following goals: a 5% growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 1991 to 1995, lower the inflation rate from 17.7% percent to 10% by 1995, raise savings of GDP to 25% and reduce budget deficit from over 10% to 5% of GDP by 1995 (Kanyenze, 2004). State-led development strategies were to be transformed to make room for market-oriented development policies, that favoured the interests of foreign-owned companies, while reducing the state's involvement in social welfare provision (Dansereau, 2005; Republic of Zimbabwe, 1990).

However, ESAP did not achieve its envisioned goals. The World Bank argued that Zimbabwe's economic growth was stalled by the lack of foreign exchange, which was generated by the primary sector alone. Consequently, there was need for the manufacturing sector to become export oriented through the liberalisation of the economy and a currency devaluation of 25% (Carmody, 1998). However, trade liberalisation exposed the manufacturing industry to stiff external competition which resulted in local manufacturers, including the textile industry, having to contend with cheaper imports from China and the diminishing real wages of consumers (Munangagwa, 2009). Carmody (1998) contend that, vital manufacturing sectors experienced a 65% contraction in production between 1990 and 1995.

Under the ESAP programme, massive retrenchments of workers took place, particularly in the public services, and the removal of subsidies on necessities (Chimhowu et al., 2010; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006). Additionally, income levels dropped due to deregulation of labour. Bond and Manyanya (2003) note that salaries for civil servants declined by 65%, for domestic workers

by 62%, and for farm workers, by 48%. Due to unemployment and high cost of living, the overall quality of life for ordinary citizens declined. Carmody (1998) highlights that, from 1990 to 1996 life expectancy, respectively, declined from 61 years to 53 years. As such, economic hardships persisted beyond the implementation of ESAP. For example, in 1998, the Zimbabwean government announced a significant price increase in basic commodities such as bread, cooking oil, sugar, and maize meal (Besada & Moyo, 2008; Hodgkinson, 2019). This was beyond the reach of ordinary people since the majority were retrenched.

In response to Zimbabwe's economic hardships, social unrest became apparent in urban areas. For instance, in 1998, the masses engaged in food riots due to rising prices and unfavourable living conditions (Besada & Moyo, 2008; Chimhowu et al., 2010; Hodgkinson, 2019; Zamponi, 2005). Workers voiced their discontent through mass demonstrations, riots, strikes, and stay-aways (Zamponi, 2005). Civil servants, including teachers and nurses, also took part in these protests, since their salaries were also eroded by high rates of inflation (Chikanda, 2010).

2.6.1.3. Land reform

Economic decline in Zimbabwe is often linked to the launch of the fast-track land reform programme in 2000. The fast-track land reform programme, was designed to redress the racially skewed distribution of land that Zimbabwe inherited from the colonial rule (Munangangwa, 2009; Zikhali, 2008). Under the fast-track land reform programme, resettlement was supposed to proceed under two models, the A1 and A2 models. The A1 model allocated small plots of land to peasants for subsistence farming, while Model A2 allocated farms to new black farmers with the resources for commercial production (Mkodzongi & Lawrence, 2019; Zikhali, 2008).

However, the implementation of the fast-track land reform programme was marked by controversy, lawlessness, and violence (Alexander, 2006; Besada & Moyo, 2008; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006). Large scale commercial farms were violently seized by the masses led by the war veterans and youth militia from the ruling party (Dansereau, 2005; Hodgkinson, 2019; Raftopoulos & Phimister, 2004; Zamponi, 2005). Farm occupations continued relentlessly, even though local courts ruled that they were illegal, and the government should immediately stop them (Alexander, 2006; Besada & Moyo, 2008). The continued farm occupations resulted

in mass displacement and migration of White commercial farmers and farm workers (Hodgkinson, 2019; Madebwe & Madebwe, 2017).

2.6.1.4. Political violence

In addition to above highlighted factors, an oppressive political environment, has contributed to a deteriorating socio-economic environment in Zimbabwe. For instance, the ruling party is known for unleashing state-sanctioned violence and intimidation on members of opposition parties and their supporters during elections, as a way of intimidation and silencing opposing views (Bond & Manyanya, 2003; Zamponi, 2005). With the overt militarisation of Zimbabwean politics from November 2017, political violence remains a major concern in the country (Asuelime, 2018; Beardsworth et al., 2019; Hodgkinson, 2019; Magaisa, 2019). For instance, when opposition parties protested unfair election processes on the 1st of August 2018, the military was deployed on the streets of Harare to manage the crowds, and this resulted in the death of six people (Hodgkinson, 2019; Magaisa, 2019).

2.6.2. Ghana

Research demonstrates that, in Ghana, migration is complex, and a prominent feature of the Ghanaian society (Awumbila et al., 2008; Awumbila et al., 2011; Coe, 2012; Nadine, 2021; Teye et al., 2019). Ghana is experiencing immigration, transit migration, and emigration, and the country embodies challenges and opportunities that are presented by these different migration flows and processes (International Organisation for Migration, 2020). The dynamic migration patterns within Ghana can be attributed to the changing global political economy and the country's political and economic situation (Awumbila, 2015). Literature on Ghana's emigration recognises that since 1980s there has been a change in migration streams, with independent women increasingly partaking in cross border migration (Awumbila, 2015; Awumbila et al., 2008; Caarls et al., 2018; Wolf & Mulder, 2019).

The early 1980s witnessed economic and political challenges which were partly caused by the government's adoption of the structural adjustment programs (SAPs), to redress some of the challenges faced by the country. However, levels of poverty increased, and inequalities were widened as families struggled to afford basic commodities such as food (Clark, 1994). The increase in poverty provoked increased migration of women in search of better livelihoods

outside Ghana to contribute towards household income. Skilled women migrated out of the country to pursue careers primarily in the health sector and secure jobs as nurses and doctors, within the global north (Aumbila et al., 2008; Wolf & Mulder, 2019). This movement of women has been facilitated by the Ghanaian matrilineal kinship system, which offers women independence and freedom of choice in their migration trajectories (Caarls et al., 2018).

Cross-border migration to other African countries and abroad, is influenced by a variety of factors such as the need to improve livelihoods through securing better paying jobs, political instability and economic decline which is inspired by structural adjustment programmes (Coe, 2012; IOM, 2020; Nadine, 2021). The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019) estimated that in 2019, there were about 970 625 Ghanaians who were living outside the country. Up to 49% of the Ghanaian migrants resided in other African countries while the United Kingdom and the United States of America were popular destinations outside the continent. However, just like other African countries, there is also significant irregular migration into and out of Ghana, making it difficult to accumulate accurate data (Awumbila et al., 2008).

2.6.2.1. Migration post-independence

After independence, Ghana's migration patterns changed due to government policies and liberal migration policies that were inspired by Pan African ideologies, which encouraged migration from other African countries to Ghana (Awumbila et al., 2008). In 1957, Ghana's thriving economy attracted migrants from neighbouring countries, as they sought better employment opportunities and improved living standards (Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003; Bakewell & Haas, 2007). Ghana, as the first country to attain independence in sub-Saharan Africa and its embrace of Pan Africanism under the Kwame Nkrumah administration, African freedom fighters from neighbouring states also sought refuge from persecution and settled in the country (Nadine, 2021).

However, Ghana's deteriorating economic conditions in the 1960s led to the emigration of people out of the country to search for employment opportunities in other west African countries, such as Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire (Bakewell & Haas, 2007). Military dictatorship and economic structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s intensified external migration as skilled professionals and non-skilled labour left the country for greener pastures (Anarfi &

Kwankye, 2003; Teye, et al. 2019). The implementation of the World Bank and IMF inspired economic recovery strategies in 1983, leading to diminishing access for the underprivileged to essential social welfare services, such as healthcare and education (Zaami, 2020).

Inflation and high rate of unemployment led to many Ghanaians from different ethnic and educational backgrounds, to leave the country in search of better living standards in other African countries and abroad. It is also crucial to emphasise that the migration of teachers, doctors, and nurses is partly in response to labour requirements of the receiving countries abroad (Awumbila et al., 2008; Teye et al., 2019). Migration continues to be a strategy that individuals and families take to sustain their families in unrelenting economic hardships within Ghana (Awumbila, 2015). As such, numerous Ghanaian migrants take on transnational identities as they manage their lives in receiving countries, to economically support families that they left behind (Awumbila et al., 2008; IOM, 2020).

Although the emigration of skilled professionals from a country is detrimental for its developmental needs; the remittances from the country's emigrants play a crucial role in the country's economy (IOM, 2020). Awumbila et al. (2008) highlight that remittances in Ghana are estimated to exceed official development assistance. For instance, in 2018, the World Bank (2019) noted that the country received over USD 3.5 billion in formal remittances. Therefore, the importance and developmental role of migration in Ghana is acknowledged by the country's stance on migration governance. Ghana is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which facilitates free movement of people within the west African region, with the aim of managing migration so that its developmental role is realised within the region (Nadine, 2021). The adoption of the country's national migration policy in 2016 also provides a framework for managing different forms of migration for sustainable development within the country (Nadine, 2021).

2.6.3. *The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*

Research illustrates that migration and displacement in the DRC has largely been caused by decades of armed conflict and political instability. The ongoing violence in DRC has sustained internal and cross-border migration. Some of the common destination countries for cross-border migration from DRC are neighbouring countries, such as Angola and Burundi

(Vlassenroot & Huggins, 2005). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2019) estimates that about 905 573 Congolese asylum seekers and refugees were resident in the Southern and Great Lakes regions of Africa, in search for protection and access to social welfare services. Literature also demonstrates that there is a gradual feminisation of Congolese migration to countries within the African continent and Europe (Azia, 2018; Schoumaker & Flahaux, 2013).

The increase in the proportion of women among Congolese migrants is often linked to deteriorating socio-economic conditions and the continued violence within the country (Schoumaker & Flahaux, 2013). For instance, the ongoing conflicts in the eastern and central regions of the DRC has forced women to seek refuge in other countries, due to experiences of sexual and gender-based violence such as rape, physical abuse and the disappearance of family members (Azia, 2018; Mulu & Mbanza, 2021). Azia (2018) asserts that, while the majority of those displaced in the DRC have remained within the country's borders, the Congolese refugee population has increased in the continent, with a steady increase in the number of autonomous women and unaccompanied children crossing borders.

Literature illustrates that the prolonged political violence and armed conflict within the DRC is a result of various factors. These factors include poor governance, weak national legislation enforcement, the presence and activities of armed militia groups. Additionally, there is direct intervention of regional powers, such as the granting of concessions to countries such Zimbabwe and Uganda in exchange for military assistance to Kinshasa. DRC also experiences competition for its vast natural resources both domestically and internationally, and ethnic tensions that are inspired by diverse ethnic groups within the country (Baaz & Stern, 2008; 2009; Clark, 2002; Moore, 2001; Samset, 2002; Vlassenroot & Huggins, 2005; Wachter et al., 2015).

2.6.3.1. Violence

A legacy of violence in the DRC was entrenched during the colonial era under the rule of King Leopold II (1885-1908) (Harms, 1983; Perry et al., 2012; Vlassenroot & Huggins, 2005:). The discovery of significant mineral deposits in the Congo Free State led to the establishment of exploitative industrial extraction practices by Belgian nationals, setting a precedent for conflict that thrived on exploitation, brutality, and slave labour (Samset, 2002). Due to the

vastness of the country, King Leopold II found it impossible to centrally govern the entire territory. Concurrently, concessions were granted to companies to economically exploit vacant lands. These companies were obliged to pay half of their profits as royalty to King Leopold II's administration (Buelens & Marysse, 2009).

The labour practices of the companies that operated in the DRC during King Leopold II's period were marked by violence and exploitation of local communities. Congolese nationals resorted to collecting rubber as a way to pay new taxes demanded by King Leopold II (Lagergren, 1970). Over ten million Congolese nationals were murdered, while others were mutilated and amputated during rubber collection operations in 1901, because they failed to meet the required rubber quotas (Casement, 1904). This brutal colonial regime was followed by military dictatorship under the Mobutu Sese Seko dispensation, which further institutionalised informal economies, economic exploitation and political repression of opposition (Baaz & Stern, 2009; Moore, 2001). Bureaucratic centralism under Mobutu's rule was employed to control natural resources such as agricultural and pastoral land, which were often used to gain political mileage and trust of local elites, as well as manage opposition insurrection (Vlassenroot & Huggins, 2005).

Under President Laurent Kabila, the political situation and state of security within DRC continued to deteriorate. In 1998, the country descended into violent conflict involving seven foreign armies and the presence of several militia groups when his former allies such as Rwanda and Uganda revolted against him (Baaz & Stern, 2009; Moore, 2001). The conflict led to hundreds of people fleeing violence and abuse of armed groups operating within the country for political and military control of resources (Watcher et al., 2015). This perpetration of violence particularly in the Eastern parts of the country displaced individuals and families from their homes, to seek refuge within DRC or in neighbouring countries (Watcher et al., 2015).

While violence in DRC can be attributed to several militia groups and armed individuals, the State army, that is, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) is instrumental in creating a violent climate within the country by launching attacks on militia groups and daily harassing civilians, mainly in Ituri, Katanga (Mai-Mai) and Kivus (Ogunnoiki, 2019). Extreme acts of terror such as rape, cannibalism, kidnapping, and executions are used

against men, women, and children (Ogunnoiki, 2019). The nature of sexual violence perpetrated on women in the DRC, left numerous individuals struggling with psychological issues, such as post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety (Bass et al., 2013). It is also crucial to consider this violence against women, in light of prevailing cultural gender norms which traditionally place women and girls in subordinate positions to male authority (Guimond & Robinette, 2014; Vause & Toma, 2015).

2.6.3.2. Ethnic tensions and militia groups

There are over 200 tribes in the DRC, making it one of the world's most ethnically diverse nations (Karbo & Mutisi, 2012). Ethnic diversity has been instrumental in facilitating the existence of over 200 tribal based militia groups within DRC (James, 2000). The militia groups are partly responsible for the country's continued political instability and ethnic hostilities. Moreover, they have been in existence because of foreign support and competition over natural resources in different provinces, such as gold and coltan deposits in Eastern Kivu and Goma provinces (James, 2000).

Since the colonial era, ethnicity is a crucial part of the DRC in influencing identities, social relationships, access to economic resources and political affiliation (James, 2000; Vlassenroot & Huggins, 2005). The divide and rule strategy, along ethnic lines, was vital for the colonisers, to repress resistance and ensure continued subordination of indigenous groups (Reno, 2006). For instance, during the civil war that saw the demise of the Mobutu Sese Seko regime, over 200 000 Rwandan-Hutu refugees were believed to have been massacred (Emizet, 2000; Moore, 2001; Wilkinson, 1997). Literature suggests that some of those who were killed were involved in the 1994 Rwandan genocide as perpetrators of violence, who fled Rwanda due to fear of retaliation from the Tutsi led government in Rwanda (McNulty, 1999; Tole 1994). Since then, militia groups have perpetrated violence and inhumane acts of terror on civilians (Ogunnoiki, 2019).). The protracted conflict, political and economic instability in the DRC has led many to seek refuge in neighbouring countries and abroad.

Having discussed conditions that give incentive to migration from Zimbabwe, DRC, and Ghana, the next section presents the area where this study was conducted. Given various challenges that women face in these countries, Johannesburg is a preferred destination for many due to perceived safety, work, and livelihood opportunities that the city can offer

(Kihato, 2013). This study is based on migrant mothers who live and work in Johannesburg inner city's Hillbrow, Berea, and Yeoville. In the following discussion, I illuminate some of the contextual factors that influence how mothers perceive and experience transnational motherhood and mothering in Johannesburg inner city.

2.7. The setting: Johannesburg Inner City

2.7.1. A brief historical background

Affectionately referred to in colloquial language as 'Jozi' or 'Joburg', the city of Johannesburg is in the Gauteng province of South Africa. It was established in 1886, following the discovery of gold deposits. Johannesburg grew rapidly as an urban centre, with major advances in commerce and finance industry (Bremner, 2000). Due to the gold rush, the mining industry attracted migrant workers from within South Africa and neighbouring countries such as Mozambique and Malawi (City of Johannesburg, 2020). However, racial segregation policies that were imposed by the apartheid government, such as the infamous Group Areas Act of 1950, restricted movements of Black people and their choices of residential areas within Johannesburg (Maylam, 1990; Olufemi, 1998). Hence, apartheid's urban policies were centred on separate socio-economic development for Black people and White people, as these racial groups were assigned to different residential and business areas (Beavon, 2000; Maylam, 1990). Black people were relegated to the city's periphery, in the townships, and often disconnected from the inner city by physical demarcations such as freeways and industrial areas (Davies, 1981; Hoogendoorn & Gregory, 2016). During the apartheid period, the central and northern parts of Johannesburg were designated for White people and the middle-class, while Black people and the working-class were concentrated in the southern areas with limited economic and livelihood opportunities (Beavon, 2004; Crankshaw, 2008).

2.7.2. Capital flight

Decentralisation from the inner city began in the 1960s, with businesses moving towards the north of Johannesburg, resulting in the establishment of cities such as Sandton and Randburg in 1969 and 1959, respectively (Crankshaw, 2008). Due to this decentralisation, commercial space in the inner city faced stiff competition with the newly developed shopping centres, forcing many companies to relocate (Hoogendoorn & Gregory, 2016). Resultantly, empty

post-industrial spaces were perceived as service industries, continued to relocate towards the north where middle-class consumers resided (Hoogendoorn & Gregory, 2016; Rogerson & Rogerson, 1995). This institutional disinvestment of business from the inner city and 'White flight' had an impact on the continued physical and socio-economic decline of the city (Beavon, 2004; Kotze & de Vries, 2019).

In addition, during the 1970s, the inner city experienced a housing crisis for Black people, and this had implications on its socio-economic development and demography (Morris, 1994). In the 1970s, for example, Hillbrow was a dynamic and youthful Whites only community, but later in the 1990s, a blend of immigrants, Black, Coloureds, and fewer White people occupied the inner city, for example, Hillbrow and Berea (Grant & Thomson, 2015; Olufemi, 1998). This growing racially diverse population living in the Johannesburg inner city was facilitated by the repeal of the Group Areas Act in 1991, which previously prohibited Black people from partaking in business and residing in residential areas that were preserved for White people (Hoogendoorn & Gregory, 2016; Olufemi, 1998). Some scholars highlight that over the years the White Flight created economic opportunities for Black South Africans and cross border African migrants, converging in the inner city and utilising the abandoned business spaces (Grant & Thomson, 2015).

2.7.3. Migrants and the inner city

Since its establishment in 1884, the city of Johannesburg continues to undergo dynamic changes in its demography, socio-economic environment, and physical infrastructure (Beavon, 2004; Grant & Thomson, 2015). Since the demise of apartheid, the Johannesburg inner city is being transformed into a hive of both formal and informal business opportunities, with both internal and international migration playing a crucial role in its socio-economic development (Grant & Thomson, 2015). In addition, the Johannesburg inner city is home to internal and cross-border migrants in search of better economic and livelihoods opportunities. Among these migrants are asylum seekers and refugees from countries such as Zimbabwe, DRC and Burundi, that are experiencing various challenges including war, violence, or socio-political unrest (Crush et al., 2005). It is important to emphasise that, Johannesburg inner city is a place of mobility and frequent movement. While some people aspire to settle some cross-border migrants may perceive Johannesburg as a transit point to

greener pastures elsewhere, even though they may reside in the city for a long time (Landau, 2006a).

Given the challenges that cross-border migrants often encounter within Johannesburg inner city, they forge ways of interacting with each other, their home countries and host community in ways which often fall outside state regulation (Landau, 2019; Landau & Freemantle, 2010). This is what Landau and Freemantle (2010, p.380) have referred to as 'tactical cosmopolitanism'. Although migrants may achieve their goals and aspirations in this way, this presents practical challenges for the city, in terms of governance, provision of public services and integration (Landau, 2019). Over the years, the city of Johannesburg has initiated several projects to transform and renew urban life in its different communities. However, Johannesburg experiences several challenges associated with current global development issues such as migration, neoliberalism, urbanisation, and socio-economic inequality (City of Johannesburg, 2020).

With a Gini Coefficient of 0.62, which is high and indicative of an unequal society in terms of economic and human development, challenges such as high levels of unemployment, poverty, lack of affordable housing for the underprivileged and social exclusion persist (City of Johannesburg, 2020). This is further reinforced by unequal spatial development with the underprivileged having to commute for long distances to areas of work and social services (City of Johannesburg, 2021). In addition, due to widespread criminal activities, some scholars have highlighted Johannesburg as one of the most dangerous cities in the world (Zack & Landau, 2021). The Johannesburg inner city is infamous for violent crimes such as muggings, robberies, and drug dealings (Crankshaw & White 1995; Grant & Thomson, 2015; Hoogendoorn & Gregory, 2016; Olufemi, 1998).

In the Johannesburg inner city, studies have revealed that migrants face challenges such as xenophobia, lack of documentation, difficulty in accessing public services, access to gainful employment, and lack of affordable housing (Landau, 2006b; 2010). While some of these challenges are also experienced by South African nationals who are poor, distinct for migrants is that their social and economic marginalisation is often due to lack of constitutional protections. Additionally, the discrimination of migrants is often condoned by bureaucrats in public offices. Some bureaucrats often invoke nationalist rhetoric to justify denial of social

services to non-nationals (Landau, 2010). Therefore, these challenges interfere with migrants' hopes, aspirations, and their ability to provide economic support to families that they left at their home of origin.

In the following section I discuss some of the barriers that make it difficult for migrants to secure better livelihoods, decent employment, documentation, and access to public services. These barriers are all interlinked and present multiple vulnerabilities in migrants' lives (Walker, 2017; Walker & Oliveira, 2015). It is important to highlight that not all migrants experience and respond to these challenges in the same way. As individuals, migrants in the inner-city experience and adapt to these challenges in different ways. As Kihato (2013, p.2) succinctly points out that, '...Johannesburg's inner city is an ambivalent place, - a site of both opportunity and lack, hope and despair'.

2.7.3.1. Xenophobia

Studies in South Africa have revealed that, women migrants are disproportionately affected by experiences of xenophobia and xenophobic violence. The social, emotional, and physical trauma that they experience is often exacerbated by their status as women (Raniga, 2019). Consequently, the intersection of different aspects of their identities, as mothers, migrants, Africans, sex workers or migration status may increase their vulnerabilities to discrimination and xenophobic violence (Mbiyozo, 2018; Mutambara & Maheshvari, 2019). This is particularly the case for refugee women from countries such as the DRC and Burundi who may have previous experiences of gender-based violence, such as sexual assault and rape at various stages of their migration process (Azia, 2018).

Research reports that although migration has always been a prominent feature of the South African economy since the apartheid era, xenophobia has become a distinctive feature of the country's socio-political landscape (Crush, 2008; Grant & Thomson, 2015; Landau, 2005; 2006b; Landau & Monson, 2008). This has prompted migration scholarship to engage widely with the causes, intentions, and manifestations of xenophobia in South Africa (Gordon, 2015; Grant & Thomson, 2015; Landau, 2005; 2006a; Landau & Monson, 2008; Misago & Landau, 2013; Zack & Landau, 2021). Additionally, studies recognise that xenophobic violence and sentiments are often directed towards Black African migrants, despite the presence of migrants from other racial groups within the country (Gordon, 2015; Grant & Thomson, 2015;

Landau, 2006a; Matsinhe, 2011). Based on their dark skin-pigmentation, often presumed to be an indication that someone is not a South African national, the Black African migrants are often harassed by the police demanding to see their identity documents (Landau, 2006b; 2010).

Some explanations of xenophobia highlight that it has similarities with the legacy of apartheid, because both phenomena are maintained by the practices of 'othering,' through racial or ethnic territorial segregation, violence, and coercive policing (Polzer, 2010). Therefore, apartheid policies reinforced notions of territory and specified who belonged to certain areas in South Africa. Hence, a discourse of exceptional nationalism is often evoked when justifying xenophobic violence (Gordon, 2015). Some scholars have sought to comprehend the occurrence of xenophobic violence and the pervasive anti-foreigner sentiment, in terms of economic challenges posed by neoliberalism, and the resultant unequal access to economic opportunities and welfare services for migrants and South African nationals (Crush et al., 2008; Dodson, 2010).

To perpetuate a discourse of othering, in South Africa, high unemployment rates, illicit businesses, HIV/AIDS, lack of access to healthcare services, poor public housing, and education are often presumed to be worsened by the presence of African migrants (Landau, 2006a; Misago, 2012). Scholars have also highlighted with concern that xenophobic violence is sanctioned by South African government officials and politicians, when they use cross border migrants as scapegoats for failed service delivery (Gordon, 2015; Landau, 2005; 2010; Misago, 2012). There is also concern that the South African government's response to xenophobic violence is often slow and it does not seem to take the need to encourage social cohesion in communities, with high regard (Gordon, 2015).

Studies have consistently documented that cross-border migrants must contend with anti-foreigner sentiments and xenophobic violence in their daily lives, (Landau, 2005; 2006a; 2006b; 2010; Landau & Monson, 2008; Misago, 2012; Zack & Landau, 2021). Over the years, South Africa has seen an increase in xenophobic attacks, for example, in 2008, there were nationwide attacks on foreign nationals which started in Alexander township resulting in the deaths of 62 individuals and displacement of hundreds from their homes (Landau, 2010; Misago & Landau, 2013).

Non-South African traders and businesses in the townships have been targets of xenophobic violence, and many have been killed or forced to leave their homes (Grant & Thomson, 2015; Landau, 2010; Polzer, 2010; Zack & Landau, 2021). Migrant owned shops have been looted and burnt down, in some instances shop owners have been injured or killed (Crush et al., 2015; Crush & Ramachandran, 2014). Research also demonstrates that law enforcement agents do not put much effort in protecting the rights of migrants. Rather the police officers in Johannesburg regularly abuse foreigners, through extortion or destroying their identity documents and blaming them for criminal activities (Gordon, 2015; Landau, 2006b; Misago, 2012).

To a greater extent, the pervasive anti-foreigner sentiment within the South African population, and lack of institutional support for migrants have implications for migrants' perceptions of belonging and integration within the South African society (Grant & Thomson, 2015; Landau, 2006a). Therefore, majority of migrants in Johannesburg tend to maintain strong loyalties with their home countries and actively resist any territorial obligations or attachments to the city (Landau, 2006a; Landau & Monson, 2008).

2.7.3.2. Documentation

Being undocumented has a negative impact on the lives of migrants. Regardless of gender, documentation is crucial for access to various services that are offered in host countries. However, consequences of being undocumented can be disproportionately dire for women. Analysing the gendered impact of the closure of some of the Refugee Reception Offices across South Africa, Gandar (2019) asserts that a lack of documentation increased women's vulnerabilities. In Gandar's (2019) study, some challenges that were faced by undocumented women were difficulties in accessing health-care services such as, routine contraception, antenatal care, and their children's birth certificates.

Studies have also revealed that women whose documentation status is linked to their husbands, in form of spousal visa, also often face some challenges, for example, lack of independence and increased vulnerability to domestic violence (Chisale, 2015; Mbiyozo, 2018). Although migrant women may have higher educational qualifications, without proper documentation they might find themselves unemployed or working as low skilled individuals in the informal sector (Batisai & Manjowo, 2020; Gouws, 2010). This economic exclusion is

further compounded by language barriers for those who cannot speak or understand South African local languages (Raniga, 2019).

Despite adopting a progressive constitution, studies have proved that South African migration policy is increasingly restrictive and marred with inconsistencies in writing and in implementation (Landau, 2010). For instance, while the 1998 Refugees Act presents South Africa with a national and international obligation to protect asylum seekers and refugees, these groups of migrants often struggle to acquire legal documentation for their protection and access to social services (CoRMSA, 2011; Landau, 2006b; Walker & Oliveira, 2015). To acquire legal documentation, such as applying for refugee status or renewing a permit; refugees and asylum seekers must engage directly with the country's Refugee Reception Centres (RROs) that are located in Pretoria, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, and Durban (Landau, 2006b).

While they await their determination of their refugee status, asylum seekers are granted temporary Section 22 Permits to ensure access to basic services such as housing, employment, and education within the country (Dalton-Greyling, 2008). Furthermore, studies have revealed that bureaucratic problems and weak institutions at the Department of Home Affairs have resulted in backlogs in the refugee determination process (Amit, 2011; Gordon, 2016; Handmaker, 2011). In addition, studies have shown that to gain access to these refugee reception offices, asylum seekers often must pay bribes to security guards and interpreters, for services that should be done for free (Landau et al., 2005; Segale, 2004). However, without money to pay bribes, some asylum seekers are forced to continue using documents that have long expired or stay without any documentation.

Therefore, the Department of Home Affairs' reluctance to deal with corruption in the documentation process means that numerous asylum seekers whose documents have expired, can effectively become illegal migrants (Landau et al., 2013; Gandar, 2019). Furthermore, Amit (2015) contends that asylum seekers often experience corruption at various stages of the application process, including the application review stage, to influence the outcome.

Moreover, research has illustrated that the status determination process is fundamentally flawed. Many applicants are often denied status based on generic reviews which do not apply to individual circumstances (Amit, 2011; Landau et al., 2013). Studies have also highlighted that some of the barriers to proper documentation or renewal of asylum permits, are fines that are prohibitively expensive, long queues at RRO, verbal abuse, failure to get leave days at work, and lack of money for travelling expenses to the nearest centres (Amit, 2015; Amit & Kriger, 2014).

Some of the above challenges are not encountered by asylum seekers only, but other groups of migrants as well who struggle to get various permits from the Department of Home Affairs (Landau, 2006; 2007). For instance, the political crisis in Zimbabwe which increased the number of undocumented Zimbabweans in South Africa, led the government to initiate the Zimbabwe Dispensation Project (ZDP)³ to document Zimbabweans who were outside the asylum system (Amit, 2011; Jinnah, 2020). However, studies reveal that only a limited number of Zimbabweans benefited from the ZDP, since most of them experienced challenges in accessing online systems and dealing with the eligibility requirements (Amit & Kriger, 2014; CoRMSA, 2011; Jinnah, 2020:). Some Zimbabweans particularly the lower skilled workers, remained undocumented.

In addition, studies have demonstrated that, for migrants, being undocumented enables everyday harassment from law enforcement agents. It is common for police officers to threaten those found with expired documents or without documentation with detention or deportation. In some cases, police officers refuse to recognise work permits or asylum seeker identity documents such as the Section 22 temporary permits, as legal documents (Kihato & Landau, 2006; Landau, 2006b; 2008; 2010; Landau & Monson, 2008). Research on migrant women in Johannesburg also revealed that, they often experience harassment from police officers who may solicit sexual favours when they are found without documentation (Hlatshwayo, 2019; Lefko-Everett, 2007; Oliveira, 2016).

³ In November 2021, the department of Home Affairs announced that the Zimbabwe Exemption Permits (ZEP) which were expiring on the 31st of December were not going to be renewed. However, a 12-month grace period was granted to enable permit holders to apply for other visa categories. This period has since been extended by another six months. Which means the permits now expire on the 30th of June 2023. This will have severe consequences for Zimbabwean families who are established in South Africa.

2.7.3.3. Employment

For many migrants, including women, the city presents challenges in terms of access to resources. Issues relating to documentation make it difficult for them to be securely employed so that they can economically sustain themselves. Without passports and permits, coupled with the scarcity of employment and xenophobic sentiments it is nearly impossible for migrants to find decent employment in the formal sector. In addition, without documentation, migrants cannot access banking services (Jacobsen & Bailey, 2004; Landau et al., 2005). Various employers require that they present their banking details for payment purposes, without which, it becomes difficult to be formally employed (Landau, 2007; Landau et al., 2005). Under such circumstances migrants are compelled to find alternative employment. As such, some migrants are forced to work in the informal sector to support themselves, families and their children back home (Kihato, 2018; Oliveira, 2016; Oliveira & Vearey, 2015; Vearey et al., 2011; Walker, 2016; 2017).

Despite the relatively simple entry into the informal economy, due to less bureaucratic formalities, this sector is not devoid of challenges. Definitions of informal work highlight several job insecurities, such as low income and absence of social security protections (International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2018). The ILO (2018), estimates that of the total workforce in the world, 60% are employed in the informal sector. With disparities within and between regions, the majority of those who make a living through the informal sector are in the developing world, with 85.8% found in Africa (ILO, 2018). Likewise, about 60% of the urban labour force in developing countries is employed in the informal sector, with workers being found in different sectors of the economy, such as the manufacturing industry, agriculture, construction, and transportation services (Van Rooyen & Antonites, 2007).

Literature on labour provides several and often contradictory definitions of informal work. (Van Rooyen & Antonites, 2007). Thus, there are ongoing debates about what constitutes informal work (Cling et al., 2010; Devey et al., 2006; Williams & Lansky, 2013). Various definitions have attempted to explain and classify the precise meaning of the informal sector, including the kind of business activities associated with it (Cling et al., 2010). Due to high rates of unemployment in urban areas, numerous individuals find work in the informal sector, as small business owners or as employees in small businesses. Van Rooyen and Antonites (2007)

distinguish two types of activities in the informal sector, which are; coping or survival strategies and unofficial earning strategies. Coping strategies involve business enterprises where workers are employed on a temporary basis, have more than one job, including unpaid jobs. Unofficial earning strategies are often illegal business activities which include crime, corruption, tax evasion, and unregistered companies (Van Rooyen & Antonites, 2007).

The ILO (1997; 1998) distinguishes the informal sector from the formal sector based on how business activities are conducted. In the informal sector, there is relative ease of entry because business relies on local inputs, it is usually family-owned enterprise, and skills needed for production are usually acquired outside the formal sector. For lower skilled labour force, the informal sector is a viable alternative to employment since there are less formalities and red tape. The informal sector encompasses three primary actor categories. First, there are individuals who own micro enterprises, where they employ only few workers. Second, there are solo entrepreneurs who both own and operate their businesses, occasionally receiving assistance from unpaid family members. The last actors include dependent workers, such as family members, unpaid workers, domestic workers who play essential roles in these informal economic activities (ILO, 1997-1998). Due to the nature of work in the informal sector, it is often associated with terms such as the black market, clandestine activities, the hidden sector, the irregular sector, or shadow economy (Chen, 2012; Van Rooyen & Antonites, 2007).

According to the ILO (2008), the informal sector can be distinguished from the formal sector based on the nature of employment and working conditions within an enterprise. Jobs in the informal sector are characterised by a lack of access to various job protection mechanisms such as medical cover and pensions (Chen, 2012; ILO, 2008). Whilst in formal sector, jobs generally pay higher wages, and they guarantee benefits such as medical cover, paid maternity, and sick leave (Rodin et al., 2012). Therefore, ILO (2002) contends that, the term informal economy refers to all economic activities that are covered in part or not covered at all, either in law or practice through formal arrangements. Thus, employers in the informal sector are not bound by any rules or legal formalities in terms of salaries or work conditions they offer to their workers.

Crush et al. (2015) demonstrate that in South African cities, the informal business activities include a variety of enterprises in services and manufacturing industry. The variety of the

informal business in South Africa include those that are survivalist in nature, while some provide employment for a larger number of people. Research reveals that in Johannesburg, the most popular activity in the informal sector is the retail business, where entrepreneurs are involved in selling different foodstuffs, such as fruits, vegetables, and cooked meals. Some informal workers also engage in hairdressing, as well as selling clothes, accessories, shoes, sculptures, tailoring, welding, and beauty products (Kihato, 2018; Peberdy, 2016).

Although the informal economy offers low skilled workers an opportunity to earn a living, cross border migrants in this sector encounter various challenges. Due to the nature of work in the informal sector, cross border migrants encounter various forms of vulnerabilities and exploitation (Walker, 2016). In a study on Zimbabwean migrant women who were working under precarious conditions in Johannesburg, Hlatshwayo (2016) found that they were being paid low wages, and had no job security or benefits. Women were unable to raise any concerns about their work-related issues due to the fear of deportation and losing their jobs (Hlatshwayo, 2016). This is particularly true for migrant sex workers in the Johannesburg inner city, who confront a multitude of overlapping challenges. These challenges include working in a generally unsafe environment, violence, discrimination, being a migrant, xenophobia and working in a criminalised sector (Oliveira, 2016; Vearey et al., 2011; Walker, 2017; Walker & Oliveira, 2015; Walker et al., 2017).

2.7.3.4. Access to public services

In 1996, South Africa adopted a progressive constitution that upholds human rights and stipulates that: South Africa belongs to everyone who lives in it regardless of their nationality (Landau, 2006a). However, cross-border migrants in the Johannesburg inner city continue to face challenges in accessing public services such as healthcare, education and affordable housing, based on their nationality and documentation status.

2.7.3.5. Health

Research on migration and health in South Africa has highlighted challenges that migrant women encounter when accessing the public health care system. Barriers to healthcare access may affect all migrants, regardless of their gender. However, women encounter unique challenges related to their specific requirements for continuous family and reproductive

health (Mbiyozo, 2018; Munyaneza & Mhlongo, 2019). Studies illustrate that migrant women and mothers encounter numerous challenges such as abuse, discrimination and being over-charged when seeking treatment within the public healthcare system (Crush & Tawodzera, 2011; Vearey, 2014; Walker, 2016). Cross border migrants who cannot communicate with service providers using local languages, are often verbally abused for communicating using English language (Crush & Tawodzera, 2011; Munyaneza & Mhlongo, 2019; Vearey, 2010).

In addition to facing discrimination and abuse, migrants are frequently denied access to services by healthcare workers and are often subjected to significantly longer wait-times in queues compared to South African nationals (Landau, 2006a). Such experiences discourage migrants from seeking medical help on time, resulting in negative implications for their health and wellbeing. Studies also demonstrate that migrant women are often treated with contempt, and encounter physical abuse when accessing maternal health care in public hospitals and clinics (Makandwa & Vearey, 2017). Seeking antenatal care and giving birth in public hospitals, and clinics has been reported to be highly challenging for migrants due to discrimination and xenophobic sentiments from service providers. These challenges are exacerbated by other contextual issues affecting cross border migrants in Johannesburg such as discrimination, difficulties in finding affordable housing, and unreliable sources of income. Walker and Vearey (2022) contend that the precarious living conditions in urban areas, marked by these persistent challenges, require an urgent need for the accessibility of mental health services within public health facilities.

2.7.3.6. Education

Although every child has a right to education in South Africa, studies have highlighted that refugee children are often excluded from public schools (Landau, 2006a; 2006b; Landau & Monson, 2008). Lack of state support in payment of school fees, transportation costs, uniforms and stationery could be the reason for exclusion of refugee children from public schools (Landau, 2006b).

2.7.3.7. Housing

Access to affordable housing for low-income population groups is a challenge in the Johannesburg inner city. Residents are forced to improvise by renting sub-divided houses,

flats, rooms, or balconies. These measures are against local government safety and health by-laws (Kihato, 2018; Kotze & de Vries, 2019). The living arrangements in which some migrants find themselves in the Johannesburg inner city results in overcrowding. Under such living conditions, it is difficult to have your privacy, exercise basic hygiene, and safely raise children. Nonetheless, living in the Johannesburg inner city provides affordable accommodation for the underprivileged, such as cross border migrants. It also offers cheaper transport costs, since it is closer to economic opportunities and most work places in the Central Business District of Johannesburg (Kotze & de Vries, 2019). However, accommodation in the Johannesburg inner city remains a challenge for cross border migrants, they are often overcharged by landlords and forced to stay in buildings which lack facilities such as electricity and sanitation (Greenburg & Polzer, 2008; Simone, 2004).

2.8. Conclusion

In this chapter I have engaged with literature that I reviewed for this study, with a focus on key topics that are: perspectives on mothering ideologies, transnational mothering, and migration issues. I also introduced the study site, Johannesburg inner city and issues that cross border migrants often encounter in the city. In the next chapter I outline the conceptual framework underpinning this study. I also discuss how the concepts of precarity, embodied transnationalism and subjective wellbeing crystallises participants' experiences, hopes, and challenges. I demonstrate how these concepts have been defined and employed within the literature and their relevance to this study. I utilise these concepts to comprehend how participants' perspectives on motherhood and their mothering roles are influenced by their physical, political, and socio-economic circumstances.

CHAPTER THREE

Conceptual Framework

3.1. Introduction

To understand how migration, motherhood, and wellbeing intersect in the experiences of transnational mothers who live in Johannesburg inner city, I make use of the concepts of precarity, embodied transnationalism, and subjective wellbeing. Using these concepts allows me to understand how migration trajectories shape transnational mothers' subjectivities and vulnerabilities in the context of several insecurities. For example, the lack of documentation, unstable jobs and livelihoods, as well as xenophobia. These subjectivities shed light on participants' mothering perceptions, experiences, strategies, and relationships across borders. While material aspects of transnational mothering such as financial support for children and families left behind are important, the affective aspects of being a transnational mother such as feelings, emotions, and thoughts are telling. They provide a useful lens through which to understand how being a mother living separately from their children shapes their wellbeing. In this chapter, I discuss in detail the three concepts informing this study and show how they are useful in understanding motherhood and wellbeing in the context of migration.

3.2. Precarity

3.2.1. *A brief history*

In recent years, the concept of precarity, together with its associated concepts such as precariousness and the precariat, has become more prominent in academic research and in the scholarship of labour (Casas-Cortés, 2014; Hewison, 2016; Kashmir, 2018; Lapinske, 2018; Motakef, 2019; Paret & Gleeson, 2016; Rosario & Rigg, 2019). However, these concepts have faced criticism from both academics and labour activists. This has led to an on-going debate about what these concepts mean and signify. Some academics are sceptical about their empirical and analytical value. Thus, they present both conceptual and methodological challenges in research that is related to labour and the global political economy (Campbell & Price, 2016; Hewison, 2016; ILO, 2012; Motakef, 2019). Some critics argue that these concepts

lack analytical rigour, as activists often use them in impressionistic ways which do not resonate with the lived experiences of those living precarious lives (Hewison, 2016; Munck, 2013).

Nonetheless, literature illustrates that the concept of precarity has been useful in illuminating that, numerous individuals across the world lack secure employment and stable income (Kasmir, 2018). Labour activists find the concept of precarity appealing because it captures the tangible realities of individuals working in precarious jobs that are marked by unpredictability of political, economic, and social marginalisation (Hewison, 2016; Siegmann & Schiphorst, 2016; Standing, 2011). The lack of stable income is linked to the adoption of neoliberal economic reforms in the 1970s in Europe, which marked a decline in Fordism as a means of production. These reforms paved the path for capitalist development, which was characterised by the privatisation of state social welfare services such as health insurance, social grants, and education (George, 2016; Standing, 2011). This highlights the subsequent social, political, and economic vulnerabilities and insecurities that are faced by those working in precarious jobs.

Despite the challenges that are encountered by cross border migrants in Johannesburg, including documentation issues and the difficulties associated with being undocumented, such as unemployment, there is a lack of an understanding on how these challenges influence transnational mothering perspectives and experiences. Literature indicates that the concept of precarity gained traction in Europe after the political and economic changes in the 1970s. These changes were inspired by the states adopting economic reforms that were associated with neoliberalism, such as the reduction or erosion of social welfare services, deregulation, and privatisation of public services (Hewison, 2016; Kasmir, 2018; Paret & Gleeson, 2016; Robinson, 2010). Henceforth, precarity is seen as an outcome of late capitalist developments, marked by a significant reduction of various state's social protection (Arnold & Aung, 2011; Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013). Consequently, precarity is often used to describe vulnerabilities, anxieties, and insecurities that were inspired by the transformation from Fordism mode of production to post- Fordism. This transformation is led by a shift from full time secure jobs to flexible part time work arrangements that do not have social protection (Kasmir, 2018).

Under Fordism, workers could negotiate with states and capital through their unions, for pay increment and other social benefits. In the developed world, the adoption of Keynesian economic policies consolidated some attributes of Fordism such as social welfare services and social protection for workers (Brett & Rossiter, 2006). However, in the context of globalisation, numerous states resorted to neoliberal economic policies which undermined labour unions and state led social welfare provisions. Neoliberalism sought capitalist development which prioritised cheaper part-time work arrangements and reduction of state responsibilities towards human development (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013; Paret & Gleeson, 2016).

The reduction of social welfare services, increasing unemployment, and precarious jobs inspired mass protests in Europe, drawing the attention of both academics and social movements (Kasmir, 2018). These social movements gained prominence particularly because they sought to make visible the struggles of marginalised groups in labour markets, such as women and migrants (Lee & Kofman, 2012; Vosko, 2010). Noteworthy is the work of EuroMayDay an anti-precarity movement which was launched in Milan in 2001, to protest the decline of the welfare state, focusing on issues such as insecure jobs and lack of affordable housing. EuroMayDay also seeks to address issues such as exploitation, migration, and discrimination for those employed under precarious conditions and have no access to social benefits, including sick leave and maternity leave (Casas-Cortés, 2014; George, 2016; Kasmir, 2018; Neilson & Rossiter, 2006). By 2005, EuroMayDay was commemorated in 18 European cities, in these events those excluded from secure jobs and social welfare provisions found platforms to voice their concerns (Kasmir, 2018).

With a focus in Europe, Casas-Cortés (2014) asserts that precarity is redefined in four distinct yet interrelated conceptual developments. Firstly, it is used in the context of diminishing social welfare services, privatisation of public services, and the gradual loss of labour rights. Secondly, it is used for recognition of the evolving nature of labour, which includes intermittent and intangible tasks. This encompasses flexible employment agreements and work that lacks formal recognition and remuneration, thus, often associated with reproductive work. Thirdly, in the context of labour migration, where precarity addresses issues of vulnerabilities which is associated with being undocumented. Lastly, precarity is used in discussions around the feminisation of labour, which refers to the increase of jobs

which were historically linked to women in terms of flexibility, total availability, and the ability to adapt to different roles, for example care work (Casas-Cortés, 2014).

However, precarity does not only refer to workplace insecurities, such as low wages and unpredictable work contracts. It also refers to a generalised state of existence which is marked by unpredictability, vulnerability, and insecurities in different aspects of life (Hlatshwayo, 2019; Waite, 2009). For example, Cruz-del Rosario and Rigg (2019, p.517) define precarity as:

“... a description of a specific subjectivity, an existential angst of living a life of ambient insecurity, strongly suggestive of the breakdown of stable social bonds and identities, and the disappearance of old reliance and reciprocities.”

According to Allison (2013), subjective experiences of precarity are significant. Allison (2013) further argues that conceptions of precarity cannot be limited to the workplace because its manifestations are evident in social life as well. Precarity affects families and individuals in such a way that people begin to experience loss of pride and self-worth (Allison, 2013). In this way precarity involves a constant struggle to earn a living in the context of a, “... life without the promise of stability” (Tsing, 2015:2). As such, for those who live under precarious conditions envisioning the future can be impossible as the present can be highly overwhelming and exhausting; it requires all the strength one can gather to survive (Allison, 2016). Socially, precarity results in the undermining of social identities, roles, relationships, and loss of social securities (Allison, 2013; Butler, 2004; 2009). Advocating for conceptions of precarity beyond those which link precarity to certain geographic regions and historical modes of production, Ettingler (2007:320) argues that precarity is, “...an enduring feature of the human condition.” It is not limited to a specific context but is a result of various processes which materialise uniquely in different economic, political, and social contexts.

However, even though humanity is the same, Butler (2009) notes that some political and social conditions create inequality such that certain groups are more vulnerable to physical and structural violence than others because of failure of the state to provide protection. For example, migrants’ lives are often precarious in multiple and reinforcing ways making them vulnerable to state violence, exclusion from social welfare services, and deportation (Paret & Gleeson, 2016). In a similar vein, Ettliger (2007:325) locates precarity in, “...untidy

geographies,” defying fixed attachments to a specific region or a particular time but evident in subjectivities (thoughts and feelings), based on real life experiences. In this study I seek to understand how precarity shapes the ways that participants perceive themselves, their social positions as mothers and the nature of relationships that are maintained with families or individuals caring for their children across borders.

3.2.2. Precarious work

Vosko (2010, p.2) defines precarious work as:

“...work for remuneration characterized by uncertainty, low income, and limited social benefits and statutory entitlements. Precarious employment is shaped by the relationship between employment status (i.e., self- or paid employment), form of employment (e.g., temporary or permanent, part-time or full-time), and dimensions of labour market insecurity, as well as social context (e.g., occupation, industry, and geography) and social location (or the interaction between social relations, such as gender, and legal and political categories, such as citizenship).”

Precarious workers are not guaranteed of any long-term employment. Hence, there are no social benefits from the employer, such as pensions or medical insurance. In this way, the risks of employment are shifted from employers to employees (Vosko, 2010). Research suggests that precarious employees are often lower skilled workers, working longer hours in low-income jobs, and have limited opportunities of accessing workplace benefits (Hewison, 2013).

3.2.3. Migrants and precarity

Literature illustrates that the concepts of precarity and precarious work are widely used in migration scholarship. The persistence of migration, globally, has highlighted the gender-specific implications within economic sectors which thrive on migrant work (Jolly & Reeves, 2005; Neilson & Rossiter, 2006; Schierup et al., 2014). This is particularly relevant, for example, in relation to female migration from countries such as Philippines and Mexico, to take up domestic work in countries such as the United States of America and Italy. Researchers have lamented the precarious nature of work that migrants take in these

countries, culminating in what is known as Global Care Chains (Hochschild, 2000; Lutz & Paleng-Mollenberg, 2012).

Scholars have emphasised that migrant mothers often entrust the care of their own children to other women left in their home countries, while they care for the children of their employers in their host communities. This situation results in what Parreñas (2001, p.364) describes as a 'deficit of care' in sending countries. In the Southern African context, there is little knowledge about how cross border migrant mothers manage their mothering roles and identities, while being employed in informal part-time jobs, or unemployed. Thus, there is still a significant gap on how precarity, due to unstable employment and livelihoods, interacts with and disrupts migrant mothers' daily living (Allison, 2012). A common issue of concern in numerous migration studies, is a challenge of restrictive immigration policies in receiving countries. This challenge makes it difficult for migrants to regularise their stay in host countries. Failure to obtain legal identity documents and work permits affects migrants' lives in various ways. With a precarious legal status, migrants resort to working in the grey economy. In the grey economy, they often face exploitation in form of discrimination based on their nationality, low wages, unpredictable work contracts, and lack of legal as well as social protection (Casas-Cortés, 2014; Paret & Gleeson, 2016). Casas-Cortés (2014, p.218) argues that:

"...being illegal exponentially multiplies the intensity of two of precarity's main traits: uncertainty and vulnerability. Every activity, every space becomes unsafe and potentially risky – from the initial journey, to finding a job, to everyday activity at the workplace or at the new home, to communication with family abroad. This proliferation of uncertainty transforms precarity into something that concerns overall existence..."

Furthermore, precarity has been used to illuminate multiple vulnerabilities that tend to reinforce each other, such as lack of documentation, deportation, exclusion from public services, xenophobia, and discrimination (Paret & Gleeson, 2016). Therefore, undocumented migrants can be understood as an embodiment of precarity due to their lack of legal protection, vulnerability to exploitation at work, and xenophobic experiences (Hewison, 2016; Neilson & Rossiter, 2006; Schierup et al., 2014; Standing, 2011).

Migration scholarship is increasingly paying attention to parenting experiences of migrants in host communities as well as in the transnational social field for those who have left their children in their home countries (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011; Poeze, 2019; Souralova & Fialoval, 2017). In this section I discuss understandings of parenting and show how a consideration of parenting styles and strategies illuminate ways in which mothers assume their mothering roles and identities in the context of migration. This will also bring to the fore the physical and social contexts from which mothers enact their mothering strategies. Consequently, this will explain how some parenting responsibilities or styles may be difficult to implement for those living and working in precarious circumstances. The discussion on mothering and precarity follows after the discussion on parenting.

3.2.4. Parenting through precarity

Literature on parenting shows that parents and care givers play a crucial role in the lives of children by fundamentally shaping their cognitive and socio-emotional development (Bornstein, 2019; Ulferts, 2020). For instance, research has shown that responsive parenting has an enduring effect on children's overall health, behavioural functioning, and educational success (Salami et al., 2017; Thompson, 2014). Spera (2005) notes that studies on parenting in different contexts have used the terms parenting style and parenting practice interchangeably to mean a set of parental behaviours and actions to socialise children within a set of environmental circumstances. These actions include communication styles, assertion of control, efforts to develop children's life skills, and instilling discipline (Spera, 2005).

However, the above parenting strategies imply that parents should be co-resident with their children. These forms of parenting assume that the continued presence of parents in their children's lives is important for their later development into adulthood. However, as the current study will show in the following chapters, due to migration in search of work and better livelihoods, parents may be forced to leave their children behind. In this way parents find creative ways to stay engaged in their children's lives, through for example, WhatsApp or regular phone calls. However, this may not be always possible because communication or paying regular visits requires sufficient financial resources. When parents are employed in precarious jobs, keeping in touch with their children may be problematic. For example, most

participants in the current study indicated that they only visited their home countries once a year and only communicated through regular phone calls as much as the funds could allow.

Important parental constructs can also be discerned from the literature such as, "...parental involvement, parental monitoring: and parental goals, values, and aspirations" (Spera, 2005:127). Parents' goals and aspirations often motivate them to assume a particular style of parenting to achieve the desired outcomes. For example, for better performance at school, parents may help their children with homework and by teaching them at home. However, the parenting approaches adopted by parents are dependent on several contextual, socio-economic, and individual factors (Ulferts, 2020). These include culture, gender of children or parents as well as the personality of both parents and children (Ulferts, 2020). These expectations on parenting can be very difficult to maintain for migrants who live in precarious circumstances. Parents may not be sufficiently involved in raising their children, as they wish. However, as will be shown later in the current study, parents tried to stay involved in their children's lives especially in terms of fulfilling their children's educational goals. Participants tried to keep in touch with teachers back home so that they could track how their children were progressing in their schoolwork. In addition, their goals and aspirations revolved around making sure that their children had the best education possible and excelled at school.

Literature shows that there are two broad approaches to parenting namely: a categorical approach that distinguishes different parenting styles and a dimensional approach which describes parenting approaches across different dimensions (Ulferts, 2020). The categorical approach describes parental styles across the two dimensions namely as parental responsiveness which describes, "...the quality of parent-child interactions as accepting, supportive, sensitive, and warm" (Ulferts, 2020:11). Parental demandingness describes "...the quality of parental discipline and control as consistent and demanding children's maturity" (Ulferts, 2020:11). These two dimensions of demandingness and responsiveness are used by the classical parenting style framework to group parents into four parenting styles namely.

The four parenting styles according to classical parenting style are: a) authoritative parents – who are both demanding and responsive. They set reasonable rules which align with children's abilities. They are also clear on their positions, and they are willing to discuss their expectations with children. b) Authoritarian parents – are demanding but they are not

responsive. They demand obedience and they are not willing to consider children's needs by way of, for example, interactive dialogue. As such they have distant and disengaged relationships with their children. c) Permissive parents – they are responsive yet not demanding. They make few demands, provide little guidance, and do not expect these guidelines to be followed. d) Neglectful parents – they are neither responsive nor demanding. They are often emotionally detached from their children and offer very little supervision and guidance (Ulferts, 2020: 11- 12).

The dimensional approach uses aspects of parenting as descriptors of the parenting approach (Power et al., 2013). However, it is important to note that parenting approaches and styles are dependent on various factors, for example, changing cultural norms, values and expectations. They are also dependent on support of the family and the wider community, and the role of children as active participants in parenting practices not just passive recipients of the demands from parents (Lei et al., 2018; Rodrigo, et al., 2014; Ruiz-Hernández et al., 2019). In the case of transnational mothers, living and working in precarious circumstances, these parenting approaches can be difficult to implement. I discuss in detail below how precarity shapes motherhood perceptions, strategies, and experiences of migrant mothers.

3.2.5. Migrant mothering and precarity

In migration studies, there is a growing body of research that seeks to explore and understand how precarity shapes migrant women's lives, particularly in relation to motherhood, mothering experiences and strategies (Benchekrone, 2023; Chakkour & Koning, 2023; Lanari, 2023; Madziva & Zontini, 2012; Ramsay, 2017; Shobiye & Parker, 2023; Suerbaum, 2023). These studies have sought to explore how precarity affects the lives of migrant women who identify as mothers in the context of neoliberalism where jobs are scarce, sources of income are unreliable and access to social welfare services is limited or non-existent (Lijnders, 2023; Madziva & Zontini, 2012; Shobiye & Parker, 2023). According to Erel and Reynolds (2018), this is because mothers are more likely to be the primary care givers to their children and being a mother creates moral obligations and responsibilities that can be difficult to fulfil when one is marginalised socially and economically.

Literature shows that the above challenges are compounded by the fact that many migrants across the world are affected by restrictive immigration policies which make it difficult for

international or cross border migrants to access legal documentation. For instance, studies have engaged with the concept of, 'legal precarity.' Legal precarity is defined as the condition marked by temporal uncertainty, opaque, and cumbersome bureaucratic procedures when attempting to secure legal identity documents, resulting in migrants experiencing an array of insecurities in various aspects of their lives (Chakkour & Koning, 2023; Ramsay, 2020; Shobiye & Parker, 2023). This has implications for migrants' aspirations and hopes because it becomes difficult to plan while living in limbo with unsettled legalities (Chakkour & Koning, 2023; Stevens, 2019). Consequently, legal precarity entails increased vulnerability to social and economic challenges and the possibility of being detained or deported (Butler, 2012; Canning 2020).

Research shows that precarity profoundly shapes the experiences of motherhood and mothering strategies for migrant mothers who are asylum seekers in various ways. For instance, mothers' moral responsibility to nurture and socialise their children may be undermined in the context of bureaucratic huddles to access documentation. The emotional work of socialising children in a foreign land where they are constantly being discriminated upon and excluded from social services, shapes migrant mothers' experiences of motherhood. This is compounded by that when mothers do not have legal documentation it also affects their children who often struggle to secure birth certificates and identity documents (Suerbaum, 2023). This undermines their roles and identities as mothers because it invites ongoing critical self-reflection on, 'acceptable' mothering roles and identities.

Suerbaum's (2023) study on how legal precarity affected mothering practices for migrant mothers who were asylum seekers in Berlin, argues that failure to access documentation has far reaching implications for mothers' sense of identity and the relationships that they have with their children. Participants considered their struggle to secure documentation for themselves and their children as personal failure rather than attributing this to structural institutions and bureaucratic huddles within the asylum system. As such, the migrant mothers engaged in constant critical self-reflection in relation to their mothering roles and strategies (Suerbaum, 2023).

In Suerbaum's (2023) study transnational mothers' self-reflections manifested as feelings of self-doubt and anxieties that often created, "...situations in which mothering becomes an

almost unbearable challenge.” Without legal documentation migrant mothers become vulnerable to many challenges including loss of jobs or livelihoods, exploitation at work, deportation, and exclusion from public services. These challenges also affect their children because exclusion from public services may mean that their own children also do not have access to education or health services. As Dewey et al. (2018) point out, the ability to be present and care for one’s children plays a significant role in women’s aspirations, identities, and maternal subjectivities. As such failure to care for one’s children under precarious conditions may be frustrating and detrimental to mothers’ mental health and wellbeing (Dewey, et al 2018).

However, it is important to note that migrant mothers are not always victims or passive in situations where they experience legal precarity. For example, Lanari’s (2023) study on a group of legally precarious Latina mothers who were living in Atlanta, Georgia in the United States of America, shows that migrant mothers exercised resistance strategies for their children in the context of institutionalised racism and discrimination against migrant children in public schools. These mothers creatively responded to discrimination against their children in schools in various ways. For example, to counter forms of exclusion in schools, mothers became actively involved in activities done in schools and helped their children to learn the English language so that they could communicate better at school. The mothers also took up jobs within the schools so that they could be in a position to help Latinx students who were unfamiliar with the school system (Lanari, 2023).

Noteworthy, migrant mothers play a crucial role to socialise their children in host communities, in ways that children can integrate into the host society and contribute meaningfully to its development. While this is important, migrant mothers are also confronted with the moral responsibility of socialising children into their own indigenous culture (Chakkour and Koning, 2023). Mothering under such contradictory moral responsibilities can be frustrating for migrant mothers and their children, especially when they have precarious documentation, and the future is uncertain. For mothers who have left their children under the care of husbands or family relatives in their home countries, being undocumented means that family reunification may be impossible, or it may take a very long time (Lijnders, 2023; Madziva & Zontini, 2012).

Bencheckroun (2023) conducted a study on migrant mothers from Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Southeast Asia with insecure immigration statuses in the UK. Bencheckroun's (2023) study notes that the mothers engaged in 'strategic mothering work.' In this form of mothering, mothers strived to perform their roles in four key areas: to provide food and shelter for their children, to protect their children from knowing the implications of having an insecure migration, actively nurturing children to become good citizens in the host country, and being aware that care between the mother-child relationship is a reciprocal process (Bencheckroun, 2023: 3332).

In South Africa migrant women who find themselves living and working in uncertain marginal environments find it difficult to navigate these complex spaces while, "...embodying multiple identities..." for example as wives and as mothers (Hiralal, 2017: 162). Walker et al.'s (2017) study explored migrant women who embodied multiple identities as single mothers, sex workers, and asylum seekers in Johannesburg. The study found that these mothers experienced, "...intersecting vulnerabilities associated with gender norms, race, and nationality... which manifest as abuse, discrimination, criminalisation, and multiple levels of structural and direct violence..." In addition to these challenges, participants felt that they were, 'bad mothers' for engaging in sex work. They were stigmatised by their families for being single mothers and sex workers. Consequently, they internalised this stigma and viewed themselves as women who were not good enough to be mothers. This is despite earning a living and financially sustaining their children through sex work (Walker et al., 2017).

Furthermore, Walker's (2018) study focused on migrant mothers from the DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, and Angola who were asylum seekers living in Johannesburg. In this study, Walker (2018) notes that being a mother and having the responsibility to care for children was stressful for participants. Being a mother in the context of limited structural support shaped most of their vulnerabilities and experiences. It proved to be, "...an everyday burden" (Walker, 2018:351). Having dependants and struggling to provide them with food and decent housing due to lack of jobs was a daily struggle (Walker, 2018).

3.2.6. *Precarity as ontological orientation*

Although understanding precarity from the perspective of work and labour struggles offers valuable insights, it does not fully capture the lived experiences of individuals who are enduring precarious conditions. By framing it as an ontological position, precarity serves to conceptualise social marginalisation and lives that are characterised by pervasive vulnerability, insecurity, and displacement (Kasimir, 2018). As such, the experience, and dimensions of precarity do not only pertain to insecure jobs but to also issues relating to socio-economic development, such as access to affordable housing, social rights, health, food security, and welfare provision (Allison, 2013; Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013; Trimikliniotis et al., 2016). Thus, the evidence of precarity in everyday lives is caused by different political, economic, and cultural processes (Ettlinger, 2007).

Aspects of precarity also include the affective domains of human life, namely the subjective, and emotional experiences (George, 2016). In the affective domain, precarity is manifested in strained personal and interpersonal, relationships, where social identities and roles are undermined by insecure jobs and incomes (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013). Due to the nature of precarious work, which is characterised by long working hours, there is hardly enough time to build meaningful social relationships (Cruz-Del Rosario & Rigg, 2019). Focusing on Japan, Allison (2013) argues that precarious work affects workers' psychosocial lives, because they lose their self-worth and pride when they fail to support their families.

Similarly, research on precarity among Mexican agricultural workers in Canada, Hennebry (2014) asserts that due to the nature of employment for these workers, they cannot afford to visit their families in Mexico, even if there is a family crisis or tragedy such as death or illness of a loved one. Their personal time and mobility are controlled by external forces, such as their employers, the availability of jobs and the need to earn a living (Neilson & Rossiter, 2006). Seemingly, precariously employed migrants have little to no control of their own personal time (Hennebry, 2014).

Bulter (2006) argues that precarity is experienced by the poor and marginalised, who are often exposed to vulnerable circumstances such as violence, forced migration and economic insecurities. These vulnerabilities and insecurities cannot be entirely attributed to

neoliberalism itself but can be seen as outcomes of transhistorical and existential processes (Kasmir, 2018). Ettliger (2007, p.324) concurs by saying:

"An expansive and multidimensional view of precarity beyond terrorist events and regimes of accumulation locates precarity in the micro-spaces of daily life, in the spaces in which individuals think and feel and interact."

In my current study, I consider precarity as an existential state which is characterised by anxieties and insecurities in various life aspects, resulting from marginalised livelihood strategies and informal work (Cruz-del Rosario & Rigg, 2019; Ettliger, 2007; Hlatshwayo, 2019; Masenya et al., 2017; Waite, 2009). In this way I perceive precarity as ongoing uncertainty, various forms of vulnerability, and daily struggles that mothers experience due to precarious circumstances in Johannesburg. Framing precarity in this way allows me to secure more intimate descriptions of mothering experiences by highlighting their perspectives on displacement and feelings of vulnerability, such as anxiety and despair in relation to the future (Allison, 2016).

3.3. Embodied transnationalism

Research on migration is increasingly engaging with the concept of transnationalism in different ways. Although the use of the term gained popularity in the early 90s, literature acknowledges that it is not a new concept (Carling & Collins, 2018; Sheringham, 2010). Some scholars assert that the existence of early transnational ties that are being witnessed were due to labour migration, like European migrants in Australia or Mexicans and Asians in the United States of America (Collins, 2009; Nguyen, 2020a; Portes et al., 1999). However, the contemporary utilisation of transnationalism as a framework for understanding cross border migration, is associated with the processes of globalisation (Nguyen, 2020a). Research indicates that advancements in communication technologies and transportation systems have enabled transnational connections in various aspects of migrants' lives, rendering sedentary understandings of the nation-state less tenable (Collins, 2009; Nguyen, 2020a). This highlights that migration is not a simple linear process which is marked by points of departure, settlement, and assimilation, rather it is marked by complex personal, social, political, and economic processes (Collins, 2009; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Lloyd, 2013; Smith, 2005:).

According to Basch et al. (1994, p.6) transnationalism refers to, " ...the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement." These transnational connections are materialised through sustained migrants' daily activities, within their social networks and various multinational organisations (Nguyen, 2020a). However, the application of transnationalism as a framework for comprehending international migration has not been immune to criticism. Scholars have expressed several concerns regarding its effectiveness. For instance, they contend that earlier research on transnationalism lacked a strong empirical basis and tended to over emphasise mobility and its potential for emancipation (Collins, 2009; Dunn, 2010).

Research on transnationalism has given limited attention to that some migrants integrate and settle in the host country, while others have minimal interaction with their home countries (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997). Allon and Anderson (2010) also demonstrate that much of the work on transnationalism is somewhat abstract and tends to lean more on economics, rather than social and political processes that are involved in cross border migration. Resultantly, in host countries migrants are often viewed as 'engines' of economic growth, associated with remittances and evaluated based on being innovative in the labour market (Nguyen, 2020b, p.2).

Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) also assert that studies that previously adopted transnationalism as an analytical tool, particularly those in population studies, fail to engage with gender as a political construct, but engage with it as a variable. This demonstrates that there is little attention on how gender as a political and social construct organises women migrants' lives. A primary concern which is frequently raised in the framing of transnationalism in most studies is the overwhelming feeling of being 'dis-embodied,' signifying a lack of physical bodily presence and tangible places (Allon & Anderson, 2010, p.12).

Therefore, there has been a neglect of more mundane and affective everyday activities of transnationalism, which could offer useful insights into the experiences of migrants and their relationships with family and friends (Allon & Anderson, 2010; Collins, 2010; Nguyen, 2020a; 2020b; Sheringham, 2010). Yet, transnationalism is essentially an embodied phenomenon

(Allon & Anderson, 2010; Dunn, 2010; Nguyen, 2020b). Collins (2010, p.52) argues that by emphasising different embodiments of transnationalism:

“...we can then recognise the often-overlapping experience of friction and freedom in transnational lives, the pleasure and pain of living between places, and the mundane and not so mundane ways that people negotiate life in transnational spaces.”

As such, embodied transnationalism, to some extent, remedies some of the shortcomings of transnationalism that are outlined above. Dunn (2010) argues that, adopting an embodied approach to transnationalism provides nuanced insights into migrants’ desires, needs, and experiences. In addition, it brings attention to the sensory and emotive elements of movement. These intimate transnational articulations emphasise the importance of emotions in the context of cross border migration (Sheringham, 2010). In other words, emotions ‘...reveal the complexity of migrants’ engagement with the world,’ and draws attention to migrants’ social relationships and the ensuing transnational subjectivities (Dunn, 2010; Nguyen, 2020b, p.7).

Embodied transnationalism is crucial in comprehending the emotions and feelings involved in experiences of transnational motherhood and mothering. It is important to emphasise that while mothers are focused on providing for their children by ensuring that, they afford them decent education in their home countries, they also must cater for their own needs in Johannesburg. I adopted the concept of embodied transnationalism to understand the daily experiences of transnational mothers, and how they articulate their emotions, aspirations, needs, and fears in relation to mothering across borders.

Nguyen (2020b) illustrates that examining the intersections of the macro contextual conditions that influence migration, such as the political and economic environments, and micro-level conditions such as personal circumstances and familial relationships, is crucial in comprehending the embodied experiences of transnationalism. Braidotti (1994, p.4) argues, that, “ ...the body, or the embodiment, of the subject is to be understood as neither a biological nor a sociological category, but rather as a point of overlapping between the physical, the symbolic, and the sociological.” This is important in understanding the influence of structural contexts on daily activities of transnational mothers in Johannesburg.

3.4. Subjective wellbeing

Research on wellbeing has increased over the years due to its instrumental role in improving quality of life in different societies (Das et al., 2020; Diener, 2006; Dodge et al., 2012; Eckersley, 2014; Forgeard et al., 2011; Muhammad et al., 2021). Although the concept of wellbeing is presented in the literature as both objective and subjective, research demonstrates that it is a complex multidimensional construct that is difficult to define and measure (Pollard & Lee, 2003; Thomas, 2009). Therefore, scholars that are concerned with progress and life satisfaction for individuals, countries, or regions, have sought to investigate the concept of wellbeing's various dimensions in different social contexts.

In relation to subjective wellbeing, literature suggests that the concept has primarily been used in the disciplines of psychology and public health. However, numerous disciplines are increasingly engaging with the concept of subjective wellbeing to display the significance of personal and community welfare in human development (Das et al., 2020). In migration studies, subjective wellbeing has been adopted in both quantitative and qualitative studies, to highlight contextual and structural factors that influence migrants' quality of life in host communities (Guedes Auditor & Erlinghagen, 2021; Liu et al., 2019; Peng et al., 2015; Stawarz et al., 2021). However, studies on transnational families tend to focus on migrants in developed countries, with a particular emphasis on the experiences of children who are left behind when one or both parents migrate. There is relatively less attention given to the determinants of subjective wellbeing on transnational mothers, particularly in the Southern Africa context. In my current study, I employ the concept of subjective wellbeing to explore how and to what extent the migration project has been rewarding in relation to participants' goals, values, and roles as transnational mothers in Johannesburg inner city.

3.4.1. *Defining subjective wellbeing*

Diener et al. (2002, p.63) define subjective wellbeing as:

"...a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life. These evaluations include emotional reactions to events as well as cognitive judgements of satisfaction and fulfilment... a broad concept that includes experiencing pleasant emotions, low levels of negative moods, and high life satisfaction."

Diener et al.'s (2002) approach is based on the notion that, the general satisfaction with life can be reported by individuals themselves, and be measured through subjective evaluations (Madonia et al., 2013). These subjective judgements might be about life in general or specific domains, such as work, marriage, or income. Moreover, Diener et al. (2002) emphasise how the personal fulfilment of life goals increases subjective wellbeing in individuals and communities (Diener et al., 2003; Madonia et al., 2013).

Literature demonstrates that subjective wellbeing is closely related and often used synonymously with concepts such as, quality of life and happiness (Camfield & Skevington, 2008; Diener et al., 2003). Quality of life refers to the extent to which people find their lives pleasant, or how societies create favourable conditions of life in the socio-economic and cultural environments. Thus, conditions that are critical to the realisation of people's physical and mental wellbeing (Eckersley, 2014). Therefore, quality of life closely relates to subjective wellbeing, because it can be measured both objectively and subjectively. Consequently, subjective wellbeing can be employed to complement other quality of life measures, such as the Gross National Product (GNP), health, and crime statistics (Diener & Suh, 1997).

There are two approaches that can be discerned from literature on how to investigate subjective wellbeing, and these are thus: the hedonic approach and the eudemonic approach. The hedonic approach seeks to understand and measure the individual's own feelings and emotions (Das et al., 2020; Deeming, 2013). For example, cases or events where people experience anxiety, fears, happiness, or contentment. The eudemonic approach is, "...sometimes referred to as the psychological functioning or flourishing approach, that focuses on self-determination theory and taps into our sense of purpose and meaning in life..." (Deeming, 2013, p.542). This includes an examination of how achievement of certain goals influences a person's subjective wellbeing. For example, an individual experiences an increase in subjective wellbeing, when they are making notable progress towards attaining valued goals (Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Diener et al., 2002).

3.4.2. *Determinants of subjective wellbeing*

Components of subjective wellbeing include both affective and cognitive dimensions. According to Diener et al. (1999, p.278), they involve, "...people's emotional responses,

domain satisfactions, and global judgements of life satisfaction.” The affective aspect of subjective wellbeing is concerned with emotional judgments that individuals make about their lives, such as expressions of fear, anxiety, or anger. It is crucial in my current study’s context, to understand the emotional work that is involved in enacting mothering strategies across borders. The cognitive aspect considers mental judgments that individuals use to evaluate their satisfaction with their own lives (Diener et al., 1999). This assessment is dependent upon a person’s comparison of their circumstances, to what they think is their personal ideal standard (Diener et al., 1985).

It is crucial to highlight that when individuals assess their own wellbeing, they often draw upon experiences that they perceive as significant. These judgments are often based on their cultural orientation. For instance, while in individualistic cultures, individuals tend to emphasise their emotions in collectivist cultures, individuals lean more on external factors such as norms and societal obligations that shape normative behaviours to determine their life assessments (Suh, 2000; Suh et al., 1998). According to Das et al. (2020) numerous studies that use subjective wellbeing as an explanatory framework, often regard factors that may potentially influence personal orientation. These factors include fulfilment of personal goals, personal needs, or emotions as determinants of subjective wellbeing. Das et al.’s (2020) interdisciplinary review on how subjective wellbeing has been studied both theoretically and empirically, they illustrate that determinants of subjective wellbeing fall into seven categories. These are: socio-economic status, basic demographics, health and functioning, personality, religion and culture, geography and infrastructure, and social support (Das et al., 2020, p.31).

Similarly, Liu et al.’s (2019) study examined the subjective wellbeing of elderly Chinese internal migrants and local residents in Dongguan City of Guangdong province, China. Liu et al.’s (2019) study identified several factors that were perceived as determinants of subjective wellbeing. These included physical and mental health status, family relationship and harmony, physical environment of the living area, social relationships and activities, community and government support, pensions, and health care services with health insurance (Liu et al., 2019, p.5-10). These determinants centred on the elderly’s most valued needs and their main reasons for migration (Liu et al., 2019). Boarini et al. (2012) examined the determinants of subjective wellbeing in countries who are members of the Organisation

for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In their study, they used factors such as income and wealth, health status, jobs and earnings, housing, social connections, environmental quality, and personal security (Boarini et al., 2012, p.10).

In my current study, I will use the concept of subjective wellbeing to illuminate participants' goals and values in relation to their migration projects, their mothering roles, and strategies. I will also use the concept of subjective wellbeing to highlight participants' expectations pre and post migration, particularly in terms of access to economic resources. As will be shown in the following chapters participants' priorities are in the aspirations and future plans for themselves and their children. I will also show that exploring the determinants of subjective wellbeing in participants' stories, highlights how societal structures such as culture, migration policy and neoliberalism shape their mothering experiences. Furthermore, participants' thoughts and feelings will demonstrate how gender norms influence their perspectives on motherhood and their roles in families. The next chapter deals with the methodology adopted for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

4.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I outlined the conceptual framework that informed this study. In this chapter I present the methodology that I adopted, with a focus on sampling techniques used, participants' demographics, ethical considerations, conducting serial interviews, participant observations, and data analysis. I also discuss my ontological and epistemological orientation as informed by constructivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Schwandt, 2000) and matricentric feminism (O'Reilly, 2019).

4.2. Qualitative research

To understand the subjective nature of experiences and perspectives on transnational motherhood and mothering, I adopted a qualitative research approach. This approach prioritises multiple social constructions of reality and is ideal for exploring complex interpersonal social structures and relationships (Hesse-Baber & Leavy, 2011; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Qualitative approach is appropriate because women may have various interpretations and values concerning transnational motherhood. As such the aim of this study was not to simplify participants' life experiences but to understand their subjective interpretations within their complex realities (Punch, 2014). Unlike quantitative research, in qualitative research, "...researchers believe that the researcher's ability to interpret and make sense of what he or she sees is critical for understanding any social phenomenon... the researcher is an instrument" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p.135). This entails that researchers cannot be entirely detached from the research process, because their own subjectivities, socio-economic backgrounds, and life experiences influence how they interact with participants and interpret data (Probst, 2015).

4.2.1. *Constructivism*

It is crucial to emphasise that qualitative research approach is not homogeneous. In qualitative approach, there are numerous research paradigms that are differentiated by

ontological and epistemological assumptions, such as post-positivism, critical theory, feminist theory, or constructivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; 2005; Punch, 2014). In my current study, my philosophical assumptions are informed by constructivism. I understand reality as relative social constructions which are multiple, fluid, and often in conflict with each other (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Schwandt, 1998; 2000).

Schwandt (2000) argues that the basic assumption of the constructivist paradigm is that knowledge is socially constructed by people who are involved in the research process, and researchers should strive to understand the lived realities of participants from their own perspectives. My current study also explores how participants demonstrated meanings of transnational motherhood and mothering. Given that these concepts are social constructs, their meanings may vary, but still be a true and valid reflection of those who self-identify as mothers. Guba and Lincoln (1989) assert that, some constructions of knowledge can be unique to individual participants. Although some constructions of knowledge are widely shared, some can be 'disciplined constructions' that result from collective systematic attempts to come to an agreement on an inquiry.

Although mothering is a unique experience for different women, influenced by their social and physical contexts, there are experiences which to a certain extent can be common among groups of women, defined by categories, such as culture, race, ethnicity, and being migrants. In my current study, when conversing with participants, I realised that although we might be different in terms of educational and migration status, we faced similar challenges as transnational mothers who were living in Johannesburg. This interaction with participants and the research process, is acknowledged and endorsed by the constructivist paradigm. As such, constructivism challenges the subject-object dualism and objectivism which is associated with positivism in social research (Lincoln, 1990; Schwandt, 1998).

Whilst conducting this study, I found myself learning from participants as much as they were learning from me. Apart from our individual interviews we would often have informal conversations about motherhood on WhatsApp and occasionally through regular phone calls. As a researcher, I did not adopt a detached observer role, but actively participated with the participants in shaping the meanings (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Throughout the research process, boundaries between participants and I became

progressively indistinct, especially during data collection and analysis. As we discussed our experiences as migrants and as mothers in Johannesburg, I realised that the knowledge that I possessed, mainly from my academic qualifications, ‘...is only one form of knowledge that is available...’ as I continued to learn from what my participants were sharing (Lincoln, 1990, p.83).

In addition to the principle that knowledge is co-constructed with participants, constructivists acknowledge the influence of values in the research process. Values are acknowledged as influential in shaping various milestones within the research process such as the research design, choice of a research problem, data collection and analysis (Lincoln, 1990). My values had an influence at varying stages of the research process. However, this thesis is inspired by my desire to share my experiences as a transnational mother whose child is under my mother’s care in Zimbabwe, and to also understand the experiences of mothers in similar positions. I discuss more on my positionality in this study in the following chapter on reflexivity.

4.3. Matricentric feminism

O’Reilly (2019) advocates for a feminist approach that distinctly focuses on the lives of women as mothers as well as their mothering experiences and practices. In her approach, O’Reilly (2019) illustrates a, “...mother-centred mode of feminism,” which she refers to as matricentric feminism. Recognising the importance of research that focuses exclusively on women as mothers and their mothering strategies, I found matricentric feminism philosophical resources useful and appropriate for this study. O’Reilly (2019) argues that studies related to mothers and their mothering strategies have been minimal and peripheral in feminist research and activism, despite the significance of mothering in the lives of women who assume this role. Matricentric feminism conceives motherhood as socially constructed and mothering as both a performance and an identity (O’Reilly, 2019). This resonates well with constructivism.

Furthermore, the efficacy of matricentric feminism is that, it produces matrifocal narratives which bring mothers’ needs and concerns to the fore (O’Reilly, 2019). This is accomplished by analysing, “...the voice of the mother,” to understand subjectivities on being a mother and

the work that they do to fulfil their mothering roles (O'Reilly, 2019, p.16). This is in line with the aim of my study whose central focus is composed of mothers' perspectives, thoughts, feelings, and experiences. By highlighting the distinction between the category of 'woman' and 'mother', matricentric perspectives argue that challenges that mothers face, be they social, psychological, economic, or political, are specific to their identities and roles as mothers (O'Reilly, 2019).

The above aspects of matricentricism resonate with feminist standpoint epistemologies. Research shows that feminist standpoint epistemologies are based on two assumptions. Firstly, all forms of knowledge are located and situated and secondly, women occupy a privileged social position from which researchers can learn the truth about their life experiences (Hekman, 1997; Riger, 1992; Schwandt, 1998). Brooks (2007) argues that, women's real-life experiences are central to feminist standpoint epistemology and they are used as basis for building knowledge. Therefore, it is important to emphasise that when formulating assertions about women, researchers must be aware that the claims need to originate from women's lived experiences. Thus, women's experiences should be used to provide, "...criterion for credibility," of the researchers' claims about their lived experiences (Collins, 1990, p.209). Collins (2000) cross-examined the idea of presenting women's experiences as homogeneous, where they are assumed to face the same challenges across different social categories such as race, occupation, or class. Collins (2000) highlights that it is crucial to understand the experiences of Black women in the United States of America, in relation to their particular social locations. This shows that "...women occupy many different standpoints and inhabit various realities..." (Hekman, 2004, p.227).

Feminist standpoint epistemologies allow for an analysis of women's lives beyond their individual lives, to an examination of the structural context and social institutions that shape their everyday experiences (Hekman, 1997). Women's experiences, challenges, and victories, offer several lessons about different aspects of the society such as gender, politics, the economy, or the culture of a particular society (Brooks, 2007). These experiences may reveal inequalities and injustices in societies, and suggest solutions to challenges that women face (Brooks, 2007).

Feminists have a history of addressing issues that resonate with constructivism. These issues include reflexivity, the relationship between the researcher and participants, and the importance of scrutinising the role of values within the research process (Schwandt, 1998). They assert that because the research process involves both the investigator and the subjects under study, it is crucial for the researcher's values, assumptions, and history to be openly declared throughout the research process (Oakely, 1981; Stacey, 1988). Feminists also share similar ethical convictions with constructivism, such as the need to address social justice issues through research, and the importance of human relations in research (Denzin, 2003).

4.4. Data collection

4.4.1. Sampling and recruitment

I recruited this study's participants in Johannesburg inner city, in Hillbrow, Yeoville, and Berea. I chose the Johannesburg inner city as my study site because it hosts numerous cross-border migrants (Crush et al., 2005). To recruit participants, I used the following guidelines as the inclusion criteria:

- Participants were to be non-South African citizens and be 18 years or older at the time of recruitment.
- They had to self-identify as a mother with at least one child living in their home country,
- Have lived in Johannesburg for at least two years – which is a sufficient time to be able to understand experiences as a transnational mother.
- Comfortable communicating in English, and who could read documents written in English (for example, the information sheet and consent forms).

For the first five participants, I used purposive sampling. Leedy and Ormrod (2010, p.147) define purposive sampling as a method in which researchers, "...select those individuals or objects that will yield the most information about the topic under investigation." Therefore, for the first five participants, I had to intentionally identifying participants, who were well-experienced as transnational mothers and could share relevant information in relation to my

research questions. For purposive sampling, I utilised my personal networks and contacts that I established during field work for my masters' research project, which was also on migration and motherhood. Thereafter, I employed snowball sampling where my participants that I identified initially helped me locate other women in similar circumstances, who could be interested in being part of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Through snowball sampling, I recruited 15 more participants. This brought the total number of participants for my current study to 20.

4.4.2. *Semi-structured interviews*

My personal networks and contacts that I established during field work for my masters' research made it easy for me to gaining access to the research site. Recruiting Zimbabwean participants was easier for me because of the similarities that we shared, in terms of nationality, ethnicity, and language. I am familiar with the two languages that were spoken by Zimbabwean participants which were Shona and Ndebele. Although Ndebele is my mother tongue, I am also fluent in Shona. This was different for participants from the D R C and Ghana, because I was not familiar with their native languages. Hence, I had to select only those who were comfortable with conducting the interviews in English. However, conducting interviews in English meant that nuances that could only be understood using native languages such as, in form of idioms and proverbs could not be used. For example, participants' vocabulary appeared somewhat limited when they tried to describe the roles of mothers in families from their cultural perspectives. I also noted that these interviews appeared formal and were shorter compared to the ones I conducted with Zimbabweans.

I conducted serial interviewing to understand participants' perspectives. Serial interviewing entails interviewing participants on multiple occasions, and it is appropriate for studying complex topics where participants may be reluctant or are taking longer to share information (Read, 2018). I conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews in October 2018 and in May 2019. I conducted the interviews in two phases. The first phase of the interviews was from the 4th of October to the 25th of October 2018. Then, I conducted the second phase, thus, repeat interviews with the same participants, from the 5th of May to the 28th of May 2019. Considering the complex life experiences of participants in the Johannesburg inner city, I allowed participants to choose places where they felt comfortable as venues to conduct the

interviews. This included options like their homes, public areas such as parks or coffee shops, or their workplaces for those who were self-employed. With permission from the participants, all interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder. Interviews ranged from slightly above 30 minutes to about 90 minutes.

I utilised a semi-structured interview schedule to assist in maintaining a structured and consistent approach. The interview schedule consisted of questions that were based on these three broad areas: migration, motherhood, and wellbeing. During the interviews, I firstly asked participants to tell me about their background, including their age, number of children, marital status, and the number of years that they had been in Johannesburg inner city. Concerning migration, I asked participants to share their decisions and choices that they made concerning their migration trajectories. In relation to motherhood, I asked participants questions on their perceptions on motherhood in the context of migration, relationships with their children and caregivers, how they provided care from a distance, their values and what it takes to be a good mother in their circumstances.

In relation to wellbeing, I sought to understand the challenges that participants faced as transnational mothers in Johannesburg, their sources of income and their experiences of contextual challenges such as crime, xenophobia, documentation, and accommodation. Interviews with Zimbabweans took on a conversational style, such that in some instances I struggled to bring the conversation back to align with the purposes of the interview because participants had lengthy narratives about their experiences. With participants from Ghana and the D R C, due to language barriers, our interviews took on a more formal conversation style, with choppy and short responses. Therefore, their interviews were shorter compared to interviews with Zimbabweans. Although I did probe for some clarifications, it was difficult to judge if their silence on certain issues was due to a lack of fluent expressions using the English language, or it was solely due to the nature of their responses. I discovered that some questions may have had the potential to trigger emotional distress.

In the second phase of interviews, which were repeat interviews, I checked responses that were given in the first interviews for consistency and sought clarifications on issues that needed further explanations. However, even though participants had agreed on repeat interviews in the first phase, only 16 of them were available for the second interviews. Some

participants changed their contact numbers while some kept postponing our appointments due to busy work schedules, hence I ultimately cancelled some of the interviews. The table below provides a summary of participants' demographic information.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of participants

Pseudonym	Age, Marital Status, and Nationality	Years in Johannesburg	Number of children left behind	Migration Status	Occupation
Bonakele	48 years old, Married, Zimbabwean	10 years	1 boy (19 years)	Undocumented - Passport expired	Domestic worker
Prudence	32 years old, Divorced, Zimbabwean	7 years	4 children (2 girls- 14 and 12 years:2 boys- 9 and 6 years)	Undocumented – no passport	Part time domestic worker
Rose	30 years old, Single mother (never married) Ghanaian	3 years	1 girl (13 years old)	Temporary Asylum seeker permit	Hairdresser
Buhle	38 years old, Divorced, Zimbabwean	7 years	2 girls (15 and 10 years old)	Undocumented, Passport expired	Domestic worker
Charity	37 years old, Single (never married) Zimbabwean	11 years	1 boy (17 years)	Documented - Zimbabwean Special Dispensation permit (ZSP)	Part time waitress and a student at UNISA
Linda	29 years old, married, Congolese	3 years	2 children (girl – 7 years, boy- 5 years old)	Temporary Asylum seeker permit	Hairdresser Part time till operator
Sikhangele	23 years old, Single mother, Zimbabwean	2 years	1 girl (6 years old)	Undocumented – no passport	Hairdresser
Sakhile	32 years old, Single, Zimbabwean	7 years	1 child – a girl (5 years old)	Documented - Zimbabwean Special Dispensation permit (ZSP)	Waitress

Pseudonym	Age, Marital Status, and Nationality	Years in Johannesburg	Number of children left behind	Migration Status	Occupation
Nicky	27 years old, Married, Ghanaian	4 years	2 boys – 9 and 7 years old	Temporary Asylum seeker permit	Tailor
Cecelia	39 years old, Married, Zimbabwean	10 years	2 children - a boy (10 years old) and a girl (3 years old)	Temporary Asylum seeker permit, Work permit expired	Part time waitress and petty trader
Rebecca	34 years old, Married, Zimbabwean	6 years	4 children – 3 girls (12, 9, 4 years old)- 1 boy- 16 years old	Undocumented	Unemployed, Gambler
Caro	36 years old, Single mother, Ghanaian	6 years	A girl – 16 years old	Temporary Asylum seeker permit	Hairdresser
MaNdebele	45 years old, Divorced, Zimbabwean	4 years	3 children (2 girls- 19 years and 14 years) 1 boy – 10 years old)	Undocumented	Part time domestic
Jane	35 years, Divorced, Zimbabwean	6 years	4 children 3 girls (14, 10, 4 years old) and 1 boy (8 years old)	Undocumented, Passport expired	A prophetess and a small-scale trader
Ntando	25 years, single mother Zimbabwean	2 years	1 boy (10 years old)	Undocumented	Self-employed Part time waitress
Ruth	24 years, Single, Zimbabwean	3 years	1 girl (5 years)	Undocumented – no passport	Waitress
Helen	27 years old, Married, Congolese	4 years	1 girl (8 years old)	Asylum seeker permit	Hairdresser

Pseudonym	Age, Marital Status, and Nationality	Years in Johannesburg	Number of children left behind	Migration Status	Occupation
Miriam	39 years old, Divorced Zimbabwean	10 years	5 children, (4 girls - 18, 14, 12 and 5 years old and 1 boy – 21 years old)	Documented, South African passport	Part time domestic worker and a small-scale trader
Gracious	33 years old, Single Mother, Zimbabwean	6 years	2 children (girls – 7 and 3 years old).	Undocumented – Passport expired	Part time domestic worker and small-scale trader
Anna	26 years old, Single mother, Zimbabwean	4 years	1 girl (6 years old)	Undocumented – Passport expired	Waitress

4.4.3. Participant observation

In addition to data collected through semi structured interviews, I conducted participant observation. Social and ethnographic research demonstrate that participant observation is a widely used data collection technique, to understand people’s actions, customs, or events in various settings (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Babbie, 2011; Iacono, et al. 2009; Punch, 2014). Researchers also participate in these settings and record observations through various techniques such as photography, tape recorders, video cameras, or field notes (Iacono et al., 2009; Laurier, 2010). Preliminary interpretations of situations or interesting events are recorded through field notes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Various studies have revealed that observations can be conducted either in a structured manner, by following predetermined categories or in unstructured open-ended ways (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Punch, 2014).

Observations may be conducted overtly or covertly (Babbie, 2011). In overt observation, researchers reveal their identities and roles within the research setting, thus, ensuring that participants are aware that they are being observed and recorded (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Researchers can openly take pictures, record conversations, write field notes and ask

questions. However, covert observation requires a researcher not to interact with participants and their identity remains hidden (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

Researchers have raised various concerns about tensions and ethical dilemmas that are associated with both ways of doing observations. In overt research there are concerns about reactivity, whereby “...the subjects of social research may react to the fact of being studied, thus altering their behaviour from what it would have been normally” (Babbie 2011, p.291). Individuals may strive to present themselves as knowledgeable and respectable, once they are aware that they are involved in a project. The nature of social relationships in the research setting may also be altered if participants know that a researcher is present (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Iacono et al., 2009). Literature recognises that covert research is heavily contested (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; McCurdy & Uldam, 2014). While covert observations minimise participants’ reactivity, there are a number of ethical challenges to contend with such as, issues of consent and transparency (Babbie, 2011). I delve deeper into how I conducted observations in the following chapter on reflexivity.

4.5. Data analysis

4.5.1. Grounded theory: a brief background

Studies illustrate that grounded theory is a well-known methodology that is employed in quantitative and qualitative studies. Over the years, grounded theory has established itself as a systematic rigorous technique of collecting and analysing data in social research since its introduction by its founders Glaser and Strauss in 1967 (Bratianu, 2020; Chun Tie et al., 2019; Mills et al., 2006; Qureshi & Unlu, 2020; Rieger, 2019). Grounded theory is defined as, “...the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research” (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.2). According to Charmaz (2006, p.187) grounded theory is, “...a method of conducting qualitative research that focuses on creating conceptual frameworks or theories through building inductive analysis from the data.”

Glaser and Strauss (1967) actively mentored numerous graduate students who continued to develop grounded theory in various ways. There are three main schools of grounded theory that can be discerned from literature, namely: the traditional grounded theory which is associated with Glaser, the evolved grounded theory associated with Strauss and Corbin, and

the constructivist grounded theory which is aligned with Charmaz (Birks & Mills, 2015; Charmaz, 2006; Chun Tie et al., 2019; Mills et al., 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). These variations of grounded theory differ in certain areas, including philosophical orientations, the nature of the relationship between the researcher and participants, and the incorporation of literature reviews.

Nonetheless, all the above variants retain key elements of a grounded theory study (Chun Tie et al., 2019). For instance, literature describes the traditional grounded theory as having its roots in positivism, based on a realist ontology which assumes that researchers have no influence on what is being studied (Charmaz, 2000). The evolved version of grounded theory adopts a post-positivist approach and leans more on symbolic interactionism, while the Charmaz (2006) version is constructivist. It puts emphasis on both the researcher and participants as co-creators of knowledge (Charmaz, 2006; Qureshi & Unlu, 2020). The traditional grounded theory advises researchers against conducting a literature review to prevent imposing preconceived concepts on their data, while the evolved version encourages using a literature review to improve data interpretation (Strauss & Corbin, 2008).

Despite various interpretations of grounded theory, research demonstrates that there are certain fundamental procedures that are common to studies that use this theory. The fundamentals include: concurrent data collection and analysis, coding, constant comparison, theoretical sensitivity, and memo writing (Birks & Mills, 2015; Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mills et al., 2006; Rieger, 2019; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Coding is the analytical process used to extract meaning from the data. Charmaz (2006, p.43) highlights that, coding involves, "...categorising segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarises and accounts for each piece of data." Coding procedures differ per each version of grounded theory. The traditional version has two main coding stages: substantive coding and theoretical coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In the evolved version of grounded theory, three stages are employed: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). On the other hand, constructivist grounded theory has two stages: initial line-by-line coding and focused coding (Charmaz, 2000).

Furthermore, it is important to emphasise that coding is not a linear but an iterative process where a researcher remains open to new ideas, which may influence the developing

conceptual framework (Bratianu, 2020). The constant comparative technique is used to compare emerging codes within the same data and across data sets to refine concepts (Charmaz, 2000; 2006; Qureshi & Unlu, 2020). The expression, 'theoretical sensitivity' refers to a researcher's ability to be highly attuned to the complexity of participants' words and experiences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This ability involves recognising and extracting elements that are of relevance for the emerging theory, from the data (Birks & Mills, 2015). Memo writing is also an important part of grounded theory, it enables a researcher to reflect on her thoughts, actions, decisions, or emerging concepts during the research process (Bryman, 2012).

4.5.2. Constructivist grounded theory

Literature recognises Kathy Charmaz, a sociologist and a student of Glaser and Strauss as the leading proponent of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000; 2017; Mills et al., 2006; Rieger, 2019). In this version of grounded theory, the researcher seeks to understand participants' experiences, "...through a dialectical process of conferring meaning on their realities" (Charmaz, 2000,p.521). The primary aim for this process is, "...to arrive at the most plausible interpretation of the observed data" (Charmaz, 2006, p.186). Constructivist grounded theory shares fundamental philosophical beliefs with constructivism in terms of key assumptions related to how knowledge is produced and the nature of reality (Lincoln & Guba 2005).

Given its compatibility with my research paradigm, constructivism, I adopted some techniques of the constructivist grounded theory method, to analyse data as demonstrated by Charmaz (1996; 2000; 2006). After personally transcribing the interviews, I employed two main techniques of the constructivist grounded theory: initial coding (line-by-line coding) and focused coding. In initial coding, each line or data segment is labelled, whilst in focused coding, I aimed to combine and synthesise data derived from initial coding (Charmaz, 2006). Although it might be easy to conceptualise these coding techniques as distinct ways of analysing data, in practise, they occur simultaneously as the researcher iteratively progresses through the data (Charmaz, 1996). Throughout the coding processes, I composed memos to assist me in understanding participants' perspectives and concerns.

Charmaz (1996) advises that it is important to study the data prior to initial coding. Charmaz (1996) contends that, the initial step when studying the data, particularly for novice researchers, should be to personally transcribe their audio-tapes and write their own field notes instead of outsourcing this task. Likewise, I carefully listened and transcribed all my audio recordings. The process of listening and transcribing the recordings enabled me to closely focus on the language that participants used to describe their feelings, actions, and experiences on transnational mothering (Charmaz, 1996). Familiarising myself with the data, proved to be effective in understanding and refining my research questions.

4.5.3. Initial coding – line-by-line coding

Initial coding is the initial analytical phase where I critically interacted with the data and created codes, showing actions or events that were important to participants and relevant to my research questions (Charmaz, 1996; 2006). During the initial coding phase, I analysed the transcripts, in a detailed manner through line-by-line coding to better understand the participants' stories. While conducting initial coding, I remained critical towards the data through constantly asking myself questions to gain an insight on their motives, actions, and how they perceived their physical and social locations in relation to motherhood and mothering. To interpret the implications of personal, individualised perspectives on motherhood and mothering roles on broader societal structures, I sought to understand how, "...structure and context serve to support, maintain, impede, or change..." mothers' actions, aspirations and challenges that they faced (Charmaz, 1996, p.38).

Charmaz (2000) suggests that researchers should keep their codes active, to discern processes and actions in the data. She argues that codes are to be framed in specific terms to avoid overlooking actions that appear mundane and often taken for granted. To achieve this, researchers should actively seek to clarify what is happening in the data, rather than imposing their own preconceived theories (Charmaz, 2006). Highlighting processes, assumptions, and actions while coding leads to greater analytical accuracy, which assists the researcher to contextualise participants' experiences in relation to broader societal structures (Charmaz, 1996). In addition, it is crucial to understand how participants use their language to construct their realities. This is because language is imbued with symbolic meanings which can enrich understandings of the empirical world (Charmaz, 2006). In my current study, mothers used

various expressions to describe how they perceived motherhood and mothering in the migration context.

In line with the constructivism paradigm, Charmaz (2006) acknowledges that researchers possess some background knowledge about the topics that they investigate, which she refers to as, “sensitising concepts.” The sensitising concepts provide ways of understanding and organising participants’ experiences, and they are influenced by our disciplinary priorities and perspectival inclinations (Charmaz, 2000). In my current study, I utilised my personal experiences as a mother and a migrant to better understand participants’ experiences. However, I was cautious not to project my own motives and fears onto participants’ experiences, or assuming that we share the same perspectives (Charmaz, 1996; 2000). The table below provides examples of excerpts from the interviews to show how I conducted line-by-line coding. A longer table is attached as Appendix F of this thesis.

Table 2: Examples of initial coding from different transcripts

Initial (Line-by-line coding)	Interview Quotes
<p><i>Making a difficult decision</i> <i>Remembering makes her emotional</i> <i>Could not face her son</i> <i>Feeling scared of informing son</i></p> <p><i>Difficult to talk about the decision with her mother</i></p> <p><i>Feeling stressed</i> <i>Protects her son by not telling him</i></p>	<p>Excerpt 1 (Bonakele)</p> <p>Bonakele: ‘...that was very painful to me [...] even when I remember the day I left I just cry I just couldn’t tell him so I decided it’s better I leave when he goes to school because I was failing to tell him I was scared I was going to break down [...] even telling my mother that I was leaving it was very difficult for me I wanted to tell her when there was still time but I ended up telling her when there was only 1 day left for me to go [...] but at least I had hinted my intentions of going to South Africa [...] as for my son each time I wanted to tell him that I will be going to South Africa I could feel tears filling up my eyes so I decided not to tell him’</p>
<p><i>Uses a phone to communicate</i> <i>Bought the phone</i> <i>Uses WhatsApp</i></p>	<p>Excerpt 2 (Cecelia)</p> <p>Cecelia: ‘...we communicate through the phone I bought him his own phone he is in Grade 4 now, so he is able to use the phone we can even communicate using WhatsApp like for instance when he wants to tell me exactly what it is that he wants he sends me a voice note like</p>

Initial (Line-by-line coding)	Interview Quotes
<p><i>Provides for her son</i></p> <p><i>Keeps updated about son's life</i></p> <p><i>Struggles to send provisions on time</i></p> <p><i>Continuous demands</i></p>	<p>now he stays with my younger sister's son so he is a bit older my younger sister is a teacher back home [...] he recently sent me a list of things that he wants for a party that they are going to have at school as part of a trip organised by the school [...] he told me that he wants Adidas tennis shoes I had to struggle and make sure that I send them as soon as I could and he also said that he wants a Fluffy key holder so he said he wants it in black and so I put it there [...] as soon as he received those things he reminded me that I should not forget to send his groceries because his snacks that he carries to school will soon be finished...'</p>
<p><i>Had high expectations for Joburg</i></p> <p><i>Expected a good job</i></p> <p><i>Life did not change much</i></p> <p><i>Feels lucky getting a job</i></p> <p><i>Struggled to get accommodation</i></p> <p><i>Struggled financially</i></p> <p><i>Shared spaces as accommodation</i></p> <p><i>Accommodation is expensive</i></p>	<p>Excerpt 3 (Charity)</p> <p>Charity: 'you know I expected that things will change like get a good job and change my son's life and that my life will change financially of cause it did change but not that much I was lucky when I arrived here because after about five days I found a job working at a clothing outlet and I worked there for quite some time but still I had a problem with accommodation [...] you see when I first arrived here I stayed with my brother with his wife but then when I started working my sister in law suggested that I find my own place to stay but then you find that financially I wasn't stable but then I had to move [...] you know how it is here in Hillbrow I started to share spaces with people as you know accommodation here is very expensive...'</p>

4.5.4. Focused coding

After conducting line-by-line coding, I progressed to focused coding. Charmaz (1996) describes focused coding as taking earlier codes that frequently emerge during initial coding and using them to sift through extensive data. Consequently, this coding process results in formation of categories or substantive themes, to understand what is being conveyed by participants regarding their situations and to highlight key concepts and processes within data (Charmaz 2006). In forming substantive themes, I condensed active codes that I obtained from initial coding, into more conceptual codes or themes to explain participants' experiences. I selected only the codes that had analytical relevance to my research questions,

which enabled me to obtain important themes to synthesise and describe participants' experiences more accurately in my findings chapters (Charmaz, 1996; 2000). To gain a more nuanced understanding of the themes, I compared incidents, events, and processes that I identified across all the transcripts. For example, I sought to understand how incidents or processes occur within a single transcript and between two different transcripts. By comparing different participants' beliefs, actions, and accounts, it became easier for me to understand the participants' experiences according to their own interpretations (Charmaz, 2006). Therefore, through focused coding, I comprehended main themes in the data and how they related to one another.

Throughout my coding processes, I composed memos to assist in elaborating processes and assumptions within the data (Charmaz, 2000). Memo-writing assisted me with identifying connections between initial codes and the subsequent main themes. Coding initial codes as active codes facilitated my memo-writing, since I viewed these codes as connected rather than isolated topics (Charmaz, 2000). I came to realise that coding is not a linear but an iterative process, that may be hard to articulate (Charmaz, 2000). The table below shows some of the results of my focused coding. A longer table is attached as Appendix G of this thesis.

Table 3: Example illustrating results of focused coding

Themes	Sub-Themes	Representative Quotes
The Ideal of a 'good mother'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical presence important • Nurturing 	<p>'I think a mother makes sure that things are in order in the family... taking care of the father and her children to make sure that they are all fine... for example, she must make sure that the children are not sick and they attend school on time and if they are not right... like they has to be a bond between you and your children' (Bonakele, 04-10-18)</p> <p>'...the mother should stay with the family and look after the children and make sure their needs are met while on the other hand a father works to provide for the family's needs but because of the situation that we are now living in many mothers do not have the fathers of their children so</p>

Themes	Sub-Themes	Representative Quotes
		<p>they do not have any options they just have to find work and support their families...' (<i>Buhle, 15-05-19</i>)</p> <p>'...the truth is it will never be the same talking to a child over the phone and talking to the child face to face... you see a child has to see your facial expressions when you reprimand them so that he can understand that you are not happy about what he has done and he just has to stop it...so it's not easy talking and doing all that over the phone it does not have any much impact but it's just that I do not have a choice I will just have to talk to him over the phone...' (<i>Bonakele, 16-05-19</i>)</p> <p>'...you know how it is these days girls get their first menstrual period very early in life so I think when that happens its always best that she is with her mother even if she doesn't tell me I will quickly see it because I am close to her and then I can see how I can assist her...' (<i>Cecelia, 19-10-18</i>)</p> <p>'...I wish I could be closer to him and help him in any way that he wishes I might help him and in terms of homework as well... it is very important for me to do that, but I cannot do that because I am here' (<i>Charity, 09-10-18</i>)</p> <p>'...yes, I buy them stuff and send them money and when they come this side, I take them to the malls and show them nice places but then still they miss that love that only a mother can give' (<i>Miriam, 19-10-18</i>)</p>

4.6. Ethical considerations

Ethics approval for this study was granted by the University of Witwatersrand's Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), protocol number H18/06/41. Research with

human subjects requires that researchers adhere to ethical principles. Leedy and Ormrod (2010, p.101) assert that, "...whenever human beings or other creatures, with the potential to think, feel, and experience physical or psychological distress are the focus of investigation..." researchers must be cognisant of the ethical implications of what they intend to do and how they will do it. This is particularly salient in social research due to the fact that it often disrupts participants' daily routines and activities (Babbie, 2011). Consequently, the moral integrity of the researcher is crucial throughout the research process, to ensure trustworthiness and validity of the research findings (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

Throughout the research process, I followed key ethical principles, such as voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, use of pseudonyms, non-discrimination, beneficence, and respect for participants (Punch, 2014). Prior to the start of interviews, I sought participants' consent to conduct the interviews. The information sheet was presented to participants, I explained the nature of the study, and what their participation will entail. I also emphasised the possibility for conducting multiple interviews with them, to gain deeper insights on some studied issues. I sought consent from participants to audio record the interviews so that I could later transcribe and analyse them.

In addition, participants were made aware that participation in the study was voluntary, and they had the right to stop participating at any time during the research process. I also clarified to participants that although it would be beneficial if they answered all my questions, they were not obliged to do so, and they had the right to refuse to answer certain questions. From my own experiences as a transnational mother, I presumed that this study was likely to evoke emotional distress. Hence I kept contact details of accessible organisations that offer psycho-social services around Johannesburg inner city at hand. The list of these organisations was also attached in the information sheet that I gave to participants.

For confidentiality, I used pseudonyms; when transcribing data from audio recordings, composing field notes, and memos. I retained personal identifying information solely for the purposes of scheduling interview appointments and stored it in a password protected folder on my computer. This information was not included in this thesis. In addition, I provided participants with ZAR 50 which is about USD 2.60 as compensation for their time and reimbursement for their transport expenses to our meeting points.

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the key components of the methodology, the research approach, and philosophical orientation for this study. I explained how constructivism and matricentric feminism influence my understandings of ontology and epistemology. In addition, I outlined participants' demographics, how they were recruited and how data was collected. I also demonstrated how I adopted some of the constructivist grounded theory techniques in analysing data. Lastly, I discussed some of the ethical principles that I applied in this study. In the next chapter I give a more detailed discussion on reflexivity and my positionality in the research.

CHAPTER FIVE

Reflexivity

5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed my philosophical beliefs regarding ontology and epistemology. In this chapter, I outline my position and perspective in the research process. The purpose of this chapter is to provide contextual information that may be relevant to the decisions and choices I made concerning my research topic, my interaction with participants during fieldwork, and my subsequent data analysis (Bourke, 2014; Chavez, 2008; England, 1994; Finlay, 2000; Macbeth, 2001; Pillow, 2003). Certain aspects of my identity, such as being a cisgender heterosexual female, a single mother, a migrant, and a Zimbabwean student studying at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, influenced the way participants engaged with me. They also influenced my perception of the research process, and the impact that I had on data interpretation. However, my listed identities, above, are fluid and may not always be prominent at all given situations or research encounter (Bourke, 2014; Crossa, 2012; Soedirgo & Glas, 2020).

5.2. Positionality and personal ties to research

This study is closely intertwined with my personal life experiences, values, and preoccupations. Hence, it was crucial for me to adopt a philosophical stance that would enable me to leverage the knowledge that I had prior to embarking on this study. Positivists express concerns about researchers being involved with the subjects and environments that they are investigating. They argue that, researchers might compromise a study's rigour and validity. On the other hand, qualitative social researchers such as feminists and constructivists see the researcher's involvement in the topic and environment that they are studying, as an integral aspect of research which should be openly acknowledged as a means of assessing research findings in context (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003).

5.2.1. Educational background

This study was motivated by my decision to migrate from Zimbabwe to Johannesburg, South Africa, to further my studies while leaving my daughter under my mother's care. Early in my career as a High School teacher, after completing professional teacher training at Hillside Teachers' College in Bulawayo, I was posted to a rural school in Lupane District under Matabeleland North Province, where I spent almost eight years as a teacher. During that time, from 2008 to 2014, there was political unrest and economic deterioration due to the ongoing Zimbabwean crisis (Madebwe & Madebwe, 2017). Civil servants and other workers were disgruntled by the high cost of living and soaring inflation rates, which made it increasingly difficult for the majority to afford basic commodities such as maize meal, cooking oil, and bread. This led to various protests in the form of food riots, mass stayaways and strikes (Hodgkinson, 2019). Hunger and starvation affected many underprivileged families, especially in the rural areas.

Numerous families could not afford access to social services such as health and school fees for their children. Based on the economic and political situation at that time, there were several Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that were working in the area, to assist government efforts to alleviate poverty in communities, through provision of food and social services. The work of NGOs such as the World Food Programme (WFP), Christian Care, World Vision, and Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) was evident in the area where I worked. These organisations performed development work such as feeding schemes in schools, food aid in communities, drilling of boreholes to improve access to clean water and payment of school fees for the less privileged.

At the school where I worked, I was part of the Open Arms Club. The club assisted orphans and less privileged students in Primary schools, through payment of fees and purchasing of uniforms for those who came from underprivileged backgrounds. I was intrigued by these development-oriented agendas. This motivated me to enrol at the University of South Africa (UNISA), for a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Development Studies and thereafter an Honours degree in the same field. I wanted to understand human development issues and the various actors that are involved. Studying with UNISA gave me the flexibility that I needed, because I could not afford to quit my job as a teacher while I was studying. Coming from a humble

family, that had limited financially resources, I had to keep my job because I did not have any other source of income.

5.2.2. Migration as part of development

As a class teacher and a secretary for the Open Arms Club, I noticed that for some children either both parents or one of them was working and living outside the country. Most parents were in various parts of the world, including South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States of America. The most popular destinations were South Africa and Botswana. It was clear to me that migration was part of the development for communities around the school. The impact of migration on families was evident. Remittances played an important part as a source of income for many families.

Furthermore, I had the desire to contribute meaningfully to issues and debates around migration and development in local and global contexts. I decided to enrol for a masters' course in migration and displacement with the African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS) at the University of Witwatersrand. I was privileged to be offered the Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (DAAD) Scholarship to support my studies. Therefore, it became easy for me to resign from my work and migrate to South Africa for my studies. Although I would miss my pupils, at least the scholarship was going to cover for my financial needs, in the short term.

5.2.3. Familial background

I come from a family of four: my mother, myself, and two siblings. My father passed away in 2013. Relocating to South Africa meant that I had to leave my daughter behind because I could not afford the cost of childcare in Johannesburg. Moreso, my child did not have a resident permit to legally live temporarily with me in South Africa. I had to make care arrangements for my daughter in Zimbabwe while I was away. As a single mother, with the father of my daughter being absent from her life since her birth, I decided to leave my daughter, who was almost 2 years old at the time, behind with my own mother. Even though my parents were not formally educated, they valued formal education and constantly encouraged their children to be high achievers at school. Therefore, my decision to pursue further studies in South Africa was met with little resistance from my mother. We had

previously discussed my plans to leave my daughter behind, and my mother had gladly agreed to take care of her granddaughter while I study in South Africa.

However, she set a condition that I should hire someone to assist with the physical aspects of childcare, such as bathing, washing, and ironing clothes, cooking, and cleaning. I had to find someone who could perform these duties and help my daughter with homework and other school related activities. I also considered that my mother was elderly, and I thought that the most appropriate role that she could take on was to supervise someone else conducting the daily care of my daughter, rather than performing the actual physical tasks.

Since I was raised by my mother in a heterosexual marriage, I would say that according to literature on motherhood I was raised in a 'normative' family set up (Arendell, 2000). My mother was actively involved in raising us. She would occasionally engage in informal petty trading, such as selling second hand clothing, but she spent most of her time in the house and we shared the same physical space. Consequently, I initially regarded the concept of motherhood and the role of being a mother as something ordinary – a given, and not something that required research or scholarly debates. My perspectives on motherhood and mothering soon changed when I arrived in South Africa.

Nothing prepared me for the emotional turmoil that I experienced due to living separately from my daughter. I found it difficult to settle and concentrate on my studies. I immediately experienced emotional distress due to leaving my daughter behind. I felt anxious most of the time. I deeply regretted making that decision, and I experienced body aches as part of the stress that I was experiencing. My appetite waned, making it difficult to eat. Forming connections or friendships with others became a challenge. I became an emotional wreck and carried a heavy burden of guilt for leaving my daughter behind, especially since she could not understand the reasons behind my decision. I considered my actions selfish.

Even though I regularly made phone calls to home and my mother would assure me that my daughter was doing fine, I struggled to come to terms with the fact that I left her behind. I felt that she desperately needed my nurturance and attention. Additionally, I had to manage my emotions and concentrate on my studies for a brighter future. I convinced myself that I was doing this for her, but the pain of living separately from my daughter haunted me.

Experiencing these emotions prompted me to contemplate the notions of motherhood and mothering in the context of migration. Moreover, I wondered if mothers in the same situation experienced similar emotions. I had several questions, such as: how do mothers in the same situation as me perceive motherhood and migration? The questions motivated me to undertake research on transnational motherhood for my masters' programme and continue with the same topic for my PhD.

5.3. Defining reflexivity

Scholarship on qualitative social science research has increasingly engaged with the concept of reflexivity as an indispensable tool in knowledge production (Ahmed Dunya et al., 2011; Berger, 2015; Charmaz, 2006; Elliott, 2011; Etherington, 2004; Finlay & Gough, 2008; Gerstl-Pepin & Patrizion, 2009; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Subramani, 2019). Feminists argued that similarities and differences that researchers may have in relation to research participants, such as gender, class, race, or sexuality, inevitably influence the research process (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). They acknowledge that these social categories are important to critically consider during research, as they influence a researcher's epistemological and ontological assumptions (Crossa, 2012; England, 1994; Rose, 1997). This illustrates the researcher's role as an 'instrument' in the research process. Furthermore, the researcher as an instrument has a critical role on how knowledge is constructed (Bourke, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Elliott, 2011; Watt, 2007). Literature recognises the importance of being reflexive on data interpretation and analysis, and on how pre-conceived convictions and assumptions influence the construction of knowledge (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003).

According to Probst (2015, p.46):

"Reflexivity is... the embodiment of an epistemology in which the knower is always present, a way of looking that gazes outward at what is taking place while sustaining an inward gaze at the looker. More than just a vehicle for honesty or management of the research experience, reflexivity offers a means for using self-knowledge to inform and enhance the research endeavour."

While reflexivity can be a way of demonstrating rigour and credibility in qualitative research (Finlay, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), it is also a way of utilising a researcher's socio-

economic background to strengthen data analysis and knowledge construction. Through active acknowledgement and critical self-evaluation of their positionality, researchers recognise that they inevitably impact various stages of the research process (Pillow, 2003). Similarly, England (1994, p.244) argues that "...reflexivity is self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher." This includes ethical considerations in relation to shifting power positions, for both the researcher and participants, while conducting research.

Literature also defines reflexivity as a, "...thoughtful, conscious self-awareness... continual evaluation of subjective responses, intersubjective dynamics, and the research process itself..." (Finlay, 2000, p.532). Therefore, reflexivity is a way of critically thinking about individual subjectivities during the research process and analysing how broader societal structures influence the context in which the research is embedded, and the produced subsequent knowledge (Lazard & McAvoy, 2020). It is essentially, "...a deconstructive exercise for locating the intersections of author, other, text, and world, and for penetrating the representational exercise itself" (Macbeth, 2001, p.35).

While in qualitative research, reflexivity is widely acknowledged as a crucial element of doing research, some concerns have been raised in literature regarding how it has been utilised in some studies. Scholars highlight that sometimes reflexivity is misunderstood as a practice where researchers excessively engage in self-analysis through autobiographical accounts, with less attention paid to the research process, relevant social contexts, and intersubjective interactions (England, 1994; Finlay, 2002; Lazard & McAvoy, 2020; Patnaik, 2013). Research also illustrates that talking about oneself in research does not automatically guarantee research quality, and it does not mean that the analysis is a true reflection of the participants' concerns (Cumming-Potvin, 2013; Pillow, 2003; Probst, 2015).

Nonetheless, various scholars recognise that when reflexivity is practiced as intended by its theoretical understandings, it enhances the rigour and ethical conduct of a study (Berger, 2015; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Drake, 2010; Macbeth, 2001; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003; Subramani, 2019). Hence, reflexivity serves to explain the researcher's positionality in the research process. In reflexivity, researchers consider how their beliefs and values might have influenced the data analysis. This increases accuracy, credibility, and trustworthiness of the

produced knowledge (Macbeth, 2001; Probst, 2015; Watt, 2007). Finlay (2000) asserts that, when researchers are open about the ways in which they evaluate themselves and intersubjective elements that may have influenced data collection and analysis, they increase their project's validity, integrity, and trustworthiness.

In addition, reflexivity is employed to establish a research's trustworthiness in terms of dependability, confirmability, transferability, and credibility, elements that are often used to evaluate qualitative research (Patnaik, 2013). Research also acknowledges reflexivity as a useful methodological tool that can foster ethical conduct during the research process, and prevent potentially exploitative interpersonal relationships (Denzin, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1990). That is why feminists advocate for reciprocal relationships in research projects that consider the uneven power relations between the researcher and participants – relationships that are built on mutual empathy and respect (England, 1994; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003).

Although the importance of reflexivity is no longer a matter of contention in social science qualitative research, researchers are concerned with the lack of a precise articulation of how it should be implemented in practical terms (Cumming-Potvin, 2013; Finlay & Gough, 2008; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003; Probst, 2015; Soedirgo & Glas, 2020; Subramani, 2019). Researchers argue that the processes of doing reflexivity intentionally and productively, to fulfil its theoretical purposes in practical terms, is often presented implicitly and in ambiguous terms (Lazard & McAvoy, 2020).

Furthermore, literature emphasises that the process of reflexivity is compounded by confronting one's emotions, biases, values, and motivations. Thus, the key elements of 'doing' reflexivity are often challenging (Finlay, 2000; Probst, 2015; Soedirgo & Glas, 2020). This complexity in practising reflexivity implies that researchers may not always be aware of the most significant aspects of their lives that impact their approach to data analysis and their interactions with research participants (Probst, 2015). For instance, due to time constraints, some aspects of reflexivity can only be retrospectively visible to researchers, after a research project has long been completed (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003).

Nonetheless, literature acknowledges that reflexivity should ideally be an ongoing process and must be practised in all stages of a research project. Researchers should be mindful and

transparent in their decision-making process, starting from the inception of a study, including the selection of a topic, data collection, data analysis and the subsequent dissemination of the produced knowledge (Berger, 2015; Finlay, 2000; Probst, 2015; Watt, 2007). Lazard and McAvoy (2020) argue that reflexivity is essential, because choices that are made during the research process (political, personal, or theoretical) can be helpful in evaluating the validity of a study in its context. A researcher can keep track of their thoughts, emotional reactions, interpretations, and actions taken in relation to the research, through a research journal, field notes, memos or debriefing with others (Davis, 2020; Probst, 2015).

Literature recognises that, in addition to personal experiences impacting how researchers conduct qualitative studies, their epistemological and ontological positioning plays a crucial role in how reflexivity is applied (Cumming-Potvin, 2013; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003; Probst, 2015; Subramani, 2019). The extent to which a researcher can practice reflexivity in a study is largely influenced by their research paradigm. Cumming-Potvin (2013) states that, "... deepening the notion of reflexivity necessitates embedding it within a theoretical framework, which is linked to the production of knowledge." As such, engaging in reflexivity is an exercise of an epistemological matter that demonstrates how knowledge is produced and an ontological matter that demonstrates what can be seen (Crossa, 2012).

5.4. Interaction with participants and interviews

England (1994) asserts that fieldwork is mediated by the intersections of the researchers and participants' worlds. For instance, the researcher's biography and experiences become the lens through which the fieldwork encounter is perceived and interpreted (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1988). Therefore, fieldwork is personal because personal experiences and socio-economic conditions such as, class, race, or ethnicity play a fundamental role in influencing the nature of the questions that are asked during the interviews (England, 1994; Palaganas et al., 2017; Subramani, 2019). As a former high school teacher, I believe that my professional training assisted me in managing my interpersonal relations. My training also helped me to ask questions in a non-confrontational way, and to listen attentively to what was being said during interviews.

Recruiting Zimbabwean participants was not a challenge for me. Having friends and relatives who reside in Johannesburg inner city facilitated my recruitment process. To Zimbabwean participants, I was an insider, in terms of nationality and my socio-cultural characteristics, such as ethnicity and language. These characteristics enabled me to understand interpersonal relations in a way that perhaps an outsider would not (Cumming-Potvin, 2013). This kind of familiarity facilitated establishing good rapport and our interviews were less formal, but conversational (Davis, 2020). Although I had prepared my semi-structured interview guide, as soon as I started interacting with participants, "...the interview took on a life of its own" (Watt, 2007, p.91).

It was quite difficult for me to recruit more Ghanaians and Congolese participants, due to differences in nationality, culture, ethnicity, and language. Our interviews were more formal and their responses and interview times were shorter compared to those that I had with Zimbabwean participants. Nonetheless, the first person that I identified as a potential participant from Ghana was the woman who occasionally did my African print dresses. She agreed to be part of the study and also referred me to her friend who had children that were residing back in Ghana. Thereafter, I identified other participants through snowball sampling. For the DRC participants, my first contact was the woman that I met at a salon in downtown Johannesburg where I usually went for my hairdo. She also agreed to be part of the study. Likewise, she referred me to her friend who had a child that she left in the DRC. Since I could not understand the languages that Ghanaian and DRC participants spoke in their home countries, I had to identify participants who were fluent in English.

To establish good rapport during the interviews, I informed my participants that I was a student at the University of Witwatersrand exploring their mothering experiences in the context of migration. I also decided to disclose that I am a non-South African and a single mother whose child is under the care of my mother in Zimbabwe. Disclosing these aspects of my identity helped participants to open up about their challenges as migrants and as transnational mothers, because they believed that I was empathetic to their challenges and could easily relate (Berger, 2015; Chavez, 2008; DeLyser, 2001; Patnaik, 2013).

Based on my initial experiences of residing in South Africa without my daughter, I misjudged the participants' potential emotional reactions by expecting that they would display intense

feelings in relation to living away from their children. I considered the topic for this study to be emotionally provocative. However, none of the participants displayed any intense emotions such as crying. In fact, some of them indicated that talking about motherhood and mothering under their circumstances was therapeutic. They mentioned that it is not common for people to have discussions about such an important aspect of their lives. Participants highlighted that society often assumes that motherhood comes naturally to all women. Therefore, it does not present any challenges to them. Below is an illustration of how I noted this in my field notes:

“At the end of our conversation when I thank her for her time, she says I don’t have to thank her because it’s not every day that a person can have time to talk about such things. She says this conversation has given her an opportunity to pour her heart out. I am happy that at least she found this conversation worthwhile” (Field notes, 04 October, 2018).

This is what she said in her own words:

“...I am also happy that I had some time to talk like this... you see when I talk like this everything comes out of my heart... you know these things are not things that you just talk about every day with just anyone...I can’t even talk about this with my husband I am sure he will say please stop nagging me” (Bonakele, 04 October, 2018).

After this conversation I reflected more on power dynamics in the research process. Studies have demonstrated that it is essential for researchers to be aware of the effects of power in research encounters. Researchers should also ensure that they show compassion towards participants by encouraging reciprocity and avoiding exploitative research practices (Crossa, 2012; Finlay, 2000; Pillow, 2003). While researchers gain some form of recognition, for example, in the form of a degree after the completion of a study, less is said about how participants benefit from the study. However, although participants talked about emotional distress due to living separately from their children, they did not wish to dwell much in that aspect of transnational motherhood. After considering the cues from some of the participants’ body language and silences in our conversations, I avoided probing on questions that I thought could trigger negative emotions. The participants often talked about emotional

challenges of mothering from a distance. They highlighted that it was not an overwhelming experience but something that they could manage. They expressed the need to be able to financially support their children as an important aspect of their experiences. Parreñas' (2001) study focused on Filipina transnational mothers who were working in Rome and Los Angeles, and left their children in the Philippines. Similar to my experiences in the current study, Parreñas (2001) illustrated how mothers dreaded confronting their emotions concerning cross-border mothering. They preferred to attend to more urgent needs, such as finding sustainable jobs so that they could support their families (Parreñas, 2001). In my current study, it was crucial to understand participants' experiences within the context of their own lives and not mine (Watt, 2007). While participants acknowledged their emotional distress, finding sustainable ways of earning a living was their main priority.

I noticed that participants were comfortable with narrating issues around xenophobia and documentation. I assumed that they felt that I could relate to this since I was a non-South African citizen. Prior to my data collection, I had assumed that issues of documentation would be difficult to discuss since being undocumented is illegal in South Africa and may result in deportation. Therefore, in my semi-structured interviews, I did not include a question which directly asked about documentation. However, participants were comfortable discussing their migration status with me, which helped me to better understand their challenges in a nuanced manner.

5.5. Observations

Punch (2014) asserts that combining interviews with observations is a good strategy in qualitative studies because this strengthens data quality and interpretation. In my current study, to complement data that I had collected through semi-structured interviews, I conducted participant observations on selected aspects of participants' lives in Johannesburg. I observed aspects that addressed my research questions and were significant in understanding the context in which participants are located (Foster, 1996; Laurier, 2010; Marshall & Rossman, 1995). My observations included visiting some of the participants in their workplaces, attending church services, and joining them when buying stock for resale in Johannesburg inner city. This enhanced my understanding of participants' social worlds beyond our conversations during interviews. I recorded my observations at the end of each

observation day. Thus, I did not make notes during my observations. This is because participants would be uncomfortable with me carrying a notebook to regularly write notes when I was with them.

However, I was aware of my privileges as a PhD student, I was documented, that is, I had a valid passport, and a study visa. I also could afford to make phone calls back home and to travel regularly. McCurdy and Uldam (2014) illustrate that although the insider position in research may mean that the researcher may have blind spots on some issues, for example, in terms of interpretation, they have the advantage of being familiar with the issues under study. Based on the nature of my research topic, it was necessary that I build relationships based on mutual trust and respect (Iacono et al., 2009).

Noteworthy, as a Zimbabwean migrant I had members of my extended family who lived and worked in Johannesburg inner city, in Hillbrow, Berea, and Yeoville. For most of the year 2018, I stayed with my aunty in Berea, one of the places where some of my participants resided. I used to observe women's everyday activities within this area. While for me, Berea was conveniently close to my university campus, it was also important to do my field work while resident in the research area.

Most participants' religion was Christianity, and religion played a significant role in their lives. To understand more about the role of the participants' religion, I had the opportunity to join two participants, Bonakele and Jane, to attend their respective churches, and sat with them during the church services. Bonakele was a member of a Pentecostal church while Jane attended the Apostolic Faith church. Although their churches were different, they provided a safe space to connect with other women from around Johannesburg inner city, who often faced similar challenges. They openly shared their problems with each other and with church elders. They believed in God to see them through various challenges that they faced in South Africa. They had strong hope that God will one day answer their prayers concerning issues such as joblessness, documentation, problems in their marriages, and accommodation. Their belief in God gave them strength to continue working for their children and maintain hope for a better future.

I also observed that the church played an instrumental role in participants' perceptions of motherhood and mothering. Motherhood and marriage were highly valued in the church, and women were encouraged to embrace both. Womanhood was also taken as synonymous with motherhood. Being a mother was associated with being a respectable woman. In addition, special prayers were offered to those who were married but could not bear children. Having children outside wedlock was discouraged and seen as the work of the devil. Moreover, marriage was viewed as a heteronormative practice, where only a man and a woman could be married. Mothers were encouraged to be physically present in their children's lives and get to know and understand them. They were supposed to stay close to their children and provide both physical and emotional care, and mothers internalised these teachings. For Bonakele and Jane whose children lived across borders, these heteronormative teachings on motherhood heightened their anxieties. They emotionally struggled to reconcile these beliefs with their real-life circumstances.

Jane is a prophetess at the apostolic church that she attended. She offered healing services to congregants and prayed for women who were struggling to have children. She also offered her services to people around Hillbrow, even though some were not members of her church. Testimonies were given at the church of how her prayers had helped people secure jobs or documentation. In exchange for her services, women brought cash or gifts such as blankets and bed covers, as tokens of appreciation. Thus, Jane managed to generate income for her children.

I also had the privileged to observe Ruth at the 'kitchen.' It was a small corner shop in Hillbrow where she worked as a cook, cleaner, and waitress. There was a stove, a sink for washing dishes, a small refrigerator, and a small table with two chairs to work on. It was a small takeaway outlet, where people bought their food through a small window and there was no space for sit ins. When I was around, I helped her by sweeping the floor, washing dishes, or cutting potatoes for making fresh chips. She also sold bread slices, coffee, tea, and oats.

It was a very busy spot when schools were open. I noticed that her job was exhausting for her. Due to the nature of her job, I understood why she preferred not to bring her child to Johannesburg. She complained that the money that she earned from the kitchen was not enough to cover her expenses such as accommodation and electricity in Johannesburg. To

supplement her income, during the weekends Ruth had part time work as a domestic worker in Sandton. Through the combined income from domestic work and the kitchen she was able to financially sustain herself and provide for her family and child in Zimbabwe.

As a way of understanding different livelihood strategies that were employed by participants, I also accompanied Cecelia when she was going shopping in the inner city. She was stocking up for her trading business that she did when she was not waitressing. We were looking for winter blankets, bed covers and curtains. Before settling to buy at any store, we first had to move from one store to another for price comparison. She aimed to purchase items at a price that would enable her to resale them in the inner city at a fair cost while making a modest profit. I noticed that even though she made some money from this, the profit was low. I observed that shopping for cheaper items was exhausting and time consuming. Therefore, Cecelia could not afford to conduct her buying and selling business whilst having her two children with her.

Cecelia carried her cash money for buying stock in different pockets of her dress, in the event of being robbed, she could at least be able to keep some of her money. She had warned me earlier not to carry a high-quality cell phone because that would attract robbers. She warned that high-quality cell phones were easily snatched in the inner city. This fear of crime in the inner city is reason why I used to take an Uber to go to campus instead of walking. Although Wits is close to Berea, taking walks in the inner city while carrying a laptop was a risky endeavour. However, ordering an Uber proved to be challenging because drivers frequently cancelled their trips. When they did come, they expressed concerns about the crime in the inner city and encouraged me to swiftly drop-off before they speed away. This is how I recorded the experience I had with one Uber driver in my field notes:

"Once the GPS says I have reached my destination the Uber drivers were quick to say, 'please drop off very quickly and firmly close the door behind you'. One old man, an Uber driver, asked me, 'what does a woman like you want to do in Hillbrow? These are very dangerous places.' When I told him that I am doing a study based on the place, he became nostalgic, he started telling me about how this place was before foreigners settled there. How he wished the South African government will one day restore Hillbrow to its past glory. Now this place is the most dangerous place to be in

Johannesburg. Because here you can get shot anytime of the day” (Field notes, 17-10-18).

I have long been aware of criminal activities in Johannesburg inner-city, but the experiences with some of the Uber drivers intensified my fears. Helen worked in the inner city as a hairdresser, and she occasionally braided my hair. While observing what she did at the salon, I helped her with sorting out braids and combing wigs. She had her regular customers that usually came at the end of the month, hence she used to be busy during the month-ends. With the support of a dedicated group of women, as her clients, Helen could estimate her monthly income. However, during the month when she was not busy, Helen actively sought customers on the streets outside the salon. Moreover, there was stiff competition in her industry. She emphasised the need for her to rapidly learn local languages to effectively communicate with her potential customers. Since she originated from the DRC, she lacked proficiency in local languages such as isiZulu or isiXhosa, making it difficult to attract random street clients. Nonetheless, she was grateful that her earnings enabled her to pay her rent in Johannesburg and support her child back home.

During the data collection process, I wrote field notes and memos that were crucial for my data analysis (Bourke, 2014; Patnaik, 2013; Watt, 2007). Listening to audio recordings and transcribing them also aided my data analysis. I then printed out all the transcripts, to manually analyse them using open line-by-line coding and focused coding techniques, to identify key themes from the data (Charmaz, 2006). I shared the emerging themes with my participants, so that they could also engage and determine if I interpreted their experiences correctly. Furthermore, I engaged with fellow PhD students to check for any biases that could have clouded my judgements (Berger, 2015; Probst, 2015).

Although we were all migrants and mothers, our experiences varied in terms of work, education levels, social class, motivations for migrating, migration status, livelihoods, and sources of income. Some participants had no form of documentation, or they had an expired passport, while others struggled to get work permits or legalise their stay in South Africa. Due to the lack of documentation, securing stable employment was nearly impossible, for participants, leading them to depend on informal and precarious jobs. The economic

hardships that participants faced, forced some of them into illicit business dealings such as gambling and trading in fake money.

Upon self-reflection, I realised that I was privileged to have legal documentation in form of a study visa in South Africa. Additionally, having a scholarship enabled me to afford my living expenses and send money home to support my daughter as well as my mother. I could also afford to call my mother and daughter several times in a month. At least, I had some form of stability in terms of documentation and a source of income. For my participants, life in Johannesburg was quite unpredictable, some were uncertain of when they would have proper documentation, especially asylum seekers, due to challenges that they faced when engaging with the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) (Gordon, 2016).

Participants who were asylum seekers' challenges worsened their experiences of transnational mothering. They could not communicate with their children as often as they wished, due to high cost of international calls, yet they also had limited opportunities to visit back home and sending remittances was a challenge. These struggles were intensified by the high levels of crime in Johannesburg inner city. Most of the participants had experienced crime in the inner city, in form of muggings. However, some of the women's experiences resonated with my own, for example, we shared common struggles in terms of social and physical locations, our aspirations to have a better life, concerns for our children. We wanted to be better mothers and wished for a better life for our children, especially in terms of accessing better education.

As a single mother, I was keen to understand how married mothers experienced transnational motherhood and mothering. I wanted to understand the gender dynamics in transnational mothering. Talking to mothers who lived with their husbands or fathers of their children in Johannesburg inner city, made me confront my own situation as a single mother and reflect on the challenges of being a lone parent. However, I noticed that in many cases even if the father was present in their lives, the mother was the one who carries the burden of childcare. No participant talked about a father being engaged in the emotional or financial care of children that were left behind. Acts of caring were done exclusively by mothers.

It was unsurprising for me to realise, through my literature review on transnational mothers, that scholars highlighted the emotional challenges that are involved in mothering while not physically present with the children. Mothering in different geographical regions and socio-economic locations is associated with adverse emotional feelings, such as anxiety, depression, or guilt for seemingly 'abandoning' their children (Carling et al., 2012). Research also acknowledges that the process of migration is essentially disorienting and disruptive (Zentgraf & Chinchilla, 2012).

Migration as disorienting may be worsened for migrant mothers, who choose or are forced by various circumstances to leave their children behind. However, although it was difficult, residing away from their children, mothers in my current study were focused on finding and exploring livelihood strategies than nursing emotional distress. I realised that there were aspects of wellbeing that were being overlooked by previous studies on transnational motherhood. Therefore, there is need to broaden the understandings of wellbeing in localised contextual situations. The use of subjective wellbeing measures allows for more nuanced conceptions of wellbeing in relation to transnational mothering experiences.

While conducting this study, I had to reflect on migration within the African continent, since this study is based on participants that originated from three African countries. I initially had assumed that emigration from Africa was mainly to the United States of America or European countries. However, through engaging with the literature on migration in Africa, I realised that migration in Africa is predominantly within the continent (International Organisation for Migration and Africa Union Commission, 2020). Sensationalist media coverage on migration in Africa often reports about 'floods' of Africans crossing the deadly seas and oceans on daily basis trying to reach Europe. Yet, studies suggest that migration in Africa is mainly within the region and is driven by factors as shared culture and ethnicity across borders, conflict, and a search for better livelihoods (Adepoju, 2011).

5.6. Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed various ways in which reflexivity has been described in literature. I also engaged with the challenges of reflexivity, as identified in literature. I demonstrated my capacity to engage in reflexivity within my current study. Firstly, I revealed how my personal

life experiences influenced my choice of the research topic. Secondly, I demonstrated how different aspects of my identity influenced my interpretation of participants' experiences and informed my analysis. In the next chapter I present and discuss the findings that I obtained from this study.

CHAPTER SIX

Insecure Subjectivities: Mothering Amid Precarity

'...yes, I am a mother, but I am not a mother...'

6.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed my positionality in the research process. I explained the impact of my personal experiences and values on my selection of the research topic, interaction with participants, data collection, and analysis. Studies have indicated that even though mothering may be viewed as an individual and personal matter, it is undeniably influenced by the social and physical context in which it is performed. For instance, the intersections of societal institutions, such as ideals on culture, family, or marriage and societal categories of race, gender, and class in different places, shape perceptions and experiences of motherhood and mothering (Collins, 1994; 1995). In this chapter, I present and discuss participants' perspectives on mothering within the context of migration.

I contend that during the process of (re)defining motherhood and mothering, participants' perspectives were entangled with conflicting thoughts and emotions. Their perspectives on mothering were characterised by shifting subjectivities as they attempted to align their real-life mothering experiences with societal standards, that are based on cultural gender norms and values, often acquired from their own upbringing and social background. This is consistent with Ettlinger (2007) who detaches precarity from particular geographical sites and associates it with individuals' expressions of emotions and thoughts, based on real life experiences. Examining manifestations of precarity from participants' emotions offer a nuanced understanding of transnational motherhood. Additionally, it illuminates insecurities in existential, material, and social dimensions of transnational mothering (Allison, 2012). My argument is based on three broad themes drawn from participants' narratives, which pertain to attributes of a good mother. These themes include the importance of being physically present, the role of mothers as primary teachers of societal norms and values, and mothers as central figures in families.

6.2. The importance of being physically present

In their conceptualisation of motherhood and mothering, participants constantly referenced to an idealised version of mothering, that is, which represents their imagination of what mothering should look like under perfect circumstances. This is closely linked to the literature on motherhood such as Hays (1996) on the intensive ideology of motherhood, who indicated that idealised normative ideologies of mothering play an influential role in women's lives. In this ideology, "...the methods of appropriate child rearing are construed as child centred, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labour intensive, and financially expensive" (Hays, 1996: 8). Moreover, the intensive mothering ideology assumes that mothering takes place within the home, where the mother and children share the same space, and she should be constantly available to meet her children's needs by spending ample time with them. In this way mothers will selflessly care for their children by putting their needs first ahead of their own (Hays, 1996).

Furthermore, the intensive mothering ideology assumes that mothers have access to economic resources, without working for them outside the home, and that they would always choose to be home. This prescribed mothering script poses challenges for individuals with limited financial resources. Feminists have criticised intensive mothering ideology for seemingly universalising mothering experiences and disempowering women, since it does not align with real-life experiences (Collins, 1994; Craig & O'Dell, 2011; Hallstein, 2008; Johnston & Swanson, 2003; Middleton, 2006; Phoenix & Woollet, 1991). However, scholars have argued that mothers frequently use the intensive mothering ideology as a measure to assess their own mothering strategies and to judge others, even though majority of women, regardless of their social class, do not practice it (Glenn, 1994; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Johnston & Swanson 2007; Stone, 2007).

The current study's participants constantly emphasised the importance of geographical proximity when defining what they regarded as effective mothering. They assumed that the ideal interaction a mother can have with her children is when they closely share physical space within their home, on a daily basis. According to participants, in the framework of intensive mothering, mothers are expected to care for their children, husbands, and other family members. This can also be attributed to traditional African ideologies of motherhood, where

a mother is seen as a central figure in the family, where she is expected to make family members feel at home (Campbell, 1990; Oyewumi, 2001). When asked what a good mother is, Buhle explained as follows:

“...the mother should stay with the family and look after the children and make sure their needs are met while on the other hand a father works to provide for the family’s needs but because of the situation that we are now living in many mothers do not have the fathers of their children, so they do not have any options they just have to find work and support their families...” (Buhle, 15-05-19).

Noteworthy, above Buhle first considered what mothers should do in an idealised manner before she reflected on her lived experiences. She believed that a mother should stay at home and care for her children. In addition, she located mothers within the family, in a traditional context, where fathers are expected to provide for the family, while mothers are devoted to nurturing children. However, after she mentioned that mothers should stay at home and manage their families, she reflected on her lived experience and realised that there are exceptions. Buhle was a proud single mother of four children, she was once married and later divorced due to abuse from her husband and in laws. As a single mother she could not afford to be home with her children but had to work outside her home country to provide for them.

Moreover, Buhle was aware that she was not the only one in this situation; many mothers, including those who are married work far from their homes to support their families. Research on transnational motherhood has revealed that the primary motive for migration is to enable mothers to provide for their children and improve their overall quality of life (Contreras & Griffith, 2012; Madziva & Zontini, 2012). However, her idea of a good mother did not match her current circumstances. Central to their perspectives on mothering, participants believed that financially providing for their children so that they could access better education and health services, was not enough in characterising them as good mothers. They argued that as biological mothers they were supposed to give affection to their children – in the same geographic space. Thus, although there were mother figures whom they entrusted with childcare responsibilities, they could not offer sufficient love and affection to their children, compared to the biological mother. Miriam succinctly expressed this as follows: *“...yes, I buy them stuff and send them money and when they come this side, I take them to the malls and*

show them nice places but then still they miss that love that only a mother can give...” (Miriam, 19-10-18).

For Miriam, the mothering role that she played in her children’s lives, was mainly being a provider. Although Miriam economically sustained her children, it could never be enough, compared to a mother’s love. Furthermore, she believed that she had done her children injustice by denying them of mother’s love. Miriam argued that merely buying her children’s necessities and sending money for expenses and school fees was insufficient to classify her as a good mother. Jane echoed Miriam’s sentiments; she felt that her mothering role was compromised since she lived far away from her children. This is how she explained this:

“...it is painful (to live far away from her children) because I gave birth to these children and now it looks like I have left them behind, but I just console myself by telling myself that I am here because of them... even though I buy them the things they want I don’t feel like I am doing enough as a mother to those children I wish I could do more...”
(Jane, 15-05-19).

Literature indicates that, in many societies, women are still regarded as capable of effortlessly giving emotional care to their children, in nurturing them to adulthood (Barlow & Cairns, 1997; Parreñas, 2005). Literature suggests that when mothers engage in daily activities of care such as cooking, feeding, and offering emotional care to children, they develop emotional connections which are fundamental for familial bonds (Falicov, 2007). As previously discussed, owing to cultural gender expectations, emotional care of dependent children is regarded as the primary reproductive role of mothers (Parreñas, 2005). Similarly, other studies demonstrate that participants continued to provide emotional care to their children even though they are separated by international borders (Boccagni, 2012; Fresnoza-flot, 2009; Lutz & Palenga-Mollenbeck, 2012; Parreñas, 2005; 2008).

While my current study’s participants acknowledged the need to reside and work in South Africa to afford their children’s living costs, they also believed that this alone was insufficient. For them, not being able to give motherly love in close proximity undermined their role as mothers. For Jane, in the quotation above, the fact that she was unable to physically provide emotional care to her children was equivalent to abandonment. Participants also

demonstrated their belief of children needing emotional care and guidance from a mother when they reach important growth milestones. They suggested that developmental stages such as puberty could be traumatic for children, in the absence of their biological mothers. For example, Cecelia explained:

“...you know how it is these days girls get their first menstrual period very early in life so I think when that happens its always best that she is with her mother even if she doesn’t tell me I will quickly see it because I am close to her and then I can see how I can assist her...” (Cecelia, 19-10-18).

For Cecelia, mothering entailed actively participating in her daughter’s life. Thus, being physically present for important moments of her daughter's growth and development. Cecelia was worried that her daughter may experience her first menstrual cycle in the absence of her biological mother. In addition, Cecelia believed that only a biological mother can appropriately deal with her daughter’s first menstruation. Bonakele shared similar sentiments to those of Cecelia, but concerning her teenage son:

“... I have realised that I have done enough harm in the life of my son by being so far away from him because he is a teenager now and I am not there to guide him you know how difficult this stage is for children and I just have to pin my hopes on my mother and continue praying for him... I cannot go there, and he cannot come this side, we tried this, and it failed... it’s sad because I do not get to understand the stages that he is in life for instance when he came to visit, he had pimples all over his face and I didn’t know whether it’s puberty or it’s just an allergic reaction... I didn’t know how to ask him...” (Bonakele, 16-05-19).

Again, owing to cultural gender norms that assume that mothers are better positioned in giving emotional care and guidance to their children, Bonakele felt guilty for not being able to provide such care. Cross-border migration separated Bonakele from her son and strained their relationship. She could not ask about the physical changes that she would have observed from her son’s body. She was left guessing if her son was on puberty or had an allergic reaction. Even though physical proximity did not always guarantee stronger emotional

relationships between mothers and their children, this expectation remained and to a certain extent exacerbated the guilt that was felt by transnational mothers.

Dreby (2006) found that mothers were anxious that their daughters went through developmental stages in their absence. They used phone calls to advise their children about the dangers of antisocial behaviour and encouraged them to maintain good morals (Dreby, 2006). Meyers and Rugunanan (2020) conducted a study on Somali migrant mothers in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, whose children remained in Somalia. They found that the mothers regretted being physically absent, during their children's growing years. Mothers also regretted not partaking in their children's special occasions (Meyers & Rugunanan, 2020). These tensions were heightened when participants reflected on their own childhood experiences, with a focus on how they were mothered. They explained how their own mothers spent ample time with them at home while their fathers provided for the family, which is contrary to their situations. They argued that, their circumstances undermined their roles as mothers because they could not be there to prepare their children for adult life.

6.3. Mothers as teachers of societal norms and values

For Bonakele, as a mother, proximity to her children, was crucial. She contended that it was an effective way for a mother to teach her children their cultural norms and to discipline them. Her narrative, below, suggests that when a mother is far from her children and family, her authority is compromised and her decisions are often taken for granted:

"...the truth is it will never be the same talking to a child over the phone and talking to the child face to face... you see a child has to see your facial expressions when you reprimand them so that he can understand that you are not happy about what he has done and he just has to stop it...so it's not easy talking and doing all that over the phone it does not have much impact but it's just that I do not have a choice I will just have to talk to him over the phone..." (Bonakele, 16-05-19)

Bonakele stated that she was unable to provide guidance and instil discipline in her son's life because she lived far away from him. The issue of physical distance between Bonakele and her son was central to how she reflected on the idea of a good mother. Bonakele emphasised the importance of face-to-face communication with her children, especially when they would

have made a mistake. Thus, she seemed to feel that communication with her son over phone calls was not effective. She felt that in her absence, her son could not be taught proper manners. Literature on motherhood highlights that, in various cultures, mothers are expected to be better positioned to socialise with their children (Ruddick, 1989). Moreover, traditional African concepts of motherhood suggest that mothers should nurture positive relationships with their children, this would enable them to provide both affection and guidance to meet their children's developmental needs (Littlefield, 2007; Magwaza, 2003).

In contrast to the above participants, for Buhle, other family members were capable of imparting societal norms and values. However, she also believed that only a biological mother's teachings could have a lasting impact in a child's life. Buhle also reflected on her own childhood and realised that she shared the same physical space with her mother, which was essential for her because she could richly learn from her physically present mother. She explained,

"...yes, I think that is important as it is, we stayed with our own mothers and we were taught how to respect elders and our culture by our mothers... only a mother can be able to teach such things..." (Buhle, 15-05-19).

The current study's participants worked hard to sustain their families back home by sending remittances and essential materials such as groceries and clothes. However, they still perceived themselves as not fully meeting the social standards of being good mothers. Research indicates that these emotions are a natural component of the ambivalence inherent in the role of motherhood. Maternal power comes with moral responsibilities that can be difficult to fulfil, especially in difficult circumstances (Oberman & Josselson, 1996; Roxburgh, 1997). Buhle stated that to be able to sustain her family back home, she had to be in South Africa. She also believed that even though relatives could discipline her son, only a biological mother could reinforce effective discipline.

Similar to Buhle, MaNdebele's narrative below suggests that children should know their mother's principles on morals, so that they can learn from her and be able to apply them as they grow. MaNdebele believed that a mother should play an instrumental role in imparting knowledge that can shape her children's morality. Her obstacle was that she was not

geographically close enough to her children, to exert a significant social impact on their lives. Furthermore, MaNdebele believed that a mother is well-equipped to teach children cultural norms and values, so that they can grow to become responsible adults. However, she believed that she fell short of being a good mother, because her children did not know the moral behaviour which was acceptable to her. Her mothering role was reduced to merely providing her children with money, groceries, and clothes that she bought from South Africa. This is how her children knew and acknowledged her as their mother. Below, she evaluated herself as a mother:

"...yes, I am a mother, but I am not a mother ... because my own rules they do not have... and they do not know... I am just a mother because I send them things that they want because they know that this thing was bought by my mother yes, I am a mother, but I am not a mother..." (MaNdebele, 11-05-19).

Ruth also shared the same sentiments, as MaNdebele. Ruth emphasises that mothers were responsible for their children's future outcomes. Moreso, she contended that mothers play a vital role in their children's lives by ensuring that they are responsible and respectable members of society. Below is her narration:

"...a mother should be able to be respected by her children, whether children grow up to be respectable people in society it is all because of a mother's works... what children should eat in the house it's all works of the mother the needs of the family it is a mother's responsibility..." (Ruth, 21-10-18).

Sakhile also had similar perspectives, as Ruth and MaNdebele, on the role that mothers should play in instilling discipline in their children's lives. According to Sakhile, mothers' guidance is crucial in helping children grow to be respectable members of society:

"...a mother should be able to monitor the household even though the father is usually the head of the house the mother is the one who sees to it that the family gets enough love... also discipline and teach them respect because we all know respect comes from the mother..." (Sakhile, 13-10-18).

According to Rebecca, children are more responsive to advice when it comes from their mother.

"...children always take advice from their mother seriously, so I think the mother is the one who is supposed to be playing that role...children should know how to respect adults, how to behave in public, you know... how to treat others with respect..."
(Rebecca, 11-05-19).

Participants' perspective in this section are not unique to participants of this study. In numerous societies, mothers are expected to prepare their children for adulthood through socialisation. Literature suggests that, in various societies mothers are expected to pass on the norms and culture values to their children, to prepare them for adulthood (Arendell, 2000; Ruddick, 1989).

6.4. Mothers as central figures in families

Through reflections on their role as mothers, participants viewed themselves as central figures of families. When asked about the role of a mother within the family, this is how Bonakele explained:

"...you know I am a failure in that area yes that's what I call failure ... you know I don't know where to start at times if I think about it deeply I just cry...I am telling you especially when I am alone ... when I think about my child I just cry ... that's the only sin that I did on myself, you see my mother made sure that she was there when we were growing up, now she has to mother my child again that's just unfair ... I think I should be doing my part as a mother because my mother is now old, she has to rest you know what I said earlier about what a mother should do in the family ...I said those things because I know those are the things that I know a mother should do" (Bonakele, 04-10-18).

Bonakele's approach to mothering her son differed from how she was mothered, because she was geographically separated from her son by state borders. This weighed heavily on her heart that she considered leaving her son behind as an unforgivable sin. She longed to be physically present in her son's life, yet she could not afford this. Moreover, Bonakele felt guilty

for imposing the everyday childcare duties on her mother, who was elderly and deserved respite from such responsibilities.

Literature indicates that while individual perceptions on motherhood and mothering may be subjective, to some extent, these views of motherhood tend to draw from women's social positions and culture, especially beliefs that are related to gender (Arendell, 2000; Bassin et al., 1994; Glenn, 1994; Millman, 2013). In this manner, intergenerational processes within families continuously influence how mothers perceive motherhood in relation to notions of childhood and various roles that family members play (Heisler & Ellis, 2008; Ribbens, 1994). In the quotation, above, Bonakele associated her views on motherhood with her personal history and the role that her own mother played in her upbringing. Despite the vital role that Bonakele played in her family back home through remittances, she believed that she was not fully meeting her responsibilities as a mother. To highlight some of the contradictions in her perspective of what mothers should do, she spoke about aspects of mothering, such as not being physically present, that disqualified her as a good mother to her son. According to Bonakele, mothers should physically stay with their children because that is what she observed when she was a child, something contrary to her own mothering conditions.

Likewise, Sakhile believed that residing and working in Johannesburg, distant from her children, is detrimental to her role as a mother. This is how she explained this:

"Yes, I do that a lot I think about that a lot because I start to ask myself, but I grew up with my own mother and all the love that a mother can only give ...why am I allowing this child to grow up without a mother you see that way I have failed as a mother..."
(Sakhile, 13-10-18).

Sakhile reflected on her childhood and realised that she was privileged because she stayed with her own mother and enjoyed motherly love. Her own children were under their grandmother's supervision, and she blamed herself for not being physically present in their lives. She viewed this circumstance as an injustice to her children, and therefore, she struggled to perceive herself as a good mother, despite fulfilling the role of a provider for the family. Sakhile's sentiments were echoed by Buhle below:

"...I think they believe I have neglected them and for sure it does seem so... it's difficult to separate with your children because every time when I call them, they always ask when am I coming, this clearly indicates that they need me in their lives and it breaks my heart because I only get to see them once a year..." (15-05-19).

Participants highlighted that often they felt as though they abandoned their children by leaving them behind. This is worsened by the fact that majority of them only visited their children once at the end of the year. This was due to their busy work schedules that did not allow for time off at work, so that they could spend time with their children. They could not travel back home often, and spend quality time with their children without compromising their jobs. Lack of financial resources was another issue, that affected their preparation for the trips to go home. Mothers needed money for their travelling expenses and to buy gifts for their children as well as their care givers. Participants believed that a home without a mother lacked the nurturing and warmth that only a mother could provide. Mothers' physical absence from their family affected their children and the rest of their family members. This is how Sikhangele explained:

"...I think a mother is a very important person in the family because she is the one who looks after the children and that they have eaten and that everything is going well for everyone in the family...yes, you know a home is never a home without a mother but with the current situation you are forced to move away from home and look for a job... especially if you are a single mother like me, you must feed your children..." (Sikhangele, 12-10-18).

Charity believed that mothers brought life to the family. She illustrated as follows:

"...you know a family stands because of a mother so a mother is the glue that holds the family together and mostly like since the old times when most women were not working when there is a problem in the home people will say but where was the mother [...] so I think it's from there a mother has to take care of not only her children but of everyone in the home..." (Charity, 09-10-18).

Although participants desired to be with their children, most of them firmly expressed that, for various reasons, they would not bring their children to South Africa. Some women

explained that if they brought their children to Johannesburg, they would face similar challenges that their mothers faced, mostly due to issues related to documentation. Participants also reported personal security as not always guaranteed in the Johannesburg inner city, due to high crime rates. Mothers expressed fears concerning the safety of their children in Johannesburg's inner city, for example, as Sikhangele explained:

"South Africa is something else for children... fine it's alright you understand but for me it's not right because a child is not safe here... you see back home children are safe a child can walk very long distances alone and you will never here news that the child has disappeared or that the child has been hurt by someone she can even go and play with neighbours and be safe unlike here you cannot even allow your child to go and play across the street..." (Sikhangele, 12-10-18).

Apart from perceiving Johannesburg inner city as an unsuitable environment for nurturing children, most participants had experienced crime on several occasions. For instance, Charity was once mugged in church. This shows that even though church can be perceived as a safe space – it is not absolutely safe in the inner city. Below is what Charity had to say,

"...sometime this year at church when we were doing all night prayers a group of armed robbers popped in and demanded that we hand over our belongings like handbags and cell phones..." (Charity, 09-10-18).

Miriam also witnessed violent crime in the inner city, and she said,

"...I was coming from work again two guys shot at a man walking in front of me I was terrified [...] there are many incidents I can tell you about crime here..." (Miriam, 19-10-18).

The prevalence of violence and crime in the inner city compelled mothers in my current study to accept living apart from their children for extended periods. Contrary to other studies, such as Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997), where transnational mothers asserted that they did not abandon their children, participants in my current study felt that they neglected them even though they financially provided for them. For this reason, participants believed that a mother's physical presence at home was more important for her children, and other family

members. According to the participants, it was only a mother who could make everyone in the family feel truly at home. For MaNdebele, unlike the father, only a mother could notice if children were not feeling well without them saying anything. Below is how she explained:

"...a mother is life in the family because with a mother you can tell her anything, but you cannot do that with a father...you know a mother understands her children even when the children are not saying anything at all the mother can always see what is wrong with them..." (MaNdebele, 11-05-19).

Literature highlights that normative perceptions of motherhood often assume that mothering duties are performed within the confines of a physical, private space at home (Falicov, 2007; Hays, 1996). In this manner, mothers engage with their children, providing them with everyday care such as teaching them personal hygiene, ensuring that meals are prepared and consumed on time. It is important to note that these acts of physical labour require the mother's physical presence at home. As such, cultural interpretations of mothering locate a mother's place within the home, where she attends to children's needs and guides them into adulthood (Glenn, 1994). These normative interpretations of mothering tend to confine women to private space, at home and therefore limit their participation in public life (Middleton, 2006). According to Prudence, a home cannot be a home without a mother, as she explained, *"I think a mother plays many different roles in the family her position is very important she looks after the children and everything in the house is known by the mother... if there is no mother then a house cannot be a home..."* (Prudence, 17-05-19).

MaNdebele and Prudence's perceptions on the role of mothers in families and mothering, did not align with their own positions back home, and mothering strategies. These mothers did not share the same physical space with their children and, they did not perform everyday childcare activities, such as, cooking, bathing, and helping children with their homework. Literature recognises that normative assumptions on motherhood and mothering roles hold significant influence over the shaping of motherhood perceptions, including concepts such as intensive motherhood (Hays, 1996; Stone, 2007). These constructions tend to confine mothers to the domestic space and limit their participation in the public space in terms of working and career development (Craig & O'Dell, 2011; Hallstein, 2008).

Resultantly, women who deviate from conventional mothering practices often face social ostracism for their distinctive approach to mothering. They experience judgment from society, and they also judge themselves for not conforming to the established model of ideal mothering. Being transnational mothers, participants were mothering in non-normative ways. As such, they believed that even though they played an important role in their children's lives, particularly in sending remittances for everyday expenses and schooling, they fell short of being ideal mothers.

6.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I demonstrated that participants' perspectives on motherhood and mothering do not align with their lived experiences. Despite taking on productive roles in terms of providing economic support, participants judged their mothering roles and strategies drawing from various sources, such as their own ideals of families. I have illustrated how transnational motherhood presents conflicting emotions and perceptions in participants' narratives. I used participants' voices to illustrate the ambivalence that is frequently embedded in motherhood, both as a social construct and lived experience, for those mothering in non-normative ways. In the following chapter, I discuss how insecurities related to unstable jobs and livelihoods shape their mothering roles and strategies.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Transnational mothering and work-related insecurities

'...I got a job but soon I was jobless again I worked again for 3 to 4 months and became jobless again...'

7.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed participants' perspectives on motherhood and their roles as transnational mothers. Participants drew from different sources of knowledge such as, their childhood or intergenerational histories to construct what they believed were attributes of a good mother. I highlighted how mothers' beliefs regarding their positions and roles within families are incongruent with their actual mothering experiences, resulting in insecure subjectivities. In this manner, economic precarity intersects with and produces precarity in other dimensions of transnational mothering, for example, maintaining cross-border social relationships. These intersections have a significant impact on the dynamics of the relationships that mothers nurture with their children, influencing the quality of communication over the phone and the frequency of visits back home. Precarious livelihoods destabilise social identities, social ties and undermine social relationships across the border (Allison, 2012; 2016; Chakkour & Koning, 2023; Ettingler, 2007; Tsing, 2015). It is crucial to emphasise that these economic uncertainties also create challenges in accessing decent housing. This means that even if mothers desire to bring their children to South Africa, they are unable to do so because their living conditions are not suitable for their children.

In the current chapter, I explore the influence of the environment in which participants reside, work, and perform their mothering approaches on their experiences. I argue that work-related insecurities profoundly shape transnational mothering strategies and the management of cross-border social relationships. This chapter discusses participants' experiences under three main themes, namely: unstable livelihoods, fragile social relationships, and precarious lives.

7.2. Unstable livelihoods

Consistent with previous studies, for participants, the primary motive behind their migration project was to provide for their children, especially, in form of remittances for everyday expenses (Bohr & Whitfield, 2011; Cheng, 2004; Contreras & Griffith, 2012; Dreby, 2009; Lutz & Paleng-Mollenberg, 2012; Parreñas, 2005; Tolstokorova, 2010; Zontini, 2010). Therefore, the success of transnational mothering is highly dependent on availability of financial resources to ensure that mothers stay relevant in their families and children's lives. In previous studies that were conducted in developed countries, mothers were employed mainly as domestic workers or nannies. Contrarily, participants in the current study were employed in various sectors of the informal economy. They worked as part time domestic workers, waitresses, hairdressers, and small-scale traders. Participants also spent some periods of time unemployed. To make ends meet, some participants engaged in illicit business activities, including trading with fake bank notes, and participating in gambling.

Therefore, most participants did not have a stable and reliable source of income or any form of work-related benefits such as paid leave or medical aid (Chen, 2012; Van Rooyen & Antonites, 2007). As previously discussed in the literature review, this study conceives precarious work in line with Vosko's understanding. Thus, work characterised by uncertainty, low wages and limited social benefits shaped by labour market insecurity, social context, and social location (Vosko, 2010). In this chapter, I examine the effects of precarious work in participants' lives. I conceptualise precarity as a state of insecurity and anxiety that affects various aspects of transnational mothers' existence due to marginalised livelihood strategies and informal work (Cruz-del Rosario & Rigg, 2019; Ettlinger, 2007; Hlatshwayo, 2019; Masenya et al., 2017; Waite 2009).

7.2.1. *Informal unpredictable work*

The availability of jobs and sustainable livelihoods is crucial for participants in fulfilling their mothering roles, making independent decisions, and exercising authority over their lives in Johannesburg and back home. Due to the nature of their livelihoods, mothers experienced various challenges that undermined their mothering strategies. Most participants reported that they worked on part-time basis. They often worked two to three times a week, which

earned meagre income. To supplement their income, they engaged in small scale trading where they sold commodities such as kitchen utensils, bedding, and clothes to communities in Berea, Hillbrow, and Yeoville. They would scout for these commodities in the Johannesburg inner city to resell for slightly higher prices. This struggle to make ends meet, had implications on their mothering strategies. Participants often struggled to meet their goals of sending remittances back home on time. For Sikhangele, finding decent work had been a struggle. This is how she explained her work situation:

"...I got a job but soon I was jobless again I worked again for 3 to 4 months and became jobless again...I help in covering our expenses here and there otherwise I use it (the money) the way I like... but these days I am not working so I rely on his money (partner) for everything sometimes I do get clients – I am a hairdresser by the way so if I get a client say for instance someone says I should plait them some dreads... and maybe I charge them R50 and I buy a few things in the house like I buy something for dinner that way I help him in a way" (Sikhangele, 13-10-18).

Her narrative revealed that there are times where she was unemployed and had no source of income. She also pointed out that she was a hairdresser, but clients were not always available. In addition, the prices that she charged for her services were too low, compared to what clients would normally pay in conventional hair salons. Given the unpredictability of her source of income, it was almost impossible to make long-term financial goals. According to Sikhangele, sometimes she relied on her boyfriend to help meet her everyday expenses. This situation might compromise her influence in the relationship and undermine her mothering strategies because she may not remit as much money as she would have desired.

Previous research has shown that women make up majority of the population of those working in the informal sector. They are most likely to work under precarious conditions where they earn low and unpredictable income (Cassirer & Addati, 2007; Kihato, 2007; Vearey, et al., 2011). Women engage in diverse forms of work, ranging from agricultural work in rural areas to employment in urban spaces where they are often deprived of their rights to work related benefits, such as medical care and paid leave (Moussie, 2016). For some migrant women in Johannesburg, they work in hairdressing, dress making, or as vendors on street pavements, where they often face harassment from law enforcement agents (Kihato, 2007).

For Bonakele, lack of income has led to disputes with her siblings back home, as they often pay for her child's school fees when she fails to send money on time. At the time of interviews, Bonakele and her husband did not have their own place to stay. They were staying with a friend from their church, who after understanding their situation offered to accommodate them for a few months until they could improve their situation. This is Bonakele's explanation:

"...we do fight (with her siblings) I wouldn't lie to you ... like there was the issue of school fees as I have told you, these days we are struggling we don't have our own place to stay so I was failing to send money for my son's school fees... the challenge that we have these days is the payment of fees I hear the fees has gone up and we are owing the school a lot of money... this year he was nominated to be a senior prefect which means he has to have a new blazer and imagine what that would cost me..."
(Bonakele, 16-10-18).

It is important to emphasise that when Bonakele was employed, she provided financial support to her child and other family members. However, when she failed to financially provide due to unemployment, her siblings found it hard to sympathise with her. Bonakele's main reason for migrating to South Africa was to find work and be able to send remittances back home so that her son's educational needs were catered for. However, she struggled to regularly honour her obligation, hence sometimes failed to send school fees on time. She could also hardly afford to buy stationery and other school requirements.

Most participants' obligation to provide for their children was reinforced by that they were single mothers. The common reasons for their single mothering were divorce, being widowed, or never having been married. Those who were married or living with partners, indicated that their partners were not supportive of their children back home. Mothers' failure to send remittances on time made them susceptible to criticism from relatives and care givers, who often assumed that they were living comfortably in South Africa and neglecting their responsibilities. Besides the scarcity of jobs in Johannesburg, participants highlighted that they worked long hours for meagre earnings.

Despite having a degree in Information and Technology, Cecelia worked in precarious conditions. She lamented about her job-hunting experiences in Johannesburg. She

complained about the poor working conditions and low income in different jobs that she had secured. Even though she had low income, she managed to pay her bills and financially sustain her family back home. Literature demonstrates that those working under precarious conditions have lower skills in the labour market and tend to earn low income even though they work for longer hours (Hewison, 2013). This is what Cecelia had to say concerning her work experiences:

"...so I started looking for a job it was difficult sometimes I will work in restaurants sometimes I will work in the kitchens as a domestic worker sometimes and then I worked at a restaurant for a long time and then I realised I worked very long hours there was no time to rest and the money was too little...I came up with a plan with the money that I was getting at the restaurant I started stocking up for this business that I now do I go to town and find things on sale blankets, kitchen utensils etc and I sell to people around here" (Cecelia, 19-10-18).

Miriam's situation was also precarious, when asked if she was earning enough money to provide for her family, and this is what she said:

"...not really that is why I am saying that I also buy and sell things because my pay is just too little it doesn't cover much so I have to make sure I sell my stuff to complement my pay... I work 3 days in a week in the kitchens" (Miriam, 19-10-18).

Prudence also narrated her work situation below. She worked for long hours, yet her salary was insufficient for daily expenses. She struggled to pay rent and commute to work:

"...I got a job working in a restaurant it was hard work I would spend about eight hours standing and I was earning very little something like R25 per day...I worked there for about three months and then I worked at Melrose as a cleaner I was getting R1500 a month and I had to leave that job because I struggled to make ends meet for example the issue of transport money and rent..." (Prudence, 17-05-19).

Participants reported that it was difficult to secure a stable job within Johannesburg inner city. For instance, MaNdebele who was a part-time domestic worker, her nature of employment was similar to some of the work conditions that other participants experienced.

She explained that she never agreed with her employer on the exact amount of money that she earned. She did not sign a formal contract; her employer only paid her irregular amounts of money for salary at the end of the month. Therefore, MaNdebele's life was marred with uncertainty. She could not make any long-term plans based on her income. It also became difficult for MaNdebele to make promises back home regarding remittances and other necessities. While she was grateful that she was earning something each month-end, her work conditions were appalling. This is how she explained the arrangement that she had with her employer:

"...I have a small job that I am doing but I cannot say it's something sustainable... it's like this other lady that I go to church with asked me if I am willing to take care of her child while she is at work and I agreed but we never agreed on the amount of money that I will be getting so she gives me whatever she has at the end of the month..."
(MaNdebele, 11-05-19).

More other participants had experiences that were similar to MaNdebele's. They experienced considerable vulnerability as a result of engaging in part-time and casual work. However, this finding is not unique to this study. Other studies have revealed that migrants in various locations often resort to perilous work as a survival strategy. They are also faced with institutional and legal barriers, such as lack of access to proper identity documents which could facilitate their access to decent employment and other services in the host country (Paret & Gleeson, 2016; Schierup et al., 2014; Standing, 2011).

The desperate need to earn a living amidst economic challenges and unstable employment has compelled Rebecca to participate in gambling to try and earn additional income. Her struggles for decent employment were exacerbated by that she was using an asylum seeker document as a form of identification. Studies conducted in Johannesburg indicate that the asylum seeker document was often rejected by employers, they considered it invalid (Landau, 2006; 2007). In her narrative below, Rebecca explained that she had previously gambled using funds that she and her husband had saved for rent:

"I once took the money that we had set aside for rent I think it was about R450 and gambled with it and I knew that I was risking because I played with all of it surprisingly,

I was very lucky because I got R9000...so these are the things I do to try and make ends meet here because as you know there are no jobs here ... sometimes you find work at a certain place and then you go there and they tell you we do not want this paper... I mean the asylum paper..." (Rebecca, 12-10-18).

Similarly, Ruth narrated that, at one point she was imprisoned because of engaging in illicit business activities. Faced with a desperate need for income due to long-term unemployment, Ruth considered trading with fake bank notes as a viable alternative to economically support her daughter and family. She was imprisoned after she was apprehended with fake bank notes at a retail store. This is how she explained,

"...life was becoming very difficult but still I would manage to send some money back home even if it means that I fail to buy myself some food, so I ended up working in this business of fake money and I ended up getting arrested..." (Ruth, 21-10-18).

Research asserts that undocumented migrants tend to work in the invisible sectors of the economy, due to fear of being deported. However, in the invisible sectors of the economy, migrants are most likely to be exploited (Paret, 2015). Studies have also demonstrated that some migrant women earn a living and economically sustain their families through working in criminalised sectors, such as sex work, where chances of experiencing physical violence and being arrested are high (Oliveira & Vearey, 2015; Vearey et al., 2011).

7.2.2. Documentation

Some participants were not documented due to various reasons, including expired passports or failure to renew their work or asylum permits on time. This lack of documentation limited their chances of accessing stable jobs in the formal sector. Cecelia, below, explained how challenges with documentation affected her:

"...by that time I had an asylum but it was difficult you know working in a restaurant and then you have to go and have the asylum stamped [...] working hours are hectic at a restaurant you can hardly have any time to be constantly stamping papers so in the beginning my boss would let me go and get the paper stamped and then there was

a day where I was supposed to go to Pretoria and have my asylum stamped but that day it was a very busy day at work so my boss refused” (Cecelia, 19-10-18).

She explained how she missed the opportunity to go to Pretoria to renew her temporary asylum seeker document, due to her busy work schedule. Her boss could not sympathise with her because he needed her at work on that day. As such, Cecelia was undocumented because she held an expired asylum seeker document. Bonakele also explained how lack of documentation was a significant impediment for her to find employment in Johannesburg. She stated that even if she got a job, when the employer discovered that she did not have the required documents, she began to face challenges at work. She said:

” ...I think it’s the fact that I do not have papers, or a work permit yes that’s a big challenge because sometimes you get a job and then they realise that you do not have papers that’s the end of you ... but when you have your certificates it’s a bit better...” (Bonakele, 04-10-18).

As a result of being undocumented, cross-border migrants find themselves having to contend with intersecting vulnerabilities that are associated with working in unstable and unpredictable working conditions (Vearey, 2013; Walker et al., 2017). In the current study, lack of documentation meant that participants had to navigate encounters with police officers who abruptly asked to see identification documents in the streets. Studies in Johannesburg have shown that migrant women are often susceptible to police violence and harassment, with incidents where police officers ask for bribes and solicit sexual favours (Kihato, 2013; Kiwanuka, 2010; Lefko-Everett, 2007). Miriam recalled how she was arrested together with other migrant women and spent some time in police cells. She was later released after her then husband bribed one of the police officers. She explained as follows:

” ...I was coming from work and they stopped the taxi that I was travelling in and they said that everyone should produce their ID or Passport [...] and many of us did not have any papers and they took us straight to Number 4 [...] at least the father of my children was still in the picture by then and he quickly came to take me he gave them some money and they released me...” (Miriam, 19-10-18).

Documentation and police harassment challenges create a sense of perpetual fear in the lives of migrant women, as the prospect of deportation becomes an ever-present reality. Due to the desperate need for documentation, many migrant women fall prey to unscrupulous individuals who pretend to be working for the South African Department of Home Affairs. They will discover that they have been deceived after paying huge amounts of money. For example, Sakhile was deceived by people who claimed that they would process her temporary asylum seeker document:

"...2010 I wanted to go and get asylum in Pretoria when I got to the offices somebody told me that names are being written over there I had no idea that there were people working inside there and they were people outside who claimed to be working for the Department of Home Affairs when in fact they were not and these people told me that I could get my Asylum with R1000 and since I had no idea how things work in Pretoria and just like that my money was taken by thieves claiming to be working for the department of Home Affairs [...]" (Sakhile, 13-10-18).

7.3. Fragile social relationships

7.3.1. *Compromised relationships with children*

A lack of reliable sources of income compromised some participants' key strategies of transnational mothering. There was need for mothers to keep constant communication with their children and care givers. This entailed having sufficient funds to facilitate communication through regular phone calls or using communication technologies such as WhatsApp which required buying mobile data. Regular visits back home also required that participants had the required documentation such as a valid passport or permit. As indicated above, some participants could not secure proper documentation. Moreover, travelling back home required a substantial amount of money, to afford gifts for their children and other family members. It is important to note that even though participants migrated within the African continent, the proximity of South Africa with their home countries does not mean that mothers made frequent visits back home.

Due to lack of financial resources, participants could hardly afford regular travelling home as they wanted to. They indicated that travelling home was expensive, especially for participants

from Ghana and the DRC. Most of the participants indicated that they could only afford to visit their children once at the end of every year. They had to save some funds for the whole year, so that they could visit home at the end of the year. During their visits, participants realised that their relationship with their children had been compromised due to long-term separation. When Prudence visited her daughter, she realised that they were no longer socially connected. For example, in their conversations Prudence felt as if she was talking to a stranger, because the conversation felt formal and irregular. She said, *"...we do talk but only serious things like I ask her, how is school? What position did you take in class? What do you want to do when you finish school?... nothing else..."* (Prudence, 17-05-19). Buhle also had a similar experience with her children, she said:

"...I think that maternal bond gets affected over time because I can see that they are closer to their grandmother than they are to me... I see that because they struggle to start a conversation with me when I go and visit them it takes time for them to be comfortable around me and I realise that these children did not even miss me..." (Buhle, 15-05-19).

Buhle felt that her children had a meaningful relationship with their grandparent (Buhle's mother), than with her. She further explained that, even when she visited her children back home, they did not show that they missed her because they seemed happy with their grandmother. Participants also indicated that their children struggled to recognise their authority but were more responsive to grandmothers and aunties who supervised them. Thus, participants reflected on how they realised that they did not know much about their children. For instance, knowing what their children liked and disliked. Below, is how Cecelia explained this:

"...the distance does affect our relationship you know when your child is growing up you should be able to see what they like and what they are doing, these things I only hear them when I ask his grandmother ... like when he comes here for the holiday, I have a lot of work trying to figure out what he likes..." (Cecelia, 19-10-18).

Therefore, participants felt that their positions as mothers and their mothering roles were undermined. Miriam also said that when her children visited her in Johannesburg, she could notice that they were not comfortable around her. The following is how she reported:

"...when they come to visit this side it's like they are not used to you eish [signs] that thing is so hurtful because it's as if they are not your children ... the way that they look at you... it's as if you are not even their mother I think the truth is they now take my mother as their mother because I never gave them love they got all that from their grandmother ... it takes time for them to get used to you" (Miriam, 19-10-18).

The income that mothers in the current study earned from their informal jobs was barely sufficient for them to maintain cross-border social relationships, through consistent, effective, and regular visits as well as communication. The participants mentioned that they preferred to purchase items that are needed back home or send remittances instead of making frequent visits, to avoid travelling costs. However, the prolonged periods of separation from their children compromised their relationships. Prudence was worried that the mother-child bond between her and her daughter was not there, as she explained:

"...that bond which should be there between mother and daughter is not there because we are not that close its like she has given up on me... when I visit them back home, she does not have any stories to share with me except ask me when am I returning back to Joburg..." (Prudence, 17-05-19).

In some cases, participants reflected on how their children found it difficult to call them 'mama'. For example, Sakhile narrated:

"...when I am there you will hear her calling me sister...she now says mama to my own mother I think it's because my mother is the one who is raising her ... this is because I never have enough time with her because you will realise that even when I go and visit the time I spend with her is not much you will realise that at work they only give me 2 to 3 weeks so that's not much time" (Sakhile, 13-10-18).

Due to the nature of their work, even if participants visited their children back home, it was only for a short period of time. The time that they got off at work was not sufficient to nurture

meaningful relationships with their children. In addition, even when some mothers accepted the compromised relationships that they had with their children, they also had to manage their relationships with people who were taking care of their children.

7.3.2. *Negotiating relationships with care givers*

Consistent with previous studies, when participants bought gifts and goods for their children, they also made sure that they bought gifts for their children's care givers, (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Horton, 2009). This was done to maintain good relations and to show gratitude for the work that caregivers were doing in caring for their children. However, despite such gestures, participants highlighted that their relationships with caregivers back home were not without challenges. Caregivers often had high expectations from participants especially in terms of remittances. This is how Bonakele related to this:

"...with those people you must keep sending them money and groceries and whatever they say they need at any time... it's difficult like now that my husband's contract expired but still the people back home expect something from us even though we told them that currently we are not working it's as if they believe we are living a good life here in Joburg and avoiding responsibility..." (Bonakele, 16-05-19).

As noted above, failure to send remittances on time was seen, by their relatives left at home, as a way of avoiding responsibilities. Participants highlighted that their relatives often assumed that life was relatively easy in Johannesburg and that jobs were easily accessible. Kihato (2013) talks about how migrant women in Johannesburg create an impression of success that they try to maintain to families back home, despite the reality being different. Therefore, the myth of Johannesburg as lucrative is maintained. So, when remittances are not forthcoming, children and care givers fail to understand that in fact, participants work hard to overcome several challenges to make ends meet. As Buhle explained below, children and caregivers left home would make unrealistic demands, based on the notion that she had enough money, she reported:

"...not all the time we are usually in conflict towards the end of the month because she would be making unrealistic demands, I am only human, and I am not making a lot of money I cannot send them each and everything that they want... they do not realise

that I do have commitments this side I have to pay rent I have to eat you know such things...so I think their grandmother will be thinking whatever she has asked for I do not take it seriously..." (Buhle, 15-05-19).

Buhle noted that her relationship with her mother was often problematic towards the end of the month, especially when she failed to send remittances and other monthly provisions. She highlighted that at times her mother made unrealistic demands which she found hard to meet. Additionally, participants emphasised that they had to maintain amicable relationships with their relatives, for the sake of their children. Although they recognised that the expectations set by caregivers were unreasonable, they realised that they had to do everything in their power to avoid falling short in the eyes of these caregivers. Jane asserted that she would rather borrow from her friends, if she receives demands from home, before she is paid.

"...imagine the money which I would have sent them it's so difficult to find [...] so when she tells me such things I get hurt and I try again to look for some money [...] I even try to run around and borrow from friends..." (Jane, 09-05-19).

Gracious' mother agreed to supervise and care for her child while she was away, with the condition that she promised to provide for the family. This is how she explained it:

"...she expects me to take care of her and be able to buy her clothes and anything which she might need but the most important thing that she always reminds me of is for me to send groceries on time because she does not want to go hungry..." (Gracious, 19-05-19).

Sakhile's mother also made similar demands:

"...like I said that my child is under the care of my mother when I went to leave her home my mother told me that as long as I am going to buy groceries and provide everything for the child, she does not mind taking care of her... even though my mother did tell me that I should provide... only for my child but I make sure I buy stuff for everyone in the family..." (Sakhile, 13-10-18).

In addition to unrealistic demands from caregivers, participants had to adapt to parenting styles that differed from their own. They highlighted some of the things that they were not happy about. For instance, Charity felt that her sister was occasionally violent when she disciplined her son:

“...you see someone who is not your child ... you see you realise that this child is not free around her yes, she is my sister but she is very harsh with children so it’s even worse when it’s not her child so those are the kind of issues that my child was worried about...” (Charity, 09-10-18).

The above challenges that participants faced with children and caregivers compromised their positions within the family and their mothering strategies. Literature indicates that precarity can compromise one’s self-identity, especially when they fail to economically sustain themselves and their families (Allison, 2013; Cruz-del Rosario & Rigg, 2019). Maintaining their identities as transnational mothers and ensuring their authority within families was difficult due to a lack of financial resources. Since these mothers spent prolonged periods away from their children, communication was crucial to assert their positions and remain relevant to families left behind.

7.3.3. Communication

Research on transnational motherhood has illustrated that communication is key for mothers to fulfil their mothering roles and meet their children’s material and emotional needs (Leifsen & Tymczuk, 2012; Parreñas, 2005). However, in the current study, participants highlighted that, it was expensive to regularly communicate with their children. Hence, they communicated only when it was necessary. For instance, they typically made phone calls usually towards the end of the month, to inquire about what was required and the due date for school fees. Due to strained financial resources, it was expensive for most participants to make phone calls as frequently as they wanted to. This implies that the amount of time that participants spent talking to their children was limited. They could not afford to engage in lengthy phone conversations that would enable them to stay well-informed about what would be transpiring in their children’s lives.

In contrast, studies that have been conducted elsewhere, have shown that transnational mothers successfully used various Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to maintain virtual emotional connections with their children back home (Chib et al., 2014; Leifsen & Tymczuk, 2012; Parreñas, 2005; Wilding, 2006). Chib et al.'s (2014) study on Filipina and Indonesian transnational mothers who were foreign domestic workers in Singapore, demonstrated the importance of communication technologies in connecting mothers to their children and care givers. The mothers utilised mobile phones, and Facebook to remain connected to their children's lives. Through these communication channels, they encouraged their children with their school work and helped them do homework through online chats (Chib et al., 2014). Contrary to these studies, in the current study, participants did not use such sophisticated ways of communication. They indicated that these methods of communication were expensive for them. Communication was done through ordinary phone calls and at times when they had mobile data, it was through WhatsApp. Miriam only called when it was necessary, for example at the end of the month when she wanted to inquire on the requirements at home:

"...calling home is very expensive sometimes I use R15 or buy airtime for R20 I know it's not much but when I call it's not for pleasure, I will be calling so that I get to hear what they want and they also know that when they receive my call they just have to get straight to the point otherwise airtime will soon be finished so when I call them once they answer they go straight to the point" (Miriam, 19-10-18).

During our conversation, Miriam made it clear that making phone calls was not for leisure, and her children understood that when she called, they should promptly inform her all about what is required at home before engaging in casual conversations. In this manner, the amount of time that she spent talking to her children was very limited and nurturing relationships through the phone became difficult or non-existent. As Buhle explained:

"I just phone as often as money can permit me calling is very expensive, I cannot call as much as I can so whenever I get the money, I call just to get the list of the things that they need and find out if they are ok..." (Buhle, 15-05-19).

Phone calls were used mainly for inquiring what was required so that they could send at the end of the month, whether groceries or money for school fees. When asked how often she called, MaNdebele had this to say,

"...I cannot say exactly after how long because it depends on whether I get the money or not... I usually have enough airtime to ask only important things and what they need..." (MaNdebele, 11-05-19)

Due to the casual nature of her work, MaNdebele could not plan exactly when to make calls to home because she was unaware of when she would be paid. This uncertainty at work impacted on her decision making in relation to communicating with her children. However, she explained that when she got paid, the amount of airtime that she could afford was mainly for asking for the list of items needed at home. Similarly, Bonakele said:

"...yes, I do try to phone but things have not been working well for me, so I phone as and when I get some money ... what I usually do is that sometimes I use my young sister's phone to communicate with him using WhatsApp..." (Bonakele, 05-10-18).

However, Rebecca she called every weekend, as she explained,

"...like every weekend I call them... I use about R30 it's not much I know but that's what I can afford as long as I can hear that they are ok, and they are not sick I am happy with that little time I am ok..." (Rebecca, 12-10-18).

Just like Rebecca, most participants could hardly afford airtime, to enable them to have lengthy conversations with their children and caregivers. Therefore, they could hardly build meaningful relationships with their children if conversations were limited to inquiring on the list of items to be bought or the amount of money needed for expenses. Given the above discussed challenges, participants were adamant that they did not wish to bring their children to Johannesburg. They cited various reasons including, accommodation issues, crime, xenophobia, and expensive day care centres for children and busy work schedules that made it impossible to nurture children.

7.4. Precarious lives in Johannesburg

7.4.1. Accommodation

Due to scarcity of financial resources, participants could not afford to have decent accommodation. Participants usually shared single rooms with friends, work colleagues, or relatives. Therefore, they lived in overcrowded spaces, with little privacy and high possibility of having one's possessions stolen. This is how Sikhangele, explained the accommodation situation where she stayed:

" ...in the flat we are 8...this flat has one bedroom ...we share that bedroom with a certain couple and then there is the sitting room which is shared by the landlord and other tenants and then there is the area that covers the kitchen it's also shared between tenants and then there is the balcony which is also a space rented by tenants..." (Sikhangele, 12-10-18).

Sikhangele and her partner shared a room with another couple – making up four people who were living in one room. Having her daughter coming to stay with her in Johannesburg would have complicated Sikhangele's situation. Sikhangele also stated that in Johannesburg, people frequently move from one flat to another, something which would negatively impact a child's life. Therefore, mothers sacrificed their own stability so that their children could have more stable lives back home, as explained by Sikhangele below:

" ...so here it's a place where having a child can be a burden imagine having to move places with my child in search of accommodation...not to mention the issue of schools when your child is now at school going age imagine today you are in this flat and tomorrow you are staying in another flat ... you might have to change even schools ... this is not good for children and how many times will you change schools..." (Sikhangele, 12-10-18).

MaNdebele, was not concerned about the nature of accommodation, whether she was comfortable or not, because all that she came to do in Johannesburg was to work and provide for her children. This is what she said, *"...all that we want here is just a place where I can lay my head down, I am not looking for a place to stay comfortably..."* (MaNdebele, 11-05-19).

For Sakhile, bringing her child to South Africa was not an option because the neighbourhood of where she resided was not a safe environment for children. Sakhile was worried about staying with people from different backgrounds whose culture felt strange to her. Below is what she said:

"...and worse we stay in these flats and we share small spaces in one flat with people from all walks of life we differ in religion language etc we believe in different religions you find that someone is doing some ritual there that is not good for children for instance I woke up one morning to a room filled with smoke ... my roommate was burning something... to convince the other person that what they are doing is wrong it's very difficult..." (Sakhile, 13-10-18).

7.4.2. Crime and xenophobia

In addition to accommodation challenges, participants reported issues of crime and xenophobia that was rampant in Johannesburg inner city. For Charity, in public spaces such as banks, where she had been, she had experienced xenophobic attitudes from the staff. She said:

"...um the very fact that you are in a foreign place you find that you cannot be treated like a human being even here in the streets when you are walking and people discover that you are a foreigner they treat you like dirt for example when you get into a place like the bank once they discover that you are a foreigner people change their attitude they start giving you a cold shoulder and they treat you unfairly..." (Charity, 09-10-18).

Bonakele echoed the sentiments similar to those of Charity. However, Bonakele experienced xenophobic sentiments at her workplace, where she was hired as a part-time domestic worker. Her South African workmates did not hide their resentments against her because she was a foreign national. She reflected on this as follows:

"...there is a woman that I work with ... that woman hates foreigners imagine we live in the same house we cook together and sleep in the same space but the way she hates people who are not South African worries me ... the other day she was talking to her

friend on the phone and she was saying people in Soweto are organising a protest they want to get into town and hit everyone who is a foreigner..." (Bonakele, 04-10-18).

For Sikhangele, high levels of crime in Johannesburg made the city an unsafe environment to raise children. According to her, a child can never be safe in Johannesburg because she believes it is common for children to be kidnapped. She narrated this below:

"South Africa is something else for children fine it's alright you understand but for me it's not right because a child is not safe here... you see back home children are safe a child can walk very long distances alone and you will never here news that the child has disappeared or that the child was hurt by someone she can even go and play with neighbours and be safe unlike here you cannot even allow your child to go and play across the street..." (Sikhangele, 12-10-18).

For Jane, raising her 15-year-old child in Johannesburg was not an option. She explained why, as follows,

"...you see the eldest of my children is 15 years ... here children her age they smoke they do clubbing and all sorts of things but back home it's not easy for a child that age to get into a night club ... the laws are very strict" (Jane, 04-10-18).

Jane said that it was challenging to supervise a child in Johannesburg, because children have too much freedom in the city. Jane argued that children were susceptible to corrupt influences such as drug and alcohol abuse. She expressed how age restrictions are not enforced in many areas in the inner city, for example in clubs and drinking places. Therefore, Jane believed that her children were safe if they stayed back home.

Miriam also believed that Johannesburg inner city has high levels of immorality, which is detrimental for children's social development. She thought that children that are raised in Johannesburg inner city were not well disciplined. It is also interesting to note that mothers lived in a space that they would not want their children to live in. This highlights the sacrifices that they made for their children, along with the realities of what they must forgo and compromise in their pursuit of being good mothers. Therefore, mothers' children could not be raised in Johannesburg because they believed that children raised in the inner city lacked

strong morals. In her narrative below, Miriam explained how she felt about raising children in Johannesburg:

"...we cannot even speak of safeness here we just leave everything in God's hands...the children that grow up here are something else like if you walk down this street just before you cross that road by that corner there you will find children in school uniform doing drugs there and sometimes you will find very young children kissing in school uniforms ..." (Miriam, 19-10-18).

7.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed some of the factors shaping transnational mothering strategies and experiences in Johannesburg inner city. I demonstrated how uncertainty in their jobs and livelihoods influenced other aspects of their lives as transnational mothers. For example, in social relationships with their children and caregivers. Although mothers managed to provide for their children in terms of clothes, food, and remittances for school fees and other services that their children required, they did so under difficult circumstances. I also discussed reasons why mothers were reluctant to bring their children to Johannesburg and prefer to raise them across borders. In the next chapter I explore the determinants of subjective wellbeing in participants' experiences.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Transnational Mothering and Subjective Wellbeing

I know my situation...

8.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I outlined contextual factors that mediate transnational mothering experiences in Johannesburg inner city. I demonstrated how challenges associated with employment and livelihoods have a bearing on various aspects of participants' mothering strategies, such as relationships with their children and the means and frequency of communication. These challenges raise two broad questions for this study's participants: (1) Has the migration project paid off for transnational mothers, in relation to their goals and aspirations? (2) Are transnational mothers satisfied with their quality of life in Johannesburg inner city? This chapter seeks to answer these questions by exploring the determinants of subjective wellbeing in participants' narratives, to illuminate their agency and determination in the presence of socio-economic challenges.

It is crucial to emphasise that although participants were faced with numerous challenges, they did not perceive themselves as victims. It was evident in the way that they expressed themselves that they were actively engaging with, "...existential challenges of life" (Keyes et al., 2002, p.1007). Notwithstanding the challenges that they faced in Johannesburg, participants managed to see the benefits of being in the city. They were able to understand that although life was hard, they were in a better situation than they were before migrating to South Africa. They embraced their daily problems as part of the sacrifices that they made for their children to have better lives.

Studies on transnational motherhood often portray the wellbeing of the mothers negatively, focusing on adverse psychological experiences such as anxiety, depression, sadness, and loss, mainly due to separations from their children (Bohr & Whitefield, 2011; Carling et al., 2012; Horton, 2009). Despite the significance of addressing these emotions, I contend that framing wellbeing in this manner tends to overlook mothers' agency and the influence of localised

contextual factors on their experiences. I explored participants' subjective wellbeing under the following themes: migration as emancipation, self-determination, amicable social relationships, redefining mothering roles, and hopes for the future.

8.2. Migration as aspiration

Consistent with previous transnational studies, participants perceived migration as means to a better life, thus, it offered them and their children, an improved socio-economic status (Contreras & Griffith, 2012; Millman, 2013; Munoz, 2019; Parreñas, 2008). Most participants reported that, without leaving their home countries, they could never provide their children with the quality of life that they now have, including access to good education and health services. In addition to securing their children's future, mothers migrated as a way of escaping various undesirable circumstances, such as fleeing political violence, escaping abusive marriages and the desire to start a new life in Johannesburg. For single mothers, the motive was to provide for their children because they believed that they had to undertake both roles of a father and mother in their children's lives. Although motives for migrating were different and complex amongst participants, what stands out is their ability to make independent decisions to address challenges that they encounter.

According to Cecelia, economic hardships played an instrumental role in her decision to migrate. Having graduated with a degree in ICT in one of the local universities in Zimbabwe, she struggled to cater for her daily expenses such as basic commodities and transport fares to work, although she was formally employed. During that time (2008), Zimbabwe faced high inflation rates which resulted in high food and fuel prices (Besada & Moyo, 2008; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006). After careful considerations, Cecelia decided to leave for Johannesburg in pursuit of better life and job opportunities. This is how she explained her decision to move to Johannesburg:

"...it was that time in Zimbabwe when they introduced bond notes...life was becoming difficult... and there was a fuel crisis I used to drive to work but then I ended up not doing that because having a car was becoming a stress so from there, I became so tired of work because sometimes we would work and not get anything at all we would be told that there is no money that is how I decided to come here..." (Cecelia, 19-10-18).

In the above quotation, Cecelia demonstrated her ability to make personal decisions by assessing her own circumstances within the broader structure in which she found herself in, such as the deteriorating economy, as indicated by her reference to inflation and a fuel crisis, which was experienced by Zimbabwe in 2008.

For some participants, migrating to Johannesburg provided an opportunity to start afresh after difficult and failed marriages. Buhle decided to move to Johannesburg after she discovered that her then husband had deceived her. When she had her second child in her marriage, she discovered that she was in a polygamous marriage because her husband was actually married before he met her. She could also foresee that her marriage could experience challenges that could be inspired by tribalism, she said:

"...we separated because the father of these children was not trustworthy in fact, he lied to me when we met and said that he was not married when he was married... after I had two children with this man, I discovered that he is married to another woman...I did not want to be in a polygamous relationship, and I was very young by then... and with this issue of tribalism I thought the marriage could stress me because this man was Shona and this woman was also Shona as you can see, I am a Ndebele I thought this marriage could be very stressful for me so I decided to leave..." (Buhle, 15-05-19).

Jane echoed Buhle's sentiments, as follows:

"...when I was around 13 years that's when I had my first child and I got married when I was 21 but he had serious issues he loved women so much [...] but then men always do that it's just that as people we are not the same some of us cannot be patient with such things that's why I said it's better that I just leave and see what life has for me in Joburg..." (Jane-10-18).

For Jane, relocating to the city of Johannesburg offered a practical solution to leave an unhappy marriage, and start a new life for herself and provide for her children. She demonstrated independent decision making and an awareness of her undesirable circumstances.

8.3. Self-determination

Some participants highlighted that even though they decided to seek better opportunities outside their home countries, leaving their children behind was a difficult decision to make. They indicated that they needed to master the courage to convince themselves that they were pursuing better economic opportunities for their children's sake. This is consistent with previous studies that demonstrate that leaving children behind is not easy for transnational mothers. They often feel as though they have abandoned their children (Bohr & Whitefield, 2011). The current study's participants reflected on the importance of self-determination when a mother migrates without her children, because it is not an easy decision to make. Bonakele explained how difficult it was for her when trying to break the news to her son about her departure for Johannesburg. It was so challenging that she ultimately left without telling him:

"...that was very painful to me ... even when I remember the day I left I just cry I just couldn't tell him so I decided it's better I leave when he goes to school because I was failing to tell him I was scared I was going to break down ... even telling my mother that I was leaving it was very difficult for me I wanted to tell her when there was still time but I ended up telling her when there was only one day left for me to go ...but at least I had hinted my intentions of going to South Africa ..." (Bonakele, 14-10-18).

For Sikhangele, seeing mothers with their children in Johannesburg triggered emotional distress as she was constantly reminded of her child back home. However, she constantly reminds herself that she had no choice but to migrate and work for the child. This is how she explained this:

"I cannot even begin to describe no I can't ...you see these children running around here [points to children playing] one of them runs with their mother and then some they run with their mothers and fathers... you know when I look at such things, I ask myself but where is my child... or when I see a mother eating fancy food with their children I begin to ask myself where is my child but then I tell myself that there is really nothing I could do..." (Sikhangele, 12-10-18).

When she encountered children with their mothers in Johannesburg, she was confronted with numerous questions regarding her own role as a mother to her child. Prudence also echoed Sikhangele's sentiments: she referred to her decision to leave her child behind as a sacrifice:

"...you remember when I asked you what is it that you wanted to talk about and when you told me I said that's the most difficult topic I can ever talk about ... this thing of not staying with my son torments me day and night ... it's part of the pain that I am supposed to endure I mean it's the sacrifice that I made by coming here..." (Prudence, 17-05-19).

Prudence explained the separation from her child as a sacrifice that she had to endure for a better future. This is consistent with several studies that were conducted in developed countries, where scholars noted that mothers constantly referred to their decision to leave children behind as a sacrifice (Tyldum, 2014). Studies have also revealed that, mostly in the first few months, mothers find it difficult to settle in host countries without their children (Moorhouse & Cunningham, 2012). According to Rebecca, she found it very hard to settle in Johannesburg after she arrived:

"...my heart was broken and for a few weeks since I arrived in Joburg I failed to eat properly like I did not even have the appetite for anything I was so stressed [...] to even thing of buying fancy food like KFC I couldn't because I will start thinking I am busy spoiling myself maybe my children are sleeping on an empty stomach today [...] even today I still don't eat fancy food unless I have bought them whatever they want and I know they are ok..." (Rebecca, 12-10-18).

For Rebecca, residing far from her children was traumatic in the first few days, she had elevated feelings of guilt and self-blame. Studies have demonstrated that feelings such as loneliness, sadness, anxiety, guilt, and depression are common in the experiences of transnational mothers (Bohr & Whitefield, 2011; Carling et al., 2012; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Horton, 2009; Parreñas, 2001; 2005).

Contrary to studies that have been done elsewhere on generational impacts of participants were also mothered by transnational mothers (see for example, Phoenix and Seu, 2013), in this study participants indicated that in their childhood, they lived with their own mothers.

Participants highlighted that being nurtured by their own mothers when they were young now heightened their anxieties in relation to distant mothering. In the current study, participants indicated that in their childhood, they lived with their own mothers. Participants highlighted that being nurtured by their own mothers when they were young now heightened their anxieties in relation to distant mothering. Some of these participants indicated that they endured criticism from friends and relatives who viewed their decision to leave children behind as tantamount to abandoning them. For instance, MaNdebele whose words I used to introduce this chapter, had this to say:

"...they were people who saw my decision to come to SA as irresponsible but then I told myself that if these people are not going to help me with money to take care of my children, then they are in no position to decide what I want to do with my life... my own mother passed away two weeks before I left for SA and so people were saying this was not the right time for me to leave but I did not listen to them because I know my situation..." (MaNdebele, 04-10-18).

In the above narrative, MaNdebele demonstrated determination in the face of criticism from her family. She understood her situation and had the ability to challenge certain cultural norms that dictated her behaviour. She paid less attention to judgements from her relatives by embracing her situation and behaving in a way that she believed was beneficial for her children. As previously discussed, studies have revealed that migration affects men and women in different ways (Fresnoza-flot, 2009). MaNdebele's relatives did not expect her to make the decision to migrate to South Africa leaving her children behind, especially after her mother's death. Additionally, when Buhle was asked if there were people who thought her decision to leave her children behind was irresponsible, she answered:

"...yes, there were... but then they soon realise why I am here because my children hardly lack anything, for instance you realise that they have bicycles something that I could not buy when I worked in Zimbabwe...so I think they also wish they could come this side, but they are not bold enough..." (Buhle, 04-10-18).

For Buhle, the desire to provide for her children outweighed people's opinions about her decision to migrate, leaving her children behind. She believed that leaving her children behind

was a brave decision that only a few mothers are willing to take. Her narrative also suggested that she was proud of being able to provide for her children as she stated that she buys them luxurious gifts like bicycles.

This is consistent with research conducted in places such as North America and the Philippines. Studies have reported that mothers often experience social stigma for seemingly being bad mothers who are pursuing self-interests in developed countries at the expense of their children (Bernhard et al., 2005; Erel, 2002). As such, transnational mothers are often blamed for child delinquency and moral decadence in sending communities (Parreñas, 2010). Studies have also illustrated the influence of sensational media coverage of women's migration, which often portrays mothers as neglecting their reproductive roles to, "enjoy the good life abroad," and this portrayal stigmatises transnational mothers (Tyldum, 2014, p.1). However, despite the criticism from friends and relatives, participants made independent decisions to migrate for a better life.

8.4. Amicable social relationships

To effectively manage transnational mothering strategies, participants highlighted the importance of maintaining positive social relations across borders, especially with their children's caregivers. They emphasised that effective relationships must be nurtured and managed, with the caregivers, their children, and broader family members. This is carried out with careful consideration, as tensions between mothers and caregivers can potentially affect the relationships between the caregivers and transnational mothers' children. Participants tried to overlook certain challenges that they had with caregivers, that could result in unnecessary conflicts, and a potential to jeopardise children's wellbeing. Participants noted, with concern, unreasonable demands from caregivers and conflicting parenting styles. For example, Miriam stated that demands were often made by the caregiver, anytime even before she was paid at the end of the month,

"...um that's a problem sometimes I send groceries for a month but then before the end of the week they will call you and start telling you that the food that you sent is finished" (Miriam, 19-10-18).

Buhle was also aware of the unrealistic demands:

"...not all the time we are usually in conflict towards the end of the month because she would be making unrealistic demands, I am only human, and I am not making a lot of money I cannot send them each and everything that they want... they do not realise that I do have commitments this side I have to pay rent I have to eat you know such things...so I think their grandmother will be thinking whatever she has asked for I do not take it seriously..." (Buhle, 15-05-19).

Participants illustrated how they also had to grapple with conflicting parenting styles. Bonakele demonstrated that her mother was not strict with her son regarding instilling discipline. She realised that her son could avoid consequences for his actions as long as he was under the care of his grandmother. This is how she explained this:

"I try to do the best I can over the phone but it's not the same as talking to him face to face and monitoring whether he is doing what I told him to do or not... I would go to the extent of taking his phone but now that he stays with his grandmother, I know that his grandmother would just let him do whatever he wants to do..." (Bonakele, 16-10-18).

Bonakele was aware that she had to maintain a strong bond with her sister for the sake of her child. Additionally, she was grateful that her sister was present to care for her son's daily needs. Some participants' narratives indicated having compassion towards caregivers, especially if it was their own mothers. Participants expressed concern that their grandmothers might be too elderly to actively engage in hands-on childcare, leading them to hire additional assistance.

The acts of compassion enhanced the relationship between the transnational mothers and their mothers. Grandmothers realised that participants cared for them. The ability to empathise with caregivers demonstrates that transnational mothers understood the importance of having positive interpersonal relationships to facilitate their mothering strategies. For example, Sikhangele understood that her mother could have other commitments besides supervising her daughter. So, she employed someone to assist with childcare. This is evident in her narrative below:

"...there is a girl who stays with them who I employ to look after the child ... you see its difficult for instance when there is a church meeting then it's important that there is somebody else who is employed to look after the child while my mother attends to such things..." (Sikhangele, 12-10-18).

Sikhangele avoided straining her relationship with her mother due to childcare responsibilities, considering that her mother was of old age and likely overwhelmed with managing both childcare and community activities. Similar to Sikhangele, Bonakele also decided to pay someone else to help her mother to care for her son. Her mother was also elderly, there were certain responsibilities that she struggled to perform, such as helping her son with homework. This is how she explained this:

"...my mother is now old, and she cannot manage to go and drop him at school and take him back home and doing homework you know such things... so we finally managed to find someone who was going to help her to do all those things and this person was going to take care of my mother as well especially during the days when she is not feeling well..." (Bonakele, 04-10-18).

To consolidate their relationships with caregivers and other family members, participants explained that they ensured to buy gifts for all family members, caregivers, and their children. Thus, participants sent groceries, clothes, and remittances as a way of establishing amicable relationships. Research has found that these gifts carry symbolic significance, serving as expressions of affection and a way of maintaining relationships (Carrasco, 2010). It is also important to emphasise the powerful influence of traditional gender norms in sending countries. Numerous studies have highlighted that family members that are tasked to care for children are often women. Therefore, the argument that migration often necessitates a reversal of traditional gender roles, such as fathers staying behind while mothers migrate, becomes less valid when childcare responsibilities still predominantly rest with women (Contreras & Griffith, 2012; Millman, 2013; Parreñas, 2005; Tolstokorova, 2010). In the current study, people that were tasked with care responsibilities were women: grandmothers, aunties, sisters, or paid helpers.

Apart from managing relationships with caregivers, transnational mothers also made efforts to remain in contact with children's teachers at school. They tried to constantly contact the teachers to get an insight of how their children were performing at school. Once in a while, mostly at the end of each school term, mothers communicated with teachers through WhatsApp or phone calls, to seek feedback on their children's school performance. For instance, Rebecca reported that she was in contact with her children's teachers as shown below:

"...yes, I try to keep in touch with their teachers in fact I am very sad because one of the teachers passed away this Monday, she had visited Joburg, and she had an accident on her way back to Bulawayo and she died on the spot, so I relied on her to tell me what is going on at school..." (Rebecca, 12-10-18).

Participants maintain these social relationships to facilitate their transnational mothering goals and strategies. These participants indicated that their main reason for being in South Africa was to enhance their roles as mothers, ensuring that their children have a better life than they experienced. They indicated that they did not want their children to have the same experiences that they had when growing up. Thus, they had a clear picture of what they wanted to achieve as mothers.

8.5. Redefining mothering roles

Similar to previous studies (Contreras & Griffith, 2012; Madziva & Zontini, 2012; Muñoz, 2019), the current study's findings suggest that transnational mothering is not the same as mothers abandoning their children. Although participants in the current study acknowledged that they did not perform their motherly duties in normative ways, and that they were criticised for leaving their children behind, they explained that their roles as mothers were mostly about economic provision rather than reproductive roles (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997). They were mostly focused on improving their children's lives, by ensuring access to good education and basic needs. Therefore, participants were able to focus on their mothering goals and were motivated to overcome the challenges that they encountered as cross border migrants in Johannesburg. Sikhangele asserted her position in her child's life through material provisions:

"...and that way she can never forget that I am the mother even when I go and visit them back home, she runs to me with joy knowing that indeed I am her mother but when you fail to support your child...tomorrow you come to her, she will fail to recognise you as the mother ... and that becomes so painful to you as the mother..."
(Sikhangele, 12-10-18).

Sikhangele believed that her authority as a mother was reinforced by being able to provide for her children. She argued that, her role as a mother could be undermined if she did not provide for her children. Cecilia had similar views to that of Sikhangele, when asked about what would happen if she failed to send remittances on time:

"...oh my God that is very painful I become so stressed I tell you if I do not have the money by that time to buy the things that he wants I borrow from friends around here and make sure whatever he wants he gets on time... as for me my heart breaks if I do not buy him what he wants I feel like I have failed as a mother and I start to think that my own parents were able to provide for me but here I am I cannot take care of my own child..." (Cecelia, 19-10-18).

Cecelia worked hard to ensure that she could promptly send whatever would be required back home. If she did not have money when demands arose, she borrowed from friends so that her son did not lack anything. Similarly, when Jane was explaining her role as a mother, she focused on her being a provider. She economically sustained her children and the entire family. This is shown in the quotation below:

"...they know that whatever they need they ask from me and I will buy for them and send on time even though sometimes I might fail to send them the things that they need... they want to see the school fees paid they want to see groceries there and I also send them money, but I feel at ease when I have sent them groceries because even if I send them money, they cannot buy much..." (Jane, 04-10-18).

Jane explained that her children depended on her for material provision. She worked hard to ensure that her children did not lack anything. MaNdebele also explained how she remained focused on achieving the goals that led her to Johannesburg. She explained below that,

regardless of how insufficient the amount that she got in Johannesburg was, she sent it to her children back home. She explained this below:

"...I make sure that whatever money that I get here in Joburg I send it to my children together with groceries and food... even the money that I get from doing piece jobs I just send it back home so that they can cover whatever needs money especially school things..." (MaNdebele, 11-05-19).

MaNdebele was also aware that she could not be aware of all the children's needs. In addition, she often sent groceries, gifts, and extra money that she makes from her part-time jobs. This enabled her family to buy whatever that she may have forgotten to buy in Johannesburg. Participants indicated that they did not take their mothering roles lightly. For example, Miriam believed that she did not wait for her children to inform her of their needs, all the time. Sometimes she sent what she thought could be needed at a particular time. She explained this as follows:

"...sometimes they call me and give me a list of things that they need and then I see what I can do [...] sometimes I don't have to wait for them I just think for myself what they may need, and I try and see what I can do and then I send..." (Miriam, 19-10-18).

Miriam's quotation, above, demonstrates her commitment to fulfilling her mothering role through providing material and economic support to her children. Most participants were single mothers; hence, they highly regarded their roles as providers. Some participants indicated that they never married, some were divorced, widowed, and had to deal with the issue of absent fathers. Charity explained how she learnt to provide for her son from birth, since his father was never present:

"...I have always been single since I got pregnant with my son the father denied responsibility and I have always been like this... he has never helped me... he has only started to be visible these days I don't know after how many years even if he helps here and there it's not clear how he is helping maybe when my child says he is sick that is when he decides or pretends to care otherwise..." (Charity, 09-10-18).

Charity was aware that her son depended on her for material provision. The father's involvement in her son's life was erratic and unreliable. Sakhile had a similar experience to Charity, she said:

"...I am a single mother everything that my child needs I provide ... he (father of the child) tried to be supportive earlier but that soon faded away... I got tired because I had to remind him all the time that he was supposed to take care of his child, so I decided that let me just support my own child I told myself that I am now the mother and father of this child the I sooner realised that the better for me..." (Sakhile, 13-10-18).

Sakhile tried to convince her child's biological father to provide support. When he managed to provide, the support was inadequate and unreliable. She accepted that she had to play the role of both the father and mother to her child. Miriam highlighted that taking on these roles was a difficult task, but there was nothing that she could do, she explained:

"...I am not married we separated with the father of the children...I have to take care of everything I am their father and their mother all the work that is supposed to be done by the father in the family is done by me and the work to be done by the mother is done by me I am just overwhelmed..." (Miriam, 19-10-18).

Jane's husband passed away. Therefore, as a widow she had to take on the duties of the father and the mother. She explained,

"...I can say that it is very difficult to be a mother especially when you are faced with difficulties in life... now that the father of my children passed away now I have to be both the mother and father to these children..." (Jane, 04-10-18).

The ability to provide financial and material needs, helped mothers to assert their authority and position in families and in their children's lives. Even though they faced numerous challenges in Johannesburg, the mothers embraced their roles as providers for their children by ensuring that they have better lives than themselves when they were growing up.

8.6. Hopes for the future

Participants shared their aspirations for the future in relation to their children. Most participants emphasised that they did not want their children to have the same life as themselves when growing up. Thus, they wanted their children to have better access to education. In line with previous studies findings, mothers were mostly concerned about their children's education access and quality, to build a sustainable future (Parreñas, 2005). Using a moral economic perspective to gendered migration, Contreras and Griffith (2012) assert that the migration of mothers from Mexico to work in the USA, contributed to improved quality of life for both their children and families. This was also demonstrated in the current study, participants expressed desire for their children to do well in school by ensuring that fees are paid on time, and occasionally contacting their teachers. They were working in Johannesburg to ensure that their children did not face the same challenges that, themselves as mothers, had when growing up. Sikhangele stated that she could not continue with her education because her father passed away and there was no one to pay for her school fees:

"...I wish he could just learn and continue with his education ... he mustn't be like me you see some of us we did not finish our education because of various reasons as for me my father passed away and no one was there to continue paying my school fees ...now I wish I could have enough money to pay for his education so that he continues up to university level..." (Sikhangele, 12-10-18).

Now that Sikhangele had a child, she wanted to ensure that her child continued with her education. Moreover, she was happy that she could afford to pay school fees. Charity echoed Sikhangele by saying:

"...I wish he could learn and do well at school and be somebody in life... look at me...as you can see, I only went to school up to O Level and then I got pregnant soon after O Level and had a child so for me to go back to school it was a problem, I ended up being forced to look for a job because I now had someone to look after ..." (Charity, 09-10-18).

Miriam also did not want her children to have the same kind of life that she had as a child. She encouraged her children to make better choices so that they will have a better life. She

often told them about her own life and the mistakes that she made concerning intimate relationships, so that they would learn from her mistakes. This is how she explained this:

"...I always tell my girls to tell me when they have a boyfriend and I always tell them that they should never allow a boy to trick them into anything and the good thing is that they have an example, I tell them you must never be like me look at me... five children that I am raising all by myself ... so I tell them to have a better life compared to the kind of life that I lived..." (Miriam, 19-10-18).

Sakhile, realised that securing a job without any qualifications was difficult. Therefore, she wanted her daughter to continue with her education and be qualified in a certain field:

"...I wish God could just assist me so that I am able to pay for her school fees ... she has to get an education and be qualified in doing something so that she can have a bright future ... she has to choose something that she is passionate about and continue with her education to the highest level I have realised here that it is difficult for you to find jobs here if you do not have any qualifications..." (Sakhile, 13-10-18).

Sakhile demonstrated that having educational qualifications increases one's chances of securing employment in the formal economic sector in Johannesburg. In addition, participants wished to build houses for their children back home. For example, Rebecca wanted to ensure her children get access to better education and to build them a house:

"... I wish my children would go far with their education as long as I am able to pay for their fees and they are supposed to go to university... I wish I could find a good job so that I can work for them and then build them a beautiful house so that even if I die at least, they can have a home to call their own ..." (Rebecca, 12-10-18).

Despite the challenges that transnational mothers in this study face in Johannesburg, they had goals and hopes for their migration project. In studies conducted in developed countries, on migrants from countries such as the Philippines and Mexico, participants engaged in bigger projects back home such as building houses and buying household furniture. However, in the current study, participants spoke more about basic provisions for their children in form of groceries, to ensure better nutrition and payment of school fees. Although in the current

study, participants wished to build houses for their children, they mainly prioritised their children's education.

8.7. Conclusion

This chapter discussed participants' perspectives on their experiences of transnational mothering and the migration project. I demonstrated how participants understood their individual circumstances and made independent decisions regarding their mothering strategies. This chapter also illustrated the importance of maintaining effective cross border social relationships, for example, with people caring for their children and with the children themselves. This act helps with facilitating mothering strategies across the border. I also highlighted participants' hopes and aspirations for the future. In the next chapter I conclude the study and offer some recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER NINE

Conclusions and Future Recommendations

9.1. Introduction

In Chapters Five-Eight above, I focused on data presentation and discussion. The current chapter concludes the study by highlighting my key arguments, the study's main findings, as well as recommendations for future research on a similar topic. This study's aim was to explore the experiences of transnational mothers living and working in the Johannesburg inner city through the lens of precarity, embodied transnationalism and subjective wellbeing. The current study contributes to the field of transnational motherhood by adopting a unique approach to understanding wellbeing.

Previous studies have focused on narrow conceptualisations of wellbeing, by paying attention to difficult emotions that mothers experience, often assumed to be a result of separation from their children. This obstructs a nuanced understanding of complex experiences of transnational mothers, thus, portraying them as perpetual victims with little agency. Using subjective wellbeing in the current study, to understand participants' experiences, gave insights into their agency and determination. This also opens new research directions in terms of understanding wellbeing in transnational motherhood.

This thesis brings to the fore the subjective and emotional aspects of precarity (Ettlinger, 2007; George, 2016). I highlighted social implications of living and working under precarious conditions for transnational mothers. I demonstrated that insecurities due to uncertain jobs and livelihoods have an impact on participants' perceptions of motherhood and mothering roles. Unstable livelihoods undermined transnational mothers' social identities and roles, thus: being mothers and their transnational mothering strategies (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013). Due to a lack of stable income and busy work schedules, transnational mothers, in the current study, could hardly afford regular communication with their children, or regular visits back home. This had a detrimental effect on relationships with their children and on their own standards of being good mothers. However, as demonstrated in previous chapters,

participants displayed resilience and determination when confronted with persistent daily challenges.

This study also brings attention to transnational motherhood as fundamentally an embodied phenomenon (Dunn, 2010). It does this by offering useful insights into the affective everyday experiences of transnational mothers in Johannesburg, with a focus on the conflicting thoughts and emotions in relation to their positions as mothers to distant children. These shifting subjectivities are a reminder of the complexities inherent in the migration experience. Although migration presents an opportunity for a better life, there are emotional demands that need to be acknowledged and managed. Participants illustrated that living in Johannesburg is a sacrifice, so their children can have a better future.

Consistent with my philosophical stance, it is crucial to emphasise that the conclusions derived from this study are presented as dynamic social constructs that depend on the specific social context in which they were developed (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Denzin 2005; Schwandt, 2000). As such, these findings are not representative of all transnational mothers in Johannesburg. They reflect complex experiences and concerns of the twenty women who participated in this study as described in Chapter four.

9.2. Overview of Key findings

9.2.1. A broader understanding of wellbeing

Research on transnational motherhood has repeatedly pointed to the emotional wellbeing of transnational mothers as part of their experiences. As I discussed, in Chapter Two numerous studies have highlighted the emotional struggles that mothers experience when undertaking transnational mothering. Previous studies have suggested that mothers experience feelings such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, sadness, and guilt because of living separately from their children (Bohr & Whitfield, 2011; Millman, 2013; Zentgraf & Chinchilla, 2012). This perception of wellbeing frequently assumes that mothers experience negative emotions primarily due to the separation from their children. This tends to overlook the social, economic, and political context in which mothers are situated. That is how the structural context supports or undermines their perceptions on motherhood and their transnational mothering strategies.

The current study contributes to research on transnational motherhood by embracing a more comprehensive understanding of wellbeing, which involves examining the determinants of subjective wellbeing in mothers' experiences. This embraces a comprehensive understanding of wellbeing, beyond their individual negative emotions, to an understanding of their subjective judgements in terms of self-determination, goals, hopes, and aspirations, in relation to their roles as transnational mothers (Deeming, 2013; Diener et al., 2003). Together with the concepts of precarity and embodied transnationalism, this study offers a nuanced understanding of wellbeing for transnational mothers in Johannesburg inner city. As discussed in Chapter Eight, through participants concerns and aspirations, this study discusses important findings on localised contextual knowledge shaping transnational mothering experiences and strategies.

9.2.2. Communication

Studies that are conducted in developed countries such as, the USA or in Europe, suggest that transnational mothers make extensive use of online communication technologies, to facilitate their mothering strategies and to remain abreast with their children's lives across borders. These mothers utilise the internet to communicate through Skype and emails, to maintain relationships and 'virtual intimacies' (Wilding, 2006, p.125). The importance of communication has been emphasised as means of staying connected and understanding their children's needs. The current study highlights that transnational communication is not universally accessible and is subject to class-based disparities (Parreñas, 2005).

Women who participated in the current study were employed in the informal economic sector, some were employed part-time, and some experienced periods of unemployment. Therefore, some participants expressed their inability to afford advanced internet-based communication technologies. Instead, they communicated through ordinary cell phone calls. Only a few participants indicated that they occasionally used WhatsApp. The calls were often made towards the end of the month to get a list of items that would be required and the amount of money to be sent. They explained that the cost of airtime for calling home was high and prevented transnational mothers from engaging in extended conversations about other social issues.

Consequently, participants focused their discussion on more important issues such as remittances and monthly provisions. This is contrary to other studies that indicated that transnational mothers helped their children in various ways online including, homework or helping them to choose their daily meals to ensure proper nutrition. The constrained access to communication tools has implications for the nature of mothers' relationships with both their children and caregivers.

9.2.3. Gender roles and transnational motherhood

Reconciling their productive and reproductive roles presented a site of conflicting thoughts and ideas in their perceptions of what counts as good mothering. As borne out in studies done elsewhere, mothers held onto traditional normative beliefs on motherhood and mothering, for example, they believed that mothers are better positioned to perform reproductive care duties like, everyday child nurturance, socialisation and offering emotional support to their children. Their perceptions of motherhood and mothering were influenced by their own upbringing and experiences as children, emphasising the importance of being physically present in children's lives.

However, participants explained how, in the context of migration they perceived their mothering role primarily as being economic providers rather than social aspects of mothering. As discussed in Chapter Two, these contradictions are common in mothers who are mothering in non-normative ways (Craig, 2010; Johnston & Swanson, 2007). This underscores the influence of gender norms on women's behaviour in their migration trajectories (Pearson & Sweetman, 2019). Migration studies also recognise that migration tends to bring about changes on normative gender roles (Parreñas, 2005). In scenarios where married women migrate and leave their children behind; it is often assumed that fathers will take on care giving roles for the children that are left behind. However, studies have illustrated that people tasked to provide care to children while the mother is away are females. This demonstrates that traditional gender roles remain in place in sending countries (Millman, 2013).

Likewise, in the current study, people taking care of children were women: aunties, sisters, or grandmothers. Several transnational studies that are conducted in the context of increasing independent female migration to developed regions have observed that women often opt for

jobs that are related to their traditional gender roles such as nurses, care givers, domestic workers, and nannies (Hennebry et al., 2016). This refutes the argument that migration initiates change in traditional gender roles. In this study, participants were employed in the informal sector, not only as part time domestic workers but also as hairdressers, waitresses, and petty traders.

9.2.4. Prohibitive costs of traveling

As discussed in Chapter Seven, participants encountered numerous challenges that were related to their insecure jobs and livelihoods. These challenges interfered with their mothering strategies. While studies conducted elsewhere suggest that transnational mothers migrate over long distances in search of work opportunities, for instance, Chinese migrants seeking better economic opportunities in Canada or the USA. For the current study, participants travelled relatively short distances to seek a better life in Johannesburg, particularly those from Zimbabwe. Although Ghana, Zimbabwe, and the Democratic Republic of Congo are within the African continent and relatively closer to South Africa, participants found travelling expenses too expensive and they could not afford to frequently travel back home. So, proximity to their home countries did not necessarily mean they were able to make frequent visits back home.

Due to unavailability of sustainable jobs and scarcity of financial resources, participants did not have sufficient funds to fund their travelling expenses. They argued that they would rather use the money for traveling to buy some of the necessities or send remittances rather than make frequent visits. Therefore, participants resorted to making at least one visit back home, usually at the end of the year. These occasional visits and limited communication due to financial constraints have implications for the relationships that they were trying to maintain with their children and care givers. Migrant mothers faced challenges in sustaining meaningful relationships with their children due to infrequent visits and irregular communication.

9.2.5. Reunification

Previous studies have highlighted that transnational mothers actively seek to reunite with their children in host countries. Although the process could take a long period of time in terms of immigration bureaucratic processes, research demonstrates that the mothers are happy to

reunite with their children in the host country (Phoenix & Seu, 2013). However, in terms of reuniting with children, this study was different. Participants were reluctant to bring their children to Johannesburg. They cited various concerns as reasons to not bring their children to Johannesburg. They worried about their personal safety from crime and xenophobic attacks. They argued that Johannesburg is not a safe place to raise children. It is important to note that most of the participants in this study have either been a victim of violent crime in the city or they have witnessed violent crime.

Based on the issues of xenophobia and the pervasive anti-foreigner sentiment, especially in relation to access to social services in Johannesburg, mothers were compelled to protect their children from experiencing such discrimination. They also explained that the accommodation issue in the inner city led to them having to constantly move in search of better housing. They argued that it was not the best decision to live with their children because it would mean that they would be constantly changing schools. In addition, participants also emphasised that there was pervasive moral decadence in Johannesburg. They explained that it was common for children in the city to be involved in drugs, alcohol abuse and general anti-social behaviour. With these challenges, coupled with their struggles with documentation, mothers were convinced that their children were better off living in their home countries.

9.3. Recommendations for future research

9.3.1. Mixed methods

Although qualitative research was valuable in exploring the intersections of migration, motherhood and wellbeing in Johannesburg, future studies may benefit from a combined approach that involves both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Using mixed methods, particularly for gaining insights into the subjective wellbeing of transnational mothers, can offer a more nuanced understanding of the structural context in which mothers live and work. Such studies should also consider the subjective wellbeing of care givers as well as children left behind to get an understanding of how migration influences families.

Including the perspectives of children through participatory research with those left behind may complement mothers' perspectives and shed light on the challenges that they face due to separation from their mothers. Exploring the subjective wellbeing of children and

caregivers can also provide viable information on the structural context facilitating the separation of families. Furthermore, future studies can delve into transnational mothering in Southern Africa in scenarios where children are under the care of their fathers and explore experiences of fathers in parenting from a distance. This may provide useful information on gender dynamics in transnational families.

9.3.2. Emotional labour

In future research on transnational mothering in Johannesburg, it may be valuable to explore the experiences of these mothers from the perspective of emotional labour, especially considering the contextual and individual challenges that they encounter in relation to their mothering strategies. As discussed in this study, emotions are an important aspect of transnational mothering in terms of maintaining amicable social relationships with their children and care givers. Understanding transnational mothers' emotions and feelings can provide important insights into their intentions, desires, and aspirations in relation to the migration project (Dunn, 2010). Such studies can provide beneficial information in terms of the personal and familial needs of transnational mothers. Additionally, they can also provide crucial information in terms of identifying and providing mental and psycho-social health services to support transnational mothers in Johannesburg.

9.3.3. Migration policy

Future research may also consider exploring the experiences of transnational mothers in Johannesburg who previously tried to reunite with their children in South Africa. Such studies may include those who were successful in bringing their children to South Africa and those who failed due to various reasons. The experiences of these groups of mothers can shed light on South Africa's migration policy, particularly concerning family reunification. For instance, what policy and legislation measures facilitate or hinder family reunification in South Africa's migration policy? How is gender, transnational families and wellbeing incorporated in South Africa's migration policy?

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APPENDIX A: Ethics certificate clearance



HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Zikhali

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: H18/06/41

PROJECT TITLE

Migration, motherhood, and wellbeing: Exploring the mothering experience of African migrant women in Johannesburg

INVESTIGATOR(S)

Miss T Zikhali

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT

Social Sciences/

DATE CONSIDERED

22 June 2018

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

Approved

EXPIRY DATE

12 August 2021

DATE 13 August 2018

CHAIRPERSON


(Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Professor J Vearey

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

Signature

____/____/_____
Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX B: Participant Information Sheet

University of the Witwatersrand

1 Jan Smuts Avenue and Jorissen Street

Braamfontein

Johannesburg, 2000

Title of research study: Migration, Motherhood, and Wellbeing: Exploring the mothering experiences of African migrant women in Johannesburg

Student: Thulisile Zikhali

Email: thuliezikhali@gmail.com

Contact number: 076 943 8722

Supervisor: Prof. Jo Vearey

Email: jo.vearey@wits.ac.za

Contact number: 011 717 4041

University of the Witwatersrand Research Ethics Committee (non-medical) contact:

Lucille.Mooragan@wits.ac.za

011 717 1408

Hello! My name is Thulisile Zikhali and I am a PhD student at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. I am working on a research that focuses on the mothering experiences of African mothers in Johannesburg who have left their children in their home countries. I would like to invite you to be a part of this research as it will help me to understand how migrant mothers manage to be mothers to children left behind in their countries. I am also interested in understanding how your life has improved since you started living in Johannesburg.

Your participation in this study would include: face-to-face interviews which may last about an hour, during which I will ask you some personal questions about your life and being a mother. If you agree, I will record the interview. Your participation in the research is

voluntary, which means you can withdraw from the research anytime you feel uncomfortable, with no penalties. Your name will not be used anywhere in the study and it will be impossible to identify you.

The information that will be collected may be used to inform policy tailored to the needs of migrant women living in Johannesburg. The study is for research purposes and will be shared on the internet. Should you have any questions you can contact me or my supervisor using the above contact details.

If you experience discomfort anytime during the interview because of what we have discussed please feel free to stop the interview. It may also be helpful to talk to someone. I can refer you to The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in Braamfontein Centre, Johannesburg. Telephone number: 011 403 5650. They offer counselling services for free.

Thank you

Thulisile Zikhali

APPENDIX C: Consent form

Title of Study: Migration, Motherhood, and Wellbeing: Exploring the mothering experiences of African migrant women in Johannesburg

Please understand that participation in the study is voluntary and you can withdraw anytime you feel like. The research project focuses on the mothering experiences of African mothers in Johannesburg who have left their children in their home countries. Your participation will involve face to face interviews in which I will ask you some personal questions about yourself and being a mother. There will be no identifying information in the research report. These interviews might take about an hour. If you experience discomfort anytime during the interview because of what we have discussed please feel free to stop the interview. It may be helpful to talk with someone. I can refer you to The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in Braamfontein Centre, Johannesburg. Telephone number: 011 403 5650. They offer counselling services for free.

Will you be comfortable if I audiotaped our conversation? If you are not comfortable, we will not be recording the interview. If you allow me to record the interview, I will need to record you giving me verbal permission to record the interview.

	Yes	No
Participant has agreed to be interviewed (researcher marks with an X in the appropriate box)		
Participant has agreed to be audio recorded (researcher marks with an X in the appropriate box)		

APPENDIX D: First Semi- Structured Interview guide

Migration, Motherhood and Wellbeing: Exploring the mothering experiences of African migrant women in Johannesburg

Questions	Probes
<p>Introduction Please tell me about yourself</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which country do you come from? • How old are you? • How many children do you have? How old were they when you moved to Johannesburg? • How old are they now? • Are you in a relationship? For example, married, have a partner or you are single?
<p>Migration What decisions did you make before moving to Johannesburg?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did you move to Johannesburg? • Is there anything you were unhappy about back home? • How did you travel from home, did you use a bus, private car etc? • Did you travel alone, in a group or with friends/relative • How was your travelling experience? • Did you experience any challenges along the way? • If so, what happened? • Did you have enough to eat along the way or enough money to buy food?
<p>Did you tell your child (ren) about your decision to move to Johannesburg? What do your friends who stay with their children say about your decision to leave your children in Zimbabwe?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If so, how did they feel? • How about you? • What arrangements did you make in terms of their care? • Are there people who were against your plan to move to South Africa? If so, who are they and why?
<p>What were your expectations concerning Johannesburg</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think your life has changed or improved since coming to Johannesburg? • If so, how? • If not, what are the challenges? • What did you do when you arrived in Johannesburg in terms of finding work and accommodation • Do you have friends or relatives here in Johannesburg?

<p>Mothering and Motherhood</p> <p>What was your role in the family prior to migration?</p> <p>What do you think is the most important thing about being a mother?</p> <p>What do you think is the main challenge here in Johannesburg about being a mother?</p> <p>Do the children tell you how they feel by the fact that you do not live with them?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think that changed when you moved to Johannesburg? • If so, how has it changed?
<p>What do you think according to your culture or background should be the role of a mother in the family?</p> <p>What was the role of your mother in the family and in your life?</p> <p>Do you think children, especially girls need to stay with their mothers?</p> <p>What is it that when you do, you feel like the best mother?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you able to live up to that role? • If so, how? • If not, why? • Did you stay with your own mother? If not, who raised you?
<p>How did you think of motherhood and mothering before you moved to Johannesburg?</p> <p>Is it easier to be a mother in Johannesburg or back home?</p> <p>How does Johannesburg affect the way you think about being a mother or mothering?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did that change when you moved to Joburg? • What would you do differently if you had your children this side?
<p>What relation do you have with the person/people taking care of your children?</p> <p>Are they your relatives or friends?</p> <p>What do you think they expect from you?</p> <p>Please tell me an example of a problem you once had with your child (ren)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there times when you feel that their expectations are not realistic? If so, what do you do? • Are the people back home happy with your decision to move to Johannesburg? • And your child(ren) • Did you make arrangements concerning who was going to take care of them while you are away? • How often do you keep in touch with them? • What do you use to communicate? For example, Facebook, WhatsApp, Cell phones etc • Do you think it is expensive to keep in touch? • When was the last time you visited back home? • How often do you visit?
<p>Do you see yourself as a good mother?</p> <p>How about your children, do they see you as a good mother?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you at times feel like you are abandoning your children?

<p>What happens if you do not send them the things they have asked for?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you say is the most stressful thing about being a mother to children on the other side of the border? • What kind of material things do you send to your children? • In what ways do you reprimand them when they have done something wrong?
<p>How do you show your child (ren) your care and love? What does it mean to you to care for your children?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think they have enough to eat? • How about school? How do you pay for their school fees? Is it always paid in time? • From where would you say you learnt how to be a mother to your children? • How would you describe your relationship with your child (ren)? • Have you ever had conflicts with the people taking care of the children? • Would you describe incidences when you experienced conflicts with your children or with the people taking care of your children? • How often do you see your children?
<p>Do you believe a mother is the main person to teach children morals and values? How do you make sure that these aspirations are realised? How do you think the people in your family view your mothering role? How do you protect our children from harm, accidents etc? How do you give them affection? Are your decisions taken seriously by the people at home? Are you in control of your life? How do you think having a husband or a partner assists you in your mothering role?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever received news that your children are behaving badly? What did you do? • Is your partner or boyfriend helping you in taking care of your children back home? Either in terms of helping financially or social support? • What are your aspirations for the future of your children? • What do you think people back home expect from you? • How do you feel about living separately from your children? • In a family set up, how would you describe the responsibilities of a mother?
<p>Wellbeing What do you do for a living or what kind of job do you have here?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you employed/ self-employed? • Do you have any qualifications for a formal job? • Where did you get your qualifications? If outside South Africa did you get SAQA? • Did you use your qualifications in finding a job? • How much do you make in a month?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you say it's enough to pay for your expenses here as well as pay for your children's expenses back home • Are you able to pay for your bills, meet other expenses and also send money back home? • Are there times when you fail to pay rent? Can you speak any of the local languages? If yes, how has that helped you? • If not, how has that been a challenge?
What would you say is the most stressful thing about being in Johannesburg?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you feeling today? Do you have any health problems? • When was the last time you were sick? • Where did you get help? • What do you do when you are not feeling well? When you are sick do you go the clinic/hospital? • When was the last time you sought help from the clinic or hospital? • What does bad/good health mean to you? • Are there any times where you do not have anything to eat?
What do you do when you are off work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes you happy? • How do you deal with stress? Do you go to church, gym etc? • Would you say that your life as a mother with children across the border is going well?
Tell me about your accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you rent a flat/room • Is the accommodation comfortable • Would you bring your child (ren) here and stay with you? • How about your relations with the landlord? • Is it expensive?
What are some of the challenges that you come across here in Johannesburg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever had any problems with the police? • Have you ever been detained here in Johannesburg? If so, why and what were your experiences? • If not, what are the challenges? • Do you get time off your job? • Do you get paid on time? • What does it mean to have good health to you? • What does it mean to have bad health according to you?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have you ever experienced any form of violence back home? If yes, what happened?• Have you ever experienced any form of violence here in Johannesburg? If yes, what happened?• What are your hopes for the future?
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APPENDIX E: Second Semi- Structured interview guide

Migration, Motherhood and Wellbeing: Exploring the mothering experiences of African migrant women in Johannesburg

Questions	Probes
What motivated you to migrate to Johannesburg?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions made • Reasons • People involved in making decisions
How do you feel about being a mother while your children are on the other side of the border?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valued aspects of being a mother • How do you assert your position to your children and family back home?
Has migration changed the way you feel about motherhood?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If so – how and why?
How would you judge yourself as a mother, since arriving in Johannesburg?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why?
In your own opinion, how are mothers supposed to behave or act as individuals and in families?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural beliefs • Normative perceptions • Individual beliefs on motherhood
How do you keep in touch/ communicate with your children?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Means of communication • How often • Why
How did you find employment here in Johannesburg?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of job? • Are there any work related benefits? • How busy is your work schedule? • Do you have a bank account?
How is your relationship with your child/ children?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you talk a lot? • What kind of things do you talk about?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If relationship is good- why? • If bad –why?
<p>What are your aspirations as a mother?</p> <p>What are your aspirations for your child or children?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you judge yourself in terms of achieving these goals and aspirations?
<p>When was the last time you were home?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How often do you visit? • Means of travel
<p>How would you describe your life here in Johannesburg?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask about experiences with housing • Access to health services • Access to education • Finding jobs • Personal Safety
<p>Would you like to bring your children to Johannesburg so that you can stay together?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes – why? • If no – why?
<p>Have you ever been a victim of crime</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, how • If no, have you ever witnessed violent crime? • Have you ever had an encounter with the police or been in trouble with the police?

APPENDIX F: Examples of initial coding from different transcripts

Initial (Line-by-line coding)	Interview Quotes
<p><i>Making a difficult decision</i> <i>Remembering makes her emotional</i> <i>Could not face her son</i> <i>Feeling scared of informing son</i></p> <p><i>Difficult to talk about the decision with her mother</i></p> <p><i>Feeling stressed</i> <i>Protects her son by not telling him</i></p>	<p>Excerpt 1 (Bonakele)</p> <p>Bonakele: ‘...that was very painful to me [...] even when I remember the day I left I just cry I just couldn’t tell him so I decided it’s better I leave when he goes to school because I was failing to tell him I was scared I was going to break down [...] even telling my mother that I was leaving it was very difficult for me I wanted to tell her when there was still time but I ended up telling her when there was only 1 day left for me to go [...] but at least I had hinted my intentions of going to South Africa [...] as for my son each time I wanted to tell him that I will be going to South Africa I could feel tears filling up my eyes so I decided not to tell him’</p>
<p><i>Uses a phone to communicate</i> <i>Bought the phone</i> <i>Uses WhatsApp</i></p> <p><i>Provides for her son</i></p> <p><i>Keeps updated about son’s life</i></p> <p><i>Struggles to send provisions on time</i></p> <p><i>Continuous demands</i></p>	<p>Excerpt 2 (Cecelia)</p> <p>Cecelia: ‘...we communicate through the phone I bought him his own phone he is in Grade 4 now, so he is able to use the phone we can even communicate using WhatsApp like for instance when he wants to tell me exactly what it is that he wants he sends me a voice note like now he stays with my younger sister’s son so he is a bit older my younger sister is a teacher back home [...] he recently sent me a list of things that he wants for a party that they are going to have at school as part of a trip organised by the school [...] he told me that he wants Adidas tennis shoes I had to struggle and make sure that I send them as soon as I could and he also said that he wants a Fluffy key holder so he said he wants it in black and so I put it there [...] as soon as he received those things he reminded me that I should not forget to send his groceries because his snacks that he carries to school will soon be finished...’</p>
<p><i>Had high expectations for Joburg</i> <i>Expected a good job</i></p>	<p>Excerpt 3 (Charity)</p> <p>Charity: ‘you know I expected that things will change like get a good job and change my son’s life and that my life will change financially of</p>

<p><i>Life did not change much</i></p> <p><i>Feels lucky getting a job</i></p> <p><i>Struggled to get accommodation</i></p> <p><i>Struggled financially</i> <i>Shared spaces as accommodation</i> <i>Accommodation is expensive</i></p>	<p>cause it did change but not that much I was lucky when I arrived here because after about five days I found a job working at a clothing outlet and I worked there for quite some time but still I had a problem with accommodation [...] you see when I first arrived here I stayed with my brother with his wife but then when I started working my sister in law suggested that I find my own place to stay but then you find that financially I wasn't stable but then I had to move [...] you know how it is here in Hillbrow I started to share spaces with people as you know accommodation here is very expensive...'</p>
<p><i>Mother holds the family together</i> <i>Mother plays a pivotal role in the family</i></p> <p><i>Mothers now must work</i></p> <p><i>Mother responsible for running the home</i></p> <p><i>Mother's care extends to everyone</i></p>	<p>Excerpt 4 (Linda)</p> <p>Linda: 'um someone who is a mother you know a family stands because of a mother so a mother is the glue that holds the family together and mostly like since the old times when most women were not working when there is a problem in the home people will say but where was the mother [...] so I think it's from there a mother has to take care of not only her children but of everyone in the home...'</p>
<p><i>Problems with the mother</i> <i>Misuse of money sent for children</i></p> <p><i>Difficult to find money</i></p> <p><i>Feels hurt</i> <i>Borrows money from friends</i></p>	<p>Excerpt 5 (Jane)</p> <p>Jane: 'I sometimes have a problem with my mother because she sometimes uses the money that I send for school fees for something else and she will tell me [...] no [...] that money that you sent I have used it for doing this and that [...] imagine the money which I would have sent them it's so difficult to find [...] so when she tells me such things I get hurt and I try again to look for some money [...] I even try to run around and borrow from friends'</p>
<p><i>Sole responsibility for the children</i></p> <p><i>Supporting other family members</i></p>	<p>Excerpt 6 (Miriam)</p> <p>Miriam: '...I have to take care of everything I am their father and their mother all the work that is supposed to be done by the father in the family is done by me and the work to be done by the mother is done by me I am just overwhelmed....'</p>

<p><i>Feels burdened, overworked</i></p> <p><i>Life is hard</i></p> <p><i>Absent father</i></p> <p><i>Father has no relationship with children</i></p>	<p>I have heard that he is around here in Joburg I have never seen him but I had that he is around and I am sure he is still enjoying his youth he will discover when it's too late that life is very difficult [...] and his children do not even know him he will start to introduce himself to them [...] in any case they do not even want to see him and they have never looked for him'</p>
<p><i>Lacks money</i></p> <p><i>Trip requires a lot of money</i></p> <p><i>Cannot visit home empty handed</i></p> <p><i>Better to send money than travelling</i></p>	<p>Excerpt 7 (Nicky)</p> <p>Nicky: 'I was there in 2015 there is no money when you go home you have to have enough money you can't just go there with nothing [...] sometimes I think it's better if I just take the money that I was going to use to travel and send it to Ghana...'</p>
<p><i>Police abruptly checking on documentation</i></p> <p><i>Did not have documentation</i></p> <p><i>Being detained</i></p> <p><i>Bribed the police</i></p>	<p>Excerpt 8 (Ntando)</p> <p>Ntando: '...I was coming from work and they stopped the taxi that I was travelling in and they said that everyone should produce their ID or Passport [...] and many of us did not have any papers and they took us straight to Number 4 [...] at least the father of my children was still in the picture and he quickly came to take me he gave them some money and they release me... he paid about R400...'</p>
<p><i>Uses asylum seeker permit</i></p> <p><i>Overstayed once and passport was spoiled</i></p> <p><i>Husband also uses the asylum seeker permit</i></p> <p><i>Asylum permit has expired</i></p> <p><i>Life is difficult without documents</i></p>	<p>Excerpt 9 (Rebecca)</p> <p>Rebecca: '...I mean the asylum paper I took it in 2010 up to today [...] I once overstayed and so my passport had a problem otherwise I was supposed to take the Asylum paper long back but my husband also has the Asylum paper that is what he uses here and there you know [...] but now the Asylum expires and I cannot even use my passport because it has expired so it's very difficult I am telling you'</p>
<p><i>Feels she is unfair to her child</i></p>	<p>Excerpt 10 (Sakhile)</p> <p>Sakhile: '...yes, I think about that a lot because I start to ask myself but I grew up with my own mother and all the love that a mother can only</p>

<p><i>Feels guilty and blames herself</i></p> <p><i>Failing as a mother</i> <i>Forced by the situation</i></p> <p><i>Feeling heartbroken</i> <i>Anxious about the future</i></p>	<p>give [...] why am I allowing this child to grow up without a mother you see that way I have failed as a mother [...] but then I console myself by saying that the situation is the one that is forcing things to be like that at least I do send groceries and stuff so she knows that mummy is there but eish that feeling is always there especially if I see children that are her age I start to ask myself where is my child and my heart breaks [...] sometimes I start to think what will happen when she grows up is she going to blame me? Will she understand [signs] I don't know...'</p>
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APPENDIX G: Example of focused coding from different transcripts

Theme Failure as a mother
Sub-Themes Inadequacy in the mothering role, Self-blame, Guilt
Representative Quotes <p>‘...you know I am a failure in that area ya that’s what I call failure ... you know I don’t know where to start at times if I think about it deeply I just cry...I am telling you especially when I am alone ... when I think about my child I just cry ... that’s the only sin that I did on myself, you see my mother made sure that she was there when we were growing up now she has to mother my child again that’s just unfair ... I think I should be doing my part as a mother because my mother is now old she has to rest you know what I said earlier about what a mother should do in the family ...I said those things because I know those are the things that I know a mother should do’ (Bonakele, 04-10-18)</p> <p>‘...I think I am just a failure to the child at home I did not fulfil my dreams like all what I had promised her I have failed to do that...’ (Prudence, 17-05-19)</p> <p>‘...I wish I did not have to burden my mother with child care because she did her job by raising me and now she has to raise my son it’s just not fair but then there is nothing I can do...so this is painful for me especially now that I have learnt a lot of things about being a mother from church you see it was better when I did not know anything...it’s sad because I do not get to understand the stages that he is in in life for instance when he came to visit he had pimples all over his face and I didn’t know whether it’s puberty or he it’s just an allergic reaction... I didn’t know how to ask him... (Bonakele, 16-10-18)</p> <p>‘...eish my heart was so painful especially when I looked at the youngest one who was only 3 by that time I wished I could come with him ... you know when I look back I realise that he doesn’t even know what a mother’s love is because he was too young when I left but then I told myself that even if I decide not to come here what am I going to give him... even now I still feel that I still owe him that kind of love because I was never there for him’ (Rebecca, 12-10-18)</p> <p>‘yes, I do that a lot I think about that a lot because I start to ask myself but I grew up with my own mother and all the love that a mother can only give ...why am I allowing this child to grow up without a mother you see that way I have failed as a mother’ (Sakhile, 13-10-18)</p> <p>‘...I think they believe I have neglected them and for sure it does seem so it’s difficult to separate with your children because every time when I call them they always ask when am I coming this clearly indicates that they need me in their lives and it breaks my heart because I only get to see them once a year...’ (Buhle, 15-05-19)</p> <p>‘...it is painful because I gave birth to these children and now it looks like I have left them behind, but I just console myself by telling myself that I am here because of them... even though I buy them the things they want I don’t feel like I am doing enough as a mother to those children I wish I could do more...’ (Jane, 15-05-19)</p>

'I cannot say I am a mother to that child because her grandmother is the person she stays with, that is, my grandmother... as for me I did not play the role of a mother in that child's life...'
(Prudence, 17-05-19)

'...no I wouldn't say that I am a good mother but I try if I was a real mother then I should be staying with my child but I always try to make up for that time when we are apart like for instance if she calls and says mummy I do not have a pencil then I know that after a day or two the pencil should be there in Zimbabwe' (Sakhile, 13-10-18)

Theme

Pain of living separated from your child(ren)

Sub-Themes

Managing emotions, Stressful

Representative Quotes

I cannot even begin to describe no I can't ...you see these children running around here [points to children playing] one of them runs with their mother and the some they run with their mothers and fathers... you know when I look at such things I ask myself but where is my child... or when I see a mother eating fancy food with their children I begin to ask myself where is my child but then I tell myself that there is really nothing I could do' (Sikhangele, 12-10-18)

'...you remember when I asked you what is it that you wanted to talk about and when you told me I said that's the most difficult topic I can ever talk about ... this thing of not staying with my son torments me day and night ... it's part of the pain that I am supposed to endure I mean it's the sacrifice that I made by coming here'' (Bonakele, 05-10-18)

'yes, sometimes I wish they could be here with me because I sometimes miss them so much I even fail to sleep or eat properly like now imagine I have had to see them in 2017 so the whole of last year I did not see them and this year the year is almost over I still haven't seen them' (Buhle, 15-05-19)

'This thing of being so far away from my child I find it very stressful I wish that I was closer, and I could stay with my children under one roof you know I wish that I can see how my son is doing like say today he had broken his leg I am able to see how bad it is and take care of him but I cannot do that even when he calls me and starts to complain I get so stressed especially if it's something that I cannot do when I am this side ... (Cecelia, 19-10-18)

'um I wish I was over there because there are things that I am missing, and I know that he is also missing something so it's far from being well it can never be well ... I cannot say I am happy let me just say I am taking each day as it comes' (Charity, 09-10-18)

'...it was so painful because I left my child when she was only four years... I stayed for a long time thinking about my child and feeling sorry for her and I would tell myself that once I get a job and be stable here in Joburg she would have to come and join me here in Joburg...it's so painful to leave your child when she is still so young' (Gracious, 19-05-19)

'...my heart is not free ... I cannot relax if they are that side ... I wish they were always close to me...'
(Jane, 09-05-19)

'...what I find very stressful is that you are continuously thinking about your children you know it's a good thing to have all your children with you but now I am this side and they are over there that on its own is stressful' (Miriam, 19-10-18)

'...my heart was broken and for a few weeks since I arrived in Joburg I failed to eat properly like I did not even have the appetite for anything I was so stressed [...] to even think of buying fancy food like KFC I couldn't because I will start thinking I am busy spoiling myself maybe my children are sleeping on an empty stomach today [...] even today I still don't eat fancy food unless I have bought them whatever they want and I know they are ok' (Rebecca, 12-10-18)

'I do not feel alright at all sometimes I feel like going mad but then I become grateful because my mother is still alive taking care of my child is as good as taking care of me ... when I start to think of her I wish she could be here with me but then I do' (Ruth, 21-10-18)

'...it was painful to me because I do wish that I could wake up and bath my child and see what she has eaten when she is going to school at least see that she has gone to school and I have prepared the food that she is going to eat during lunch ...because of the situation back home I cannot go back there' (Sakhile, 13-10-18)

Theme

Informal Work

Sub-Themes

Unavailability of a reliable source of income, Part-time jobs, Self-employed, Payment of fees on time a struggle

Representative Quotes

'...I got a job but soon I was jobless again I worked again for 3 to 4 months and became jobless again...I help in covering our expenses here and there otherwise I use it the way I like... but these days I am not working so I rely on his money for everything sometimes I do get clients – I am a hairdresser by the way so if I get a client say for instance someone says I should plait them some dreads ... and maybe I charge them R50 and I buy a few things in the house like I buy something for dinner that way I help him in a way' (Sikhangele, 13-10-18)

'...so I started looking for job it was difficult sometimes I will work in restaurants sometimes I will work in the kitchens as a domestic worker sometimes and then I worked at a restaurant for a long time and then I realised I worked very long hours there was no time to rest and the money was too little...I came up with a plan with the money that I was getting at the restaurant I started stocking up for this business that I now do I go to town and find things on sale blankets kitchen utensils etc and I sell to people around here' (Cecelia, 19-10-18)

'I once took the money that we had set aside for rent I think it was about R450 and gambled with it and I knew that I was risking because I played with all of it surprisingly I was very lucky because I got R9000...so these are the things I do to try and make ends meet here because as you know there are no jobs here ... sometimes you find work at a certain place and then you go there and they tell you we do not want this paper... I mean the asylum paper' (Rebecca, 12-10-18)

'we do fight I wouldn't lie to you ... like there was the issue of school fees as I have told you, these days we are struggling we don't have our own place to stay so I was failing to send money for my son's school fees...' (Bonakele, 05-10-18)

'it's a huge challenge if you do not have connections in some places you cannot find a job' (Charity, 09-10-18)

'... the challenge that we have these days is the payment of fees I hear the fees has gone up and we are owing the school a lot of money... this year he was nominated to be a senior prefect which means he times or 3 times a week' (Jane, 05-10-18)

I have a small job that I am doing but I cannot say it's something sustainable... it's like this other lady that I go to church with asked me if I am willing to take care of her child while she is at work and I agreed but we never agreed on the amount of money that I will be getting so she gives me whatever she has at the end of the month...' (MaNdebele, 11-05-19)

'...not really that is why I am saying that I also buy and sell things because my pay is just too little it doesn't cover much so I have to make sure I sell my stuff to complement my pay... I work 3 days in a week in the kitchens' (Miriam, 19-10-18)

'I got a job working in a restaurant it was hard work I would spend about eight hours standing and I was earning very little something like R25 per day...I worked there for about three months and then I worked at Melrose as a cleaner I was getting R1500 a month and I had to leave that job because I struggled to make ends meet for example the issue of transport money and rent...'
(Prudence, 17-05-19)

'...it's so difficult because we are not working, we try to make sure the fees is paid, at least we pay termly sometimes [...] when we fail to pay their grandmother pays for them sometimes their father helps... I sell a lot of things I buy perfumes shoes cover beds and sell them to people around here that way we never go hungry' (Rebecca, 12-10-18)

'...life was becoming very difficult but still I would manage to send some money back home even if it means that I fail to buy myself some food, so I ended up working in this business of fake money and I ended up getting arrested' (Ruth, 21-10-18)

Theme

Plans for the future

Sub-Themes

Aspirations for children, For themselves

Representative Quotes

'I wish he could just learn and continue with his education ... he mustn't be like me you see some of us we did not finish our education because of various reasons as for me my father passed away and no one was there to continue paying my school fees ...now I wish I could have enough money to pay for his education so that he continues up to university level' (Sikhangele, 12-10-18)

'I wish they could live a life that is different from my own I want them to go a long way with their education and be able to get white collar jobs' (Buhle, 15-05-19)

'I love to see my children happy and I also want my children to be educated and I also want my children to be Christians because I grew up in a Christian home [...] all of us in the family went to mission schools we never went to government schools so I try by all means that even if we are struggling I do not want my children to know that' (Cecelia, 19-10-18)

'I wish he could learn and do well at school and be somebody in life look at me [laughs] as you can see I only went to school up to O Level and then I got pregnant soon after O Level and had a child so for me to go back to school it was a problem I ended up being forced to look for a job because I now had someone to look after ... (Charity, 09-10-18)

'...I wish I could get a better life you know...to see my business growing and to buy myself a car and a house so that my children could have somewhere to stay and I can also go back home and be able to make a living there because I do not like this life in Joburg but I am here because I have no choice...' (Jane, 09-05-19)

'...I wish they could live a life that is different from mine and they should grow up to be respectable people who respect other people...' (MaNdebele, 11-05-19)

'I always tell my girls to tell me when they have a boyfriend and I always tell them that they should never allow a boy to trick them into anything and the good things that they have an example, I tell them you must never be like me look at me 5 children that I am raising all by myself [...] so I tell them to have a better life compared to the kind of life that I lived' (Miriam, 19-10-18)

'I wish I could get a well-paying job so that I can build my house back home and then I can go back and raise my children there... because I do not want to stay here forever...' (Prudence, 17-05-19)

'...1. I wish my children would go far with their education as long as I am able to pay for their fees and they are supposed to go to university 2. I wish I could find a good job so that I can work for them and then build them a beautiful house so that even if I die at least they can have a home to call their own' (Rebecca, 12-10-18)

'I want her to have a bright future like for example maybe she can be a lawyer be a police officer or a soldier and that she should go far with her education and not be like me because I got a child when I was still very young' (Ruth, 21-10-18)

'I wish God could just assist me so that I am able to pay for her school fees ... she has to get an education and be qualified in doing something so that she can have a bright future ... she has to choose something that she is passionate about and continue with her education to the highest level I have realised here that it is difficult for you to find jobs here if you do not have any qualifications'
(Sakhile, 13-10-18)