

Experiences of Transnational Migrant Fathers in South Africa

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Masters in Psychological Research Declaration**Surname: Sekano****First name: Onthatile****Student no.: 1108266****Supervisor: Professor Maria Marchetti- Mercer****Title: Experiences of Transnational Migrant Fathers in South Africa**

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Isaac Rapula Semanya, and my aunt, Mmamogolo Esther Mafifi; while they are not present in person to witness my realization of this dream, I believe they have spiritually supported me throughout my life.

Dad, I wish you were here to see your baby girl pursue her dreams and join me in celebrating her acceptance into the Research Master of Psychology program.

Mmamogolo, I know you would have been thrilled to see me finish this and share my enthusiasm for academics. You have always been an inspiration to me and will remain an important part of my life's journey.

I love you and I miss you

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Abstract

In 1994, South Africa's apartheid system came to an end, creating new opportunities for cross-border travel and the migration of foreigners from poor and rural areas seeking better economic opportunities. Due to South Africa being an economically stable African country, migration to South Africa has increased dramatically since 1994. However, there are challenges that migrants experience upon arriving in South Africa such as difficulties in acquiring legal documents, inadequate job prospects, appalling living circumstances, high crime rates, and the potential for xenophobia. This study aims to add to the body of knowledge of African migrants to South Africa specifically fathers who left their children behind, by using Bowen's family system theory to explore their experiences as transnational migrants in South Africa. The sample for the study consisted of 10 Black African migrant men living in South Africa, and Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected data. The findings of this study show that African transnational migrants faced a variety of pull and push factors that prompted their migration to South Africa, as well as a variety of adjustment challenges such as xenophobia and difficulty finding work. The study also found that migration had an emotional and psychological impact on father-child relationships. Separation from their children had an impact on the migrants' mental health, prompting them to develop a variety of coping strategies. The findings also indicate that not having their fathers present had a psychological impact on some children. Furthermore, the migrants used information and communication technologies (ICTs) to maintain regular contact with their children who had been left behind. The study discovered that, while participants used a variety of communication channels with their families, the majority preferred WhatsApp due to its ease of use and low cost. However, some participants lacked the financial resources to purchase smartphones for communication, while others were unable to cover the costs of staying in touch with their families. Furthermore, the study's findings show that fathers' ability to maintain relationships with their children is

heavily influenced by the mothers of the children. Some mothers supported father-child relationships; others did not. In conclusion, the findings show that sending remittances allowed them to support their family members who were left behind. Furthermore, it was discovered that remittances were sent for a variety of reasons. For example, some fathers sent money to meet their families' basic needs, while others sent money because they believed that providing for their families financially, fulfilled their role as fathers and breadwinners.

Keywords: Transnational migration, Information communication technologies, Family systems, African migrants, migrant fathers

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

International migration has increased enormously, with 3.5% (272 million) of people worldwide being international immigrants, with 52% being males and 48% females (Mpaata, 2020). As South Africa is an economically stable African country, migration to South Africa increased dramatically since the first democratic election in 1994 (Chereni, 2017). Because of its size as one of the largest cities in South Africa's urban centre and its superior employment prospects compared to the rest of the country's provinces, Johannesburg, Gauteng, attracts the majority of immigrants (Reed, 2013). According to the Census 2022 data, the top five countries, from which immigrants arrived in South Africa, were Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho, Malawi, and the United Kingdom (Statistics South Africa, 2022). In 2022, there were an estimated 2.4 million immigrants residing in South Africa, according to Stats SA (Statistics South Africa, 2022). There are more middle-aged married heads of households migrating to South Africa than in the past, when it was predominantly young, single, and unmarried people (Chereni, 2017). Transnationalism is the term used to describe a new form of migration where people who have moved from their country of origin to a host country, primarily for political or economic reasons, are able to maintain connections and ties through technology and visits, with both countries and stay in touch with families left behind (Schiller et al., 1992). Transnationalism may also have a negative impact on family relationships, particularly those between separated parents and children. Parents' inability to have smartphones and ICTs, make it difficult for them to maintain constant contact with their children (Baldassar, 2008). As a result, transnational fathers find it difficult to discipline their children remotely as well as have an emotional connection with them (Willerton et al., 2011). Therefore, this can result in the fathers feeling a sense of guilt, regret and feeling like strangers to their own children due to migrating (Willerton et al., 2011). Men's experiences of migration, transnational fatherhood,

and the lived realities of male migrants have been under studied in Africa in previous studies (Mpaata, 2020). The present study aimed to address this by exploring the definitions and the experiences of transnational migrant fathers who moved to South Africa from other African countries. This introductory chapter will include the rationale of why this study is important.

1.2 Rationale

There is a sizeable gap in the body of knowledge regarding the role of fathers in transnational families. First off, the majority of research on transnational families is small-scale qualitative research and does not systematically gather information on the experiences of transnational fathers (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). Second, the majority of information gathered, or data collected is at one end of the transnational experience, with only the parent or parents already in the host country and the children in the country of origin living without the migrant parent (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). In addition, the majority of research has focused mostly on Latin Americans (especially from Mexico) migrating to the United States. This emphasis ignores growing trends in transnational families in other migrant-sending and receiving regions, such as Sub-Saharan Africa (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011).

However, there have been studies regarding the experiences of international immigration from South Africa by Aderanti (2003), Crush et al. (2005), and Rutherford (2008) and other studies that focus on emigration, experiences of the families that were left behind, how relationships were maintained as well as the use of ICT's by Marchetti-Mercer et al. (2020). Men's experiences of migration, transnational fatherhood, and the lived realities of male migrants have been under studied in previous studies (Mpaata, 2020). There is a paucity of research in family studies that focuses on the experiences of fathers who are away from their families as well as how migrant men view their role as fathers while being far away from their families. Studies focus on the stress the mother experiences with the father being away and having to take care of the home and the children (Lesch, 2022). Therefore, the purpose of the

study was to explore the experiences of transnational African fathers who migrated to South Africa with specific emphasis on how they maintained a relationship with their children still living in their country of origin. It also aimed to explore the different tools and strategies migrant fathers used to maintain relationships with their children. Lastly, it explored the different coping mechanisms that migrant fathers use to deal with the separation from their children.

This thesis is organised as follows:

Chapter One : Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the study by providing an overview of the study. It presents the rationale for conducting research on transnational migration.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive overview of the relevant migration literature. Definitions of migration are provided in this chapter, along with an overview of the history of migration in South Africa both before and after apartheid. It also provides an overview of South African migration frameworks. This chapter defines transnationalism, provides an overview of transnational migration families, delves into the experiences of transnational African families, describes how they maintain regular contact with their family that is left behind, and discusses the challenges that transnational families face when communicating with their family that is left behind. Furthermore, this chapter delves into transnational parenting and how migration affects roles. This chapter also discusses fathers' perspectives on fatherhood, what it means to be an African father, the responsibilities that come with it, and how that role is handled. This chapter also discusses the role that mothers play in father-child relationships, as well as the effects that migration has on these relationships. This chapter further discusses the effects father migration has on the families left behind, the

difficulties migrants encounter in their new nation, and the coping strategies they employ to deal with being apart from their loved ones. The final section of this chapter discusses the various remittances used by transnational families and how they help to maintain long-distance relationships.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter provides a detailed account of the decisions made and procedures used to answer the research questions posed at the start of this study. This comprises a summary of the research aims and research design that serve as the foundation for the procedures used to carry out this study. It also includes a summary of the procedures used to guarantee that ethical standards were met and self-reflexivity as well as the benchmarks used to ensure qualitative rigour were achieved.

Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter presents the major themes that emerged during the analyses of the data gathered for the study, using the framework of Braun and Clarke's (2019) thematic analysis. The main themes that have been identified in the study are namely, 1) Push factors to immigration, 2) Pull factors related to immigration, 3) Adjustment to the host country 4) The use of ICTs in communication with left-behind children, 5) The psychological and emotional impact of migration on the father-child relationship, 6) The role of the mother, 7) The role of remittances. The supporting subthemes to these central themes are also discussed.

Chapter Five: Discussion

This chapter seeks to answer the research questions that were initially posed for this research project through the interpretation of the data and a comparison of findings with the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The prevailing themes were examined in light of the Bowens Family systems theory.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This chapter concludes the study by summarising the key findings, highlighting its limitations, and making recommendations for future studies in this area.

Appendices:

This section contains the necessary documentation that was utilised in this research project.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on migration, transnationalism, family communication via ICTs, the important role of remittances in transnational families, and the challenges faced by migrants in their host nations. The goal of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive theoretical framework that will serve as a backdrop for interpreting the data from the thematic analysis that will be detailed in the findings chapter. It will list the most important definitions relevant to this study, explore the history of migration in South Africa, detail the reasons why individuals migrate, explain the challenges migrants experience, describe the concept of transnationalism, explore transnational African migration, and explain how ICTs are used with migrants and their families left behind. Lastly, an overview of the different forms of remittances will be provided.

2.2 Definitions related to migration

Migration is defined as the movement of people across national boundaries (Ayantokun, 2018). A migrant is an individual who decides to leave their place of origin for a number of different reasons, not always in response to an immediate threat of harm or death (Machaka et al., 2021). In addition, the term migrant refers to a broad range of individuals, including those who relocate in search of better opportunities in life, such as family reunions or employment or education. It also includes refugees (Machaka et al., 2021). The term refugees refers to individuals who flee their nation because of widespread violence, foreign aggression, internal strife, grave human rights violations, or other events that have seriously disrupted the peace and order and threatened their lives, safety, or freedom (Sánchez Nájera & Freier 2022).

Any act of migration that violates the laws that regulate entry and stay in the country of destination is referred to as **illegal immigration**. An individual may become an illegal immigrant because of a number of reasons. People who would not otherwise be eligible for a visa or who come from countries without automatic waivers of visas, frequently cross the border without going through customs to enter their destination country (illegally) (Casarico et al., 2015).

A person who has fled persecution in their country of origin and is looking for safe haven abroad but has not yet been granted any legal status or recognition is considered an **asylum seeker**. While awaiting the outcome of their case, asylum seekers are occasionally detained in a number of nations (Hiropoulos, 2017). To make the distinction between refugees and asylum seekers, an individual is typically referred to as an asylum seeker up until the point at which the nation they are requesting refuge from formally reviews and grants their request. If their applications are turned down, asylum seekers risk being deported and losing their right to stay in the country of destination (Hiropoulos, 2017).

Notwithstanding the motivations for leaving their country of origin, migrants are often faced with xenophobia in their host countries. According to Adler (1996), **xenophobia** is the general dread of difference, extreme unease around members of other cultures, or hatred and discrimination toward those who act, behave or appear to be different. Migration paths for refugees, asylum seekers, and people without legal status are particularly difficult. They are more likely than other migrants to have experienced abuse and trauma before and during the migration process (Merry et al., 2017), thus, putting these families at risk of being excluded in the host country because of the trying and difficult circumstances they face (Merry et al., 2017).

Transnationalism is defined as the process by which immigrants form social networks between their home country and their new country of residence (Schiller et al., 1992). Families that live apart for a portion or all of their time are known as **transnational families** because

they manage to stay together and foster what is essentially a sense of familyhood a sense of collective well-being and unity regardless of national boundaries (Mazzucato et al., 2014).

2.3 History of Migration in South Africa

2.3.1 Migration during the Apartheid era

Migration to South Africa has been a long-standing issue for more than a century (Dinbabo & Nyasulu, 2015). The colonialist project which was known as apartheid was developed in what appeared to be an effort to establish institutions that would oversee diverse cultural groups and facilitate their coexistence in harmony and peace (Kaarsholm, 2019). The first Immigration Regulation Act of 1913 was enacted based on 19th century policies and practices in order to strictly regulate population flows among Indians and non-White immigrants (Klotz, 2000). The goal of this Act was to prevent African immigrants from coming to South Africa, however it wanted to use their labour force (DEMIG, 2015). Furthermore, this Act prohibited people from travelling freely within South Africa and between its provinces (DEMIG, 2015). During this time, African migration was limited to temporary movements, while the government actively pursued European settlers, who were only granted legal status through the migrant labour system (Klotz, 2000). Because of its discriminatory immigration policy, it only attracted people that the previous administration deemed to be a good fit (Haile, 2012). The main objectives of the regimes in power before 1948 were to guarantee a sufficient labour supply and to uphold White rule, similar to the previous colonialist governments in the 19th century,

Apartheid in South Africa took place from 1948 to 1994 (Kaarsholm, 2019). In addition, the apartheid regime used deeply ingrained notions of customs, culture, and communal identity to ethnicise political processes and administrations (Kaarsholm, 2019). During the colonial and apartheid eras, Black South Africans were forcibly removed from their

homes and placed in native reserves, which subsequently became known as homelands or Bantustans. They lived in appalling conditions at the time (Bennett et al., 2015). Kaarsholm (2019) contends that the apartheid state used sophisticated technologies for surveillance, tracking and identification, to control population movement and access to residential areas in order to uphold order and power. The apartheid regime historically had an impact on South Africa's migration patterns (Ayantokun, 2018). Bonnet (2021), who provides an overview of African immigration to South Africa, states that the apartheid regime created complex migration systems. This was done with the intention of providing labour to the mining and agriculture industries (Gordon, 2015). South Africa emerged as the primary destination for labour migrants due to its natural resources and potential for economic growth. During the apartheid era the majority of Black men moved within Africa to find work, leaving their families behind in rural areas (Marchetti- Mercer et al., 2023). As a result, migrants from nearby countries were frequently hired as cheap labour in South Africa's mining, manufacturing, and agriculture industries (Gordon, 2015). During apartheid, the mining sector in South Africa employed labour migrants (Ayantokun, 2018). Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Botswana, and Swaziland accounted for the majority of labour migrants from Africa, though the percentage varied over time (Ayantokun, 2018). All labour migrants were located through the Employment Bureau of Africa office in their country of origin (Crush et al., 2005). The immigrants were hired on two-year contracts and resided in unkempt homes which were mostly single-sex hostels that had poor housing conditions (Adepoju, 2003). Families were divided, and communication options were limited, making it impossible to maintain relationships. Because of the distance and cost of travel, visits to home were difficult and often limited to specific seasons of the year (Marchetti- Mercer et al ., 2023).

Additionally, during the apartheid era, migration in South Africa took the form of circulation, which is also known as transient or seasonal migration (Rugunanan & Xulu-Gama,

2022). Circulation was the process by which migrant mine workers in South Africa were hired from nearby nations for a limited time before having to return home and go through the immigration process once more or when their work was required (Rugunanan & Xulu-Gama, 2022). The discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand changed the entire pattern of labour migration in the sub-continent. Initially, most migrants came independently (Crush et al., 2005). Furthermore, professionals with specialised skills, primarily from Ghana, Uganda, and in a smaller scale from Nigeria, secretly moved to the South African homeland states during the apartheid era and illegally left their countries of origin (Adepoju, 2003). Unskilled labour travelled back and forth between non-mining countries like Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa and mining nations during the colonial and apartheid eras (Rugunanan & Xulu-Gama, 2022). The government only authorised the one organisation (Employment Bureau of Africa), to hire workers from other African countries for South Africa's mining sector. Migrants were required to return home to renew their contracts upon expiration (Ayantokun, 2018). Thus, the only ways for Black people to enter South Africa were through illegal means or as contract labourers in the mines (Ayantokun, 2018).

In addition, the apartheid national government enacted the Bantu Self-Government Act (1950), which kept Black people confined to their homelands, which were established as sovereign states (Fintel & Moses, 2017). The Pass Laws Act (1950) severely limited travel outside of one's homelands and was one of the important laws enacted (Fintel & Moses, 2017). This Pass Law regulated movement to and from locations other than the country's borders (Fintel & Moses, 2017). Additionally, every Black person over 16 years old was mandated by this Act to carry a passbook, which functioned as a means of identifying one's place of employment and granting permission to enter an urban area for a period no longer than 72 hours (Fintel & Moses, 2017).

Furthermore, between 1960 and 1987, nearly 900,000 Caucasians legally entered South Africa (Haile, 2012). To increase the proportion of White people in the population, skilled and semi-skilled White migrants from Kenya, Zambia, and Zimbabwe were granted citizenship (Schierup, 2016). The government actively encouraged Caucasians to immigrate and provided financial assistance to them (Haile, 2012). After 1986, the government eased some restrictions on Black immigration, but only to help the Bantustans while also strengthening state policing powers (Klotz, 2000). Furthermore, the Aliens Control Act enacted in 1991 and which was based on the 1913 Act, excluded Black people (Ayantokun, 2018). In addition, the Act included a number of amendments that gradually tightened restrictions on people's ability to cross national borders (Klotz, 2000).

2.3.2 Migration to South Africa during the Post-Apartheid era

The end of racial segregation and the apartheid system in South Africa occurred in the early 1990s (Reed, 2013). In 1994, South Africa's apartheid system came to an end, creating new opportunities for cross-border travel and the migration of foreigners from poor and rural areas seeking better economic opportunities (Visser & Kalitanyi, 2010). South Africa has seen a significant increase in the number of immigrants and refugees since the democratic government was elected in 1994 (Gordon, 2015). The majority of African migrants that enter South Africa, are a mixed group consisting of refugees fleeing unstable political and poor economic conditions, and economic migrants seeking work (Visser & Kalitanyi, 2010). Therefore, once freedom of movement was possible there was a significant increase in migration to South Africa (Reed, 2013). The end of the apartheid regime brought new opportunities for both domestic and international mobility as well as new moving incentives (Crush et al., 2005). In addition, South Africa has one of the largest economies on the African continent and is one of the most developed countries in Africa (Reed, 2013). As a result, South

Africa is now among the most sought after locations in Africa for both economic and asylum-seeking immigrants (Gordon, 2015).

The first post-apartheid government, the African National Congress (ANC) sought to end laws that discriminated against people based on their race and to promote genuine collaboration between the nation and other nations in Africa, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, and the international community as a whole (Ayantokun, 2018). In 1992, SADC was founded, comprising Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (Crush et al., 2005). The SADC region has resulted in new forms of mobility and a significant increase in both legal and unauthorised cross-border flows, according to Crush et al., 2005. In addition, in search of employment and other economic opportunities, the majority of migrants have come from Sub-Saharan African nations and SADC countries like Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Namibia, Botswana, and Lesotho (Dinbabo & Nyasulu, 2015). Eventually other skilled migrants from other African countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zaire joined in, shaping South Africa's informal sector (Adepoju, 2003). It has been estimated that nationals from 100 countries now reside in South Africa (Moyo, 2021). According to Moyo (2021) just 32% of these migrants were from non-SADC nations. Furthermore, a report on migration trends published by Statistics South Africa notes that, between 2016 and 2021, a net of 853,000 people migrated to South Africa (Moyo, 2021).

In 1994, the migration patterns in South Africa shifted to include a wider range of migrants, from high-skilled workers to low-skilled individuals, as well as those with and without documentation (Moyo, 2021). This contrasts with regional labour migrants during the apartheid era, who were primarily working in the mining sector and traditionally originated from nations like Lesotho, Eswatini, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe (Moyo, 2021).

According to Haile (2012), the immigration policy of the post-apartheid state continued to be regulated by the Aliens Control Act 96 of 1991. Any individual suspected of being undocumented could be stopped by police or immigration officers working for the Department of Home Affairs Internal Tracing Units, according to the Aliens Control Act (Haile, 2012). Once stopped, the individual could be requested to produce a copy of their passport or a South African identity document (ID) (Haile, 2012). Indeed, the mobilisation of international support played a significant role in putting an end to apartheid (Ayantokun, 2018).

Individuals who migrate from the Global South, particularly from the South - South and Southern Africa, have different motivations than individuals who migrate to the Global North (North America, Europe and Australia) (Rugunanan & Xulu-Gama 2022). Some immigrants from the Global North do so voluntarily or out of choice and in pursuit of a particular lifestyle (Rugunanan & Xulu-Gama, 2022). In contrast, individuals from the Global South who migrate to the Global South - South on the other hand, do so because of uncontrollable push factors like civil wars, political violence, economic difficulties, and extreme poverty (Rugunanan & Xulu-Gama, 2022). Furthermore, according to Dinbabo and Nyasulu (2015), the majority of African migrants who travel to South Africa do so because the situation in their home countries has deteriorated to the point where it is below their threshold for tolerability. The large number of Zimbabwean immigrants living in South Africa at the moment is a good example of this (Dinbabo & Nyasulu, 2015). According to the Census 2022 data, the top five countries from which immigrants to South Africa originated, were Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho, Malawi, and the United Kingdom (Statistics South Africa, 2022). Since the 2011 census, these five nations have remained in that order as well. In 2022, there were an estimated 2.4 million immigrants residing in South Africa, according to Stats SA (Statistics South Africa, 2022). As part of a strategy to combat poverty, turmoil and strife, people from other African nations like Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Cameroon, Somalia, Ethiopia, and the

Democratic Republic of the Congo migrated to South Africa (Rugunanan & Xulu-Gama, 2022). Nearly 40% of migrant workers travelled to Johannesburg, South Africa, after apartheid (Reed, 2013). The bulk of both domestic and foreign migrants reside in Gauteng Province because of its dominant economic position throughout the country and the entire Southern African region (Maviza, 2020). Furthermore, due to its mining operations, Johannesburg, also referred to as eGoli (meaning a place of gold) in affectionate terms, has consistently had the highest concentration of migrants in Gauteng (Maviza, 2020). As a result of the influx of immigrants from both within and outside the country, Johannesburg has become known as the South African city with the fastest rate of growth (Maviza, 2020).

2.3.3 South African Migration frameworks

According to Vanyoro (2023), refugees and migrants are entitled to a number of the same universal human rights and fundamental freedoms which have to be respected, protected and fulfilled at all times. For refugees in South Africa, there is the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Convention in Africa which was added through the Refugees Act. What this means, is that refugees in South Africa are entitled to international rights such as freedom of movement, travel documents and the right to work (Vanyoro, 2023). However, in South Africa migrants and refugees are seen as two separate distinct groups and are governed by different legal frameworks (Vanyoro, 2023). Additionally, this plays a role in how foreign nationals obtain work permits. Although applying for a work permit should take between three months and a year, in practice this is not always the case (Vanyoro, 2023). Due to some employers refusing to hire foreigners without work permits, this puts the migrants' jobs in danger (Vanyoro, 2023). Additionally, a large number of migrants remain undocumented or seek asylum for years, and those who have refugee status find it challenging to acquire documents like the refugee identity or travel documents (Mukumbang et al., 2020). Most asylum seekers and refugees have difficulty acquiring or renewing their papers in a timely manner, and it is

obvious that undocumented migrants cannot find meaningful, long-term employment, even if they are qualified (Mukumbang et al., 2020). The majority of illegal migrants are forced to work in the unorganised sectors and live in impoverished neighbourhoods (Mukumbang et al., 2020). This contributes to the fact that many migrants end up being undocumented (Vanyoro, 2023). Therefore, South Africa became the focal point of the Southern African system of migration (Rugunanan & Xulu-Gama, 2022).

2.3.4 Motivations for migrating to South Africa

Migration can be selective, which means that people choose to migrate because they see opportunities abroad and can weigh the benefits and drawbacks of both their home country and the country they are moving to (Lee, 1966). On the other hand, people who are unemployed or experiencing economic insecurity in their native countries are more likely to face forced migration (Lee, 1966).

According to Dinbabo and Nyasulu (2015), economic reasons are one of the main factors influencing immigration to South Africa. For instance, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) found that Africans migrate to South Africa as a result of the dire conditions in their native countries, where they are no longer able to survive (Dinbabo & Nyasulu, 2015). There are push and pull factors for immigration, with the pull being the opportunities in the host nation and the push being the extreme poverty in the country of origin, as evidenced for example by the large number of Zimbabweans living in South Africa. Migration is primarily driven by changes in their native country's economy (Lee, 1966). Certain migrants come from countries where economic opportunities are limited and difficult to obtain, especially for the less educated (Lee, 1966). Furthermore, extreme poverty, unemployment, and socio-economic unrest are present in some of the neighbouring African

nations, which is another driving force behind the influx of migrants into South Africa (Dinbabo & Nyasulu, 2015).

However, not all migrants to South Africa came for jobs; some were compelled to leave their home countries and arrived in South Africa illegally, as refugees or asylum seekers (Adepoju 2003).

2.4 Transnationalism

2.4.1 Transnational Migration

In the 1990s, Schiller et al. (1992) were among the first to use the term transnationalism. According to Schiller et al. (1992) migrants create transnationalism by establishing social connections between their home country and the host country. Those who immigrate and create these social connections are called **transnational migrants** (Schiller et al., 1992). Several definitions of transnational migration have been put forth by various academics (Maviza, 2020). Schiller et al. (1995) for instance, described transnational migration as the process through which migrants create and maintain concurrent, multifaceted relationships that bind together the communities from which they originated and those where they settled (Schiller et al., 1995). The definitions have placed a strong emphasis on how migrants are simultaneously embedded in both their nations of origin and destination and shows how migrants and their offspring engage in cross-border family, social, political, religious, and cultural processes (Maviza, 2020). Likewise, undocumented migrants need special attention because, while they are less likely to participate in transnational activities, they frequently encounter more obstacles and have less access to resources that could enable them to do so (IOM, 2010).

In the past, migrants were generally understood to be individuals who left their home countries to settle in or adjust to a new socio-cultural setting (Maviza, 2020). Nonetheless, transnational processes are now more widely acknowledged as an essential component due to

the rise of globalisation, the restructuring of the world, the growing interconnection and integration of various regions into a single supply chain, as well as technological advancements in fields like transportation and communication (Maviza, 2020). Through various means of communication, including regular communication through the use of technology and remittances, migrants have always kept in touch with their families back home (Maviza, 2020). Some critics argue that transnationalism is nothing new because what is known as transnational has existed for a long time (Foner, 1997; Waldinger & Fitzgerald, 2004). Because of technological advancements that facilitate communication and mobility, the only difference between the transnational migrant practices of today and those of the past, is the frequency of visits, strength and consistency of the connections made possible by ICTs and mobility technologies for physical mobility and transport (Maviza, 2020).

2.4.2 Transnational Families

Some Africans are compelled to search for work opportunities abroad in order to support their families because of high unemployment rates, poverty, and resource shortages in their home nations. (Mpaata, 2020). One of the main strategies for the family to survive is by sending one of the parents to work abroad while the rest of the family members and the children stay in the country of origin, which creates a transnational family (Abrego, 2009). Replacement caregivers can be friends, family, or other non-related individuals who provide short or long-term care. Examples of such individuals include friends and nuclear or extended family members who move in and out as needed (Bryceson, 2019). Caregivers are extended family members who play an important role in the well-being of children in transnational families (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). When children and their parents reside in different countries, caregiving responsibilities are assumed by a new person in the family system (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). For instance, a large number of children around the world are raised in transnational families as a result of this development (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). Children

may leave their homes and live with extended family when parents emigrate (Maviza, 2020). Parents may choose to hire domestic workers to provide specific care arrangements for their children, allowing them to remain in their homes (Maviza, 2020). Family members, such as the aunt of the child's father or the grandmother of the child's mother, or a member of the church may take care of the children of migrants (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). Additionally, grandparents on occasion, may continue to care for the children left behind (Maviza, 2020). Patterns of living, as well as patterns of authority, may change in these situations (Maviza, 2020).

Research on transnational families has primarily focused on understanding how families continue to be significant to society despite member separation due to distance, disconnection, and the occasional rupture of families (Maviza, 2020). Previous research has found that the children have benefited financially from their parents' migration, but they have suffered emotionally from the prolonged separation from their parents (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). The body of research above shows that migration does not only affect the family left behind such as the children and the remaining parent. It also affects the parent who leaves their family and goes to a host country.

Unlike the widespread migrations of the nineteenth century, when people were permanently relocated and had limited opportunities to maintain relationships with their families of origin, transnational kinship is practically a given in the 21st century due to the global mobility of individuals (Bryceson, 2019). Equally important, according to Mazzucato and Schans (2011), transnational family life may not always result in family dissolution and can even serve as a strategy for attaining social status for each member of the family. Furthermore, family members may aspire to be reunited (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). In addition, transnational families, while not new, are unquestionably more common than they have ever been (Bryceson, 2019).

2.4.3 Transnational African Families

Previously, African migrants did not find it easy to maintain regular constant contact with their people from their country of origin (Maviza, 2020). Technological advancements in the modern era have made it possible for migrants to stay in constant contact with their home countries. Their capacity to do so has enabled them to continue being actively involved at several levels and in several places within the global social spheres (Maviza, 2020). While migrant parents are physically absent from their families, Marchetti-Mercer et al. (2020) found that they can still be psychologically present in their family's lives. Transnational fathers are able to still maintain a supportive relationship with their children and fulfil the father role while being physically absent (Parke & Cookston, 2021). This can be done through the use of different forms of ICTs as well as regular visits home (Marchetti-Mercer et al., 2020).

Moyo et al. (2023) conducted interviews with Zimbabwean migrants, including adult children, parents, and elderly parents. Migrants left in order to survive Zimbabwe's extremely unstable socio-economic environment and to pursue better employment opportunities elsewhere. (Moyo et al., 2023). ICTs were used to maintain family relationship. For example migrants preferred using WhatsApp for communication due to its affordability and usability (Moyo et al., 2023). In addition to facilitating regular family interactions even when they are geographically separated, WhatsApp or WhatsApp groups appear to be a means of recreating family interactions in transnational families (Lake Yimer, 2021). Some migrants mainly relied on smartphones and applications (apps) like Facetime and Skype, in addition to using WhatsApp to communicate with relatives who were left behind (Marchetti-Mercer et al., 2023). One of the reasons people use Skype is because it is less expensive than phone calls (Marchetti-Mercer et al., 2023).

Additionally, in a study by Davalos (2020) who researched Ghanaian migrant fathers, it was found that fathers who used online communication with their children had a positive

improvement in their relationship with their children because they were able to know what happened in their children's daily lives, how they were doing in school, what sports they were playing, and they were also able to mentor their children over the phone. Transnational fathers who maintained regular communication with their children were able to create stronger emotional and encouraging bonds (Mpaata, 2020). The father may be seen to be abandoning the children and ceasing to care for his family if there is a lack of regular communication (Mpaata, 2020).

According to Davalos (2020), communication is crucial between transnational fathers and the family members who are left behind in order to preserve their close social ties and maintain a sense of virtual co-presence. Communication has also been demonstrated to be very successful in creating and preserving kinship ties (Lake Yimer, 2021). The usage of communication exemplifies what it means for a family to live in a digital world (Lake Yimer, 2021). ICTs were also used to provide additional useful types of care, such as grocery delivery (Moyo et al., 2023). It was found that Zimbabwean migrants believed that technology was essential for staying in touch on a regular basis (Moyo et al., 2023). Migrants are able to send food vouchers and place orders via WhatsApp to send groceries directly from South Africa to Zimbabwe (Moyo et al., 2023). Thus, in transnational families, the exchange of care entails more than just sending money back home; it also includes meeting practical needs related to health and welfare (Moyo et al., 2023). This emphasises the importance of transnational families having access to smartphone technology in order to move from shared presence to ambient co-presence and become more aware of their distant relatives' daily activities (Madianou, 2016). The term "ambient co-presence" describes the feeling of constant co-presence over distance that can be obtained by simply having access to or ownership of ICTs (Madianou, 2016). The continuous communication between migrants and family members, as well as their ability to connect at any given moment, creates a sense of ambient co-presence,

making you feel as if your family is always available to you (Madianou, 2016). Additionally, it was found that in addition to ICTs, visits were the most effective way for transnational relationships to overcome distance (Marchetti- Mercer et al., 2023). Visiting one's family fosters more tangible human connections than communicating virtually using ICTs (Marchetti- Mercer, Swarts and Baldassar, 2021). However, Parke and Cookston (2021) state that not all migrants are able to visit their families back home and may spend years in the host country without seeing them. Several factors may contribute to this, but the main one is that most migrants are undocumented, which affects their ability to visit home and then return to the host country (Parke & Cookston, 2021). The logistics and costs of travelling back home can also prevent migrants from being able to visit their families (Parke & Cookston, 2021). Another factor contributing to migrants' inability to visit their families was the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, South Africa restricted all forms of travel, both nationally and internationally, making it even more difficult for migrants to return home (Mabandla et al., 2022). Some migrants lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in no income and no means of staying in touch with their families (Posel & Casale, 2021). As a result, ICTs are critical to the preservation of family relationships in African transnational families .

2.5 Challenges Transnational families face

2.5.1 Communication

Although being able to communicate with transnational families helps with maintaining relationships with those left behind, cost remains a deciding factor (Moyo et al., 2023). However, it is important to note that due to financial constraints, not all participants can use ICTs to communicate with their families (Baldassar, 2008). Baldassar (2008) states that the frequency and duration of migrant-to-migrant contact are determined by their access to resources, limiting their ability to engage in transnational contact. Digital inequality is another

major barrier for vulnerable migrants (Haile, 2021). The disparities that exist between different groups' access to, use of, and benefits from ICTs as a result of rights, gender, geographic location, authority, and financial standing, among other factors, are referred to as digital inequality (Haile, 2021).

Due to the prohibitively expensive cost of data, particularly in Zimbabwe and South Africa, some migrants' stated that they used WhatsApp for messaging and voice recordings rather than video calls to communicate with their families back home (Moyo et al., 2023). This supports the findings of Madianou and Miller's (2011) study, which demonstrated that migrants have lower communication costs in South Africa due to lower calling costs compared to their families back home. The study by Moyo et al. (2023) indicates that some migrants are very selective about how they spend their money. Certain migrants prioritise their finances by allocating more funds to necessities for survival, resulting in a reduction in funds allocated for family communication (Moyo et al., 2023). In addition, Malawian migrants who relocated to South Africa in pursuit of better employment prospects found another obstacle to preserving relationships: a lack of internet access in some Malawian households (Price & Kabaghe, 2023). According to Price and Kabaghe (2023)'s study Malawian migrants stated that they found it difficult to use ICTs with regularly contact their families in Malawi: they required access to less expensive calling options, such as data-based WhatsApp calls (Price & Kabaghe, 2023). Other migrants from Malawi expressed similar sentiments, claiming that it can be difficult to purchase airtime when one is short on funds (Price & Kabaghe, 2023). To gain access to these technologies, they must first purchase more expensive smartphones and their own data, as well as data for their Malawian families (Price & Kabaghe, 2023). As a result, migrants in South Africa are forced to use more expensive means of communication (Price & Kabaghe, 2023). A further concern raised by a few migrants was Malawi's poor network connectivity. Because of bad network connections, sending documents or messages to Malawi takes longer to be

received, and voice notes on WhatsApp may occasionally not download. (Price & Kabaghe, 2023). As a result, poor connections limit migrants' ability to communicate with their families back home. As a result, the migrant's life in the host country may suffer if they are unable to communicate with their family members who have remained behind.

For migrants living in South Africa, Maja et al. (2023) explored the impact of rural-urban migration on them and the families they left behind. According to Maja et al. (2023) the use of ICTs and mobile data access was critical for left-behind families to maintain relationships. ICTs also aided immigrants because they were necessary for adjusting and acclimating to their new surroundings (Maja et al., 2023). Maja et al. (2023) found that family members discovered that using ICTs to spend more time with their loved ones was beneficial, despite the associated communication costs. Among the benefits was the ability to use ICTs to assist with caregiving and to share important events such as weddings and funerals (Maja et al., 2023).

2.6 Transnational Parenting

Even though fathers move away from their home countries in search of better socio-economic opportunities, they still encounter difficulties along the way in their host country (Mpaata, 2020). African migrants in South Africa, who move with their children are more likely to reside in shacks, garages, and cottages, which are informal settlements and which have less reliable access to electricity, water, and sanitary facilities (Bennett et al., 2015). This leads to the father deciding to keep the family in their country of origin, continuing transnational parenting (Mpaata, 2020). When a family decides that one or both parents will move to a different country and leave the children behind, the parent(s) will still be involved in their children's lives and maintain direct or indirect contact with them (Mpaata, 2020). This is known as transnational parenting. According to Mpaata (2020), the majority of the time, traditional family roles will change when transnational parenting takes place. Studies on

migration have focused on the impact of migration on adult children and female experiences of migration (Mpaata, 2020). Furthermore, most research focuses on the psychological well-being of mothers who are physically absent from their children's lives due to migration, and on the psychological well-being of their children left behind with other family members (Mazzucato & Dito, 2018). For instance, a study by Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997), on transnational women from El Salvador who immigrated to the United States and left their children behind, stated that despite being physically separated from them, they were able to fulfil their motherly responsibilities through the exchange of letters, pictures, and regular phone calls. They were also able to remind their children to do their homework, take their daily medication, and complete other household chores over the phone.

Similarly, Millman (2013) observes that, while mothers support their families and gain financial independence, there are significant emotional costs for the mothers involved. Mothers frequently experience feelings of hopelessness, bereavement, guilt, isolation, and anxiety, owing primarily to the pressure to meet the standards of what it means to be a "good" mother (Millman, 2013). The emotional distress experienced by migrant mothers is partly caused by the fact that they are often the only ones who are held accountable for the actions and future selves of their children (Zikhali & Vearey, 2016).

Mothers who migrate to other countries frequently face the perception that ensuring their children's future will harm their relationships with them (Zikhali & Vearey, 2016). According to some academics, mothers who migrate become frustrated when they have to spend a lot of time away from their children because it strains their relationships with them (Contreras et al, 2012; Bohr and Whitefield, 2011). Falicov (2007) observes that, despite mothers' efforts to maintain relationships with their children through various means, such as communication technologies, the meeting can be described as more of a gathering of strangers than a family reunion when they do eventually have the opportunity to meet.

2.7 African perspectives on fatherhood

Fatherhood is viewed as male-identified adults, regardless of living situation, marital status, or biological relationship, are primarily responsible for caring for a child (Bowels et al., 2022). A father can have many different roles in a family: he can be the sole parent, one of two primary parents, or a secondary parent (Bowels et al., 2022). They may be a grandfather, stepfather, foster parent, or biological father (Bowels et al., 2022).

Morrell and Richter (2006), on the other hand, regard fatherhood as a cultural and human role, or the role that men play in raising their children.

Gender stereotypes and the idea of working and providing fathers have always shaped fathers' expectations of both society and themselves (Gumede, 2020). Social norms and images of masculinity and fatherhood coexist with various cultural and traditional depictions of fathers (Gumede, 2020). Over the years, being a father has been strongly associated with being a provider.

In most African societies, the father is regarded as the head of the household, which entails that he makes all final decisions pertaining to the family, serves as the primary provider and protector of the household, and is also responsible for disciplining the children. (Mpaata, 2020). Men in the African society also believe that being a good father involves fulfilling those roles to a sufficient level (Mpaata, 2020). A good father, according to a study on fathers in northern Uganda, is perceived as one who can raise his children with discipline, teach them life lessons, and invest in their futures by creating a strong family (Mpaata, 2020). Additionally, Ugandan fathers thought that a dysfunctional family and misbehaving children were a direct reflection of themselves as fathers and that they were not fulfilling their role as a father (Mpaata, 2020). Furthermore, it was found that in Uganda, a father who leaves his family and relocates to a different country in search of better employment opportunities is praised and

regarded as a good father, whereas the father who stays at home and struggles to provide for his family is then criticised and denigrated (Mpaata,2020).

Chereni (2015) conducted a study on gender transformation and fatherhood among Zimbabwean immigrant fathers living in Johannesburg. According to the study, migrant Zimbabwean fathers believed that their primary responsibility as fathers was to financially support their families, and that they fulfilled this role by providing their children with toys, food, clothing, and an education (Chereni, 2015). Furthermore, the study found that fathering practices included fathers balancing caring and earning responsibilities (Chereni, 2015). Nonetheless, the study found that the fathers felt they were missing out on their children's daily lives because they were unable to travel to see their families in Zimbabwe due to financial constraints (Chereni, 2015). The fathers also stated that they would be more involved in their families' lives if they were physically present, and that as it stands, they must rely on their wives to discipline and mentor their children, which is a difficult concept for them (Chereni, 2015).

Lesch (2022) who explored the experience of Namibian men working in South Africa, asserted these fathers saw their responsibilities as being those of a family's protector and provider. The inability of fathers to serve as the family's protectors was another difficulty they encountered (Lesch, 2022). Moreover, it was found that the fathers felt helpless and worried when they learned that one of their children had been in a dangerous situation or was ill (Lesch, 2022). Therefore, the fathers felt that they had to delegate their responsibility for serving as the family's protector to the mother, which made them feel even more uncomfortable (Lesch, 2022). In this instance teenagers may take advantage of their mothers' propensity for being lenient with discipline because they are aware that mothers are typically kinder than fathers and that eventually they will not discipline them or will do so with less severity than their fathers (Lesch, 2022). Not only do fathers struggle to accept their new roles, but mothers

frequently struggle to perform the duties that fathers previously performed, such as disciplining children (Lesch, 2022).

2.8 The Impact of distance on the relationship between father and children

Childhood is a crucial time when parents provide their children with social, psychological, and physical support so they can grow appropriately (Tefaw & Minaye, 2022). According to psycho-social theories and research, parental assistance is a strong predictor of a child's future ability to manage stress, anxiety, and various social and psychological issues (Tefaw & Minaye, 2022). Young adults who have experienced slow rejection frequently vent their resentment on their romantic partners (Tau, 2020). Because they frequently lack a father figure in their lives, these developing children are frequently forced to assume parental responsibilities at a young age, denying them a normal childhood (Tau, 2020). According to Tau (2020) father figures are just as important as mothers in the lives of their children. The father creates a sense of security and safety from the outside world by being involved in the child's upbringing (Tau, 2020). When a father figure is absent from a child's life, the child may interpret this as neglect and become resentful of others, resulting in aggressive behaviour (Tau, 2020). Similarly, research has shown that children who grow up in a fatherless home may become lonely due to inadequate attention from a single mother (Zhao et al., 2017). Strong feelings of affection and the presence of a child's father or other father-like figure are typically necessary to sustain attachment bonds in children (Tau, 2020). Conversely, it has been found that absent fatherhood is associated with unfavourable emotions and sentiments that sever attachment bonds (Liu et al., 2009). According to Liu et al. (2009), problems in the parent-child attachment may be the cause of depression-like disorder in children who do not have fathers.

When tasks are delegated and rearranged, and current household responsibilities are changed to address issues resulting from the migrated parents, the household and family

systems are affected (Tesfaw & Minaye, 2022). For example, a study conducted in Mexico by Kandel and Massey (2002) in regions with high rates of parental migration overseas revealed that maintaining emotional ties between migrant parents and their children who remain behind may be difficult. Furthermore, the study found that children left behind in migrant households performed worse academically, than children from households headed by both parents (Kandel & Massey, 2002). As a result of the father's absence, some children can also experience psycho social issues and that children have no role model to look up to as they grow into young adults (Tau, 2020).

2.7.1 Fathers' relationships with children left behind

Willerton et al. (2011) investigated fathers who were in the military and who were separated from their children due to being deployed to different countries. In the study, some fathers felt remorse for trying to discipline their children from a distance because they believed they had been gone too long and their absence had softened the traditional role of the father (Willerton et al., 2011). One of the fathers in the study said they felt like strangers to their own children and that they were unsure of where they stood in terms of child discipline (Willerton et al., 2011). A study by Davalos (2020), revealed that transnational fathers from Spain and Ecuador had expressed feelings of guilt and pain as a result of being separated from their children. Having an emotional connection with children is another challenge fathers face. One of the fathers in the study by Lesch (2022) said he found it difficult to engage with his son because the boy did not talk much on the phone, and if he video-called him, the boy remained silent. Moreover, in the same study fathers found it difficult to express love and affection over the phone to their children. One father said he loved his children, but was unable to express his feelings to them, believing that his children were smart enough to figure it out for themselves (Lesch, 2022). In addition, some fathers explained that because of transmission across generations, it affected how they displayed affection to their children. The transfer of values,

knowledge, and customs from one generation to the next is referred to as intergenerational transmission of culture (Trommsdorff, 2009). Therefore, cultural transmission is understood as the process through which a culture is passed on in every generation that follows (Trommsdorff, 2009). Some fathers acknowledged that they did not know how to show their children verbal affection because they had never experienced it themselves (Lesch, 2022). The majority of the men in this study acknowledged feeling guilt and regret as they yearned for a stronger emotional bond and affection with their children (Lesch, 2022). The fathers also mentioned that being apart from their children caused them to feel sad and frustrated. One of the fathers said he felt like a failure because he missed out on his children's lives and was unable to witness his daughter speaking and crawling for the first time (Lesch, 2022). Overall, the fathers felt like they were only part-time parents and thought that not being present at home physically reduced their ability to be a good parent (Lesch, 2022). Additionally, the fathers felt that, despite the fact that migration helped them with material provision, it made their nurturing roles as fathers difficult and complicated (Lesch, 2022).

2.7.2 The role of the mothers when fathers are geographically separated from their families

Mothers have a major influence on the dynamics of a father-child relationship by either supporting or opposing it. Research suggests that mothers can encourage fathers to be actively involved in their children's lives and that they will appreciate financial support from them even if they are not romantically involved (Clark et al., 2015). Similarly, fathers who are devoted to their child's mother but do not live with her are more likely to provide financial support and child care (Clark et al., 2015). Makusha et al. (2012) explored men's support of children living in Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa, as reported by the children, women and the men. The findings of the study found that according to all the children, irrespective of gender, a tense mother-father relationship prevents father-child engagement, while a cordial relationship fosters

positive father-child interactions (Makusha et al., 2012). Furthermore, the study found that stable marriages or ongoing relationships that allow the mother and father to plan, communicate, and divide responsibilities amicably are necessary for active fatherhood (Makusha et al., 2012). In addition, one of the father's from the study stated tense or non-existent father-mother relationships are not appropriate for child support because it is difficult to provide financial support for a child one does not live with, because one is unsure if the money one is providing is going towards the child's benefit, especially if you do not get along with the mother (Makusha et al., 2012). Consequently, the desire of non-resident fathers to make financial contributions to their children is influenced by these experiences and perceptions (Makusha et al., 2012). However, if their relationship with their children's mother is strained, fathers who do not live with their children may not provide much financial support (Clark et al., 2015). Therefore, especially in the context of migration, father-mother relationships are essential for fostering father-child relationships.

2.9 Migrants' Relationship with the home country

While the vast majority of migrants come to South Africa in search of better economic opportunities, not all of them choose to stay (Wahba, 2021). Some migrants do want to return to their home countries (Wahba, 2021). Other than failure in the host country, there are a number of reasons for returning back home (Wahba, 2021). Most of the time, migrants want to live and work near their families (Wahba, 2021). Returning is frequently part of a migration strategy that entails moving temporarily to save money and gain knowledge and skills that can be used back home (Wahba, 2021). Furthermore, the degree to which migrants succeed in their new country has an impact on return (Wahba, 2021). As a result of their failure early in the migration process, unsuccessful migrants have higher departure and return rates from the host country than average migrants (Wahba, 2021). Successful migrants leave more frequently than the average migrant, but only after they have met their savings goals (Wahba, 2021). It is also

possible that migrants who do not feel at home in their new country will want to return home. Consequently, Antonsich (2010) defines belonging as feeling at home. To belong, one must locate a location that makes one feel at home (Antonsich, 2010). Cultural attachment is another way for someone to feel at home in a new country. According to Falicov (2005), a person's family, friends, and the communities in which they participate can serve as a conduit for cultural attachment. However, not every migrant has this experience in their new country, which may make them want to return home as well. Opara (2022) explored the experiences of West African migrants living in Johannesburg, South Africa. Migrants who have lived in South Africa for a long time report feeling less integrated and cohesive in the country's society (Opara, 2022).

According to Kunuroglu's (2016) analysis of research attempting to pinpoint the factors influencing return migration choices, migrant behaviour is to be understood from the perspective of wanting to belong to a particular ethnic group from a transnational standpoint. It is believed that immigrants' decisions to return are influenced by how they identify themselves and how they view their country of origin (Kunuroglu, 2016). Migration and return migration are not viewed as separate phenomena but rather as a web of social, political, religious, and commercial exchanges that transfer ideas and knowledge across national borders (Mwangi & Asiedu, 2017). Moreover, from this transnationalism perspective, the migrant's home country's circumstances, as well as their attachment to it, daily lives there, and familial ties, all have an impact on their intentions to return (Mwangi & Asiedu, 2017).

Tsuda (2009) investigated the factors that have led millions of diasporic migrants to return to their ethnic homeland of Japan after decades of absence. He argues that while economic incentives are the main driver behind the return, emotional factors and ties to one's ethnic community also matter. Different ethnic groups may place different values on economic and other motivations (Tsuda, 2009). Subsequent research on Greek immigrants from

Germany's second generation revealed that the primary reasons for their return were non-economic factors like family, lifestyle, stage of life or familial connections, and ethnic ties, such as their pre-existing social network (King et al., 2011). However, studies on migrants from the Caribbean (Potter, 2005) and India (Jain, 2013) revealed that the main causes of their return were financial, such as better employment opportunities. Economic and ethnic factors, also known as pull factors, have been extensively researched and highlighted in scholarly works as primary drivers of repatriation (Kunuroglu, 2016). However, migrants' decisions to return and feel a sense of belonging may be influenced by the host country's negative discourse, which is reflected in people's prejudices against immigrant groups, xenophobia, perceived prejudice, and racial discrimination (Kunuroglu, 2016). It is important to remember however, that research on the negative effects of return migration also shows that migrants who have dreamed of returning for years eventually realise that their dreams usually end in disappointment (Kunuroglu, 2016).

2.9.1 Impact of Migration on migrants and those left behind

Even though technology has made it easier for migrants to feel included in their families' daily lives and activities, being physically apart from family still presents difficulties (Marchetti-Mercer et al., 2023). Furthermore, in the study of Moyo et al (2023), Zimbabwean migrants stated that the dissolution of their family structures was the primary consequence of their migration to South Africa. A male migrant from Zimbabwe interviewed by Moyo et al. (2023) stated that while leaving Zimbabwe was a wise financial decision, it was also a bad one because they had to grow up alone in a foreign country without their parents, without parental guidance and they had to discover on their own what it meant to be a man (Moyo et al., 2023). Furthermore, another Zimbabwean female migrant who had entrusted her son to her family stated that her bond with him gradually deteriorated due to her inability to provide him with a

mother's love (Moyo et al., 2023). She added that sending voice messages or video calls was insufficient because it created an even greater distance between them (Moyo et al., 2023).

In addition, migration paradox is also another factor affecting transnational relationships. Bryceson (2019) asserts that while migration can enhance the material life of the children left behind, it may also have a negative impact on the mental and emotional well-being of those children. According to studies, there is an emotional divide between migrant fathers and their children, which is marked by an absence of direct communication and a sense of unease, discomfort, and awkwardness in the relationship (Parreñas, 2008). These traits essentially convey a feeling of unfamiliarity that could be present in transnational family relationships (Parreñas, 2008). A Malawian study participant said that he felt forgotten because he had not been there for his young son's entire life (Price & Kabaghe, 2023). Furthermore, some of the participants are unable to visit their families back in Malawi due to financial constraints (Price & Kabaghe, 2023). As a result of this, it affects the transnational families, therefore, distance and separation cause the parent-child bond to weaken.

2.10 Challenges migrants experience

When arriving in a new country migrants face a number of challenges. Rugunanan and Smit (2011) highlight the following challenges which include the difficulty in acquiring legal documents, inadequate job prospects, appalling living circumstances, high crime rates, and the potential for xenophobia. Below is a more detailed discussion of these issues.

2.10.1 Lack of legal documents

One of the challenges that migrants might face is the lack of legal documentation if they arrived in South Africa as undocumented migrants (Pelser, 1998). Parents without documentation may be unable to send as much money home as they would like, and if they are separated from their children in their birth country, they may be unable to see them for an

extended period of time (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). Furthermore, if parents without documentation bring their children to the host country, the children may struggle to receive proper education and medical care, and they may even end up working without documentation themselves (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011).

2.10.2 Difficulty in securing employment

Many African foreigners working in South Africa found it difficult to find work in their home countries due to economic turmoil (Gao, 2022). However, they were able to find low-skilled work or general work in South Africa (Gao, 2022). Some migrants work in unskilled jobs and in the informal sectors (Crush & Tawodzera, 2017). The most common jobs in the informal sector included selling of food items, household goods and clothes, and services like styling of hair (Crush & Tawodzera, 2017). Furthermore, some migrants earn money through casual work activities like gardening, car washing, distributing flyers at traffic signals, and washing clothes (Crush & Tawodzera, 2017).

Because they are more likely to work informally, migrants often have unstable employment situations. The employment of migrants is precarious and is often associated with various risks, including language obstacles, employer bias and discrimination, a lack of connections in the workplace, inadequate knowledge of the labour system, poor health issues, and inadequate social support (Koseoglu Ornek et al., 2022). However, Kalitanyi and Visser (2010) state that it is challenging for immigrants to obtain work in their new countries. Even with their education and experience, immigrants only very rarely find employment (Visser & Kalitanyi, 2010). Viljoen et al. (2019) investigated ways in which South Africa could attract and recruit critical skilled immigrants into different sectors of the economy. The study's findings show that participants in South Africa's labour market described the country's system as xenophobic and discriminatory, such that not everyone is comfortable with immigrants, even if they possess critical skills (Viljoen et al., 2019). In addition, the study found that everything

is dependent on the job one gets (Viljoen et al., 2019). A plausible explanation for this could be the phenomenon of brain waste, a significant concern for highly skilled migrants, in which they find themselves employed at a level well below their actual expertise because of a lack of opportunities (Viljoen et al., 2019). As a result of this, some migrants turn to entrepreneurship after becoming frustrated with their attempts to blend in with the host society (Visser & Kalitanyi, 2010). Many of them are compelled by this to pursue entrepreneurship on the basis of necessity. As a result, they generate work for themselves and occasionally for unemployed South Africans (Visser & Kalitanyi, 2010). But these business owners deal with many issues and face considerable xenophobic animosity towards them and their companies (Visser & Kalitanyi, 2010). In addition, according to Adsera and Pytlikova (2015), fluency in the language of the host country and the capacity to pick it up quickly have both been demonstrated to be crucial for the migration of existing human capital to other nations and to generally increase immigrants' success in the job market in their new home countries. Additionally, improved language skills lower migration costs and enhance immigrants' social integration in the host nation (Liu et al., 2020). Migrants and natives are also more likely to feel socially integrated when they speak the same language (Liu et al., 2020).

2.10.3 Experiences of Violence and Crime Victimisation

In addition to the effects of the weak legal system and issues with immigration policy, the majority of migrants in South Africa also encounter high levels of xenophobia and violence. (Opfermann, 2020). In South Africa, while the majority of xenophobia is targeted at Black African migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers (Opfermann, 2020), diverse Asian immigrant populations are growing more exposed to xenophobic prejudice and attacks (Park & Rugunanan, 2010). Currently, South Africa is home to at least 350 000 people of Chinese origin, between 70 000 to 100 000 Pakistanis, an additional 55 000 to 60 000 Bangladeshis, and a significant influx of recent migrants from India (Park & Rugunanan, 2010). Although

there have been more violent attacks that included Asians, especially Bangladeshi shopkeepers, in recent years, these migrants from different parts of Asia are not the main targets of xenophobic violence (Park & Rugunanan, 2010).

Given that all refugees and immigrants should have fundamental human rights, including protection, it stands to reason that migrants could report these kinds of violent acts committed against them to the South African Police Services (SAPS). However, that is not always the case, as the SAPS from time to time use targeted operations to beat, arrest, deport, and intimidate unauthorised migrants (Opfermann, 2020). According to Opfermann's (2020) study the participants claimed that they feel unsafe and afraid because gangs and criminals view them as easy targets. According to Ramoshaba and Rapholo (2023), who examined xenophobic experiences among illegal migrants in South Africa, it was found that foreigners living in South Africa would be either robbed or told to return to their country of origin by South African citizens.

In terms of victimisation, Rakubu and Malatji (2023) investigated the effects of the fears of immigrant's in South Africa. According to their study, SAPS often believe that illegal immigrants are complicit in crime. Furthermore, the study found that a subset of migrants had been detained without cause and were unable to challenge the legitimacy of their detention (Rakubu & Malatji, 2023). This resulted from the fact that immigrants are frequently easy targets for extortion by the police because of their lack of legal status and or insufficient identification documents (Rakubu & Malatji, 2023). Another study by Rugunanan and Smit (2011) discovered that many of the participants and their family members had been victims of crime, as evidenced by their narratives. These crimes also included kidnappings, burglaries, robberies, assaults with the aim of causing great harm to another person, and sexual assaults such as rape.

2.10.4 Isolation and Loneliness

In the process of moving from their home country to their new country of residence, migrants frequently experience loneliness due to the stress of immigration and the absence of coping mechanisms. As a result of inadequate social relations, one experiences loneliness as an unpleasant feeling or dissatisfaction (Jang & Tang, 2022). Depending on their age at immigration, migrants experience different challenges and stresses when they relocate to a new country (Jang & Tang, 2022). International migration is a significant turning point in a person's life and frequently results in long-term changes in their trajectory in a variety of areas, including their health, financial well-being, family, and social life (Jang & Tang, 2022).

Prior studies have identified particular difficulties that migrants face that have an impact on their mental health, such as communication issues brought on by language and cultural barriers; adjusting, acculturation, and intergenerational conflict which is affected by differences in family structure and processes; as well as acceptance by the receiving society, which can have an impact on employment opportunities, social status, and settling in (Jang & Tang, 2022). The term "social cohesion" describes how residents of a given locality or neighbourhood get along with one another. This looks at how migrants interact with other ethnic groups and locals, as well as the beliefs they have of local institutions (like the police) (Guna, 2018). Contrarily, community integration refers to the mingling of differences, with drawbacks gradually reducing or disappearing. The impact of migration on social cohesiveness and integrated community development is complex and wide-ranging (Guna, 2018). A number of factors including language and cultural barriers, a lack of knowledge about the surroundings and social environment, prejudice, and xenophobia contribute to the exclusion of migrants from basic public services like housing, health care, and employment. These factors are all root causes of conflict between communities (Guna, 2018).

2.11 Coping Mechanisms

Pertek (2022) explored how faith and religion shaped the resilience of forced migrant women who were subjected to gender-based violence and trafficking. Pertek's (2022) research indicates that forced migrants employ a variety of coping mechanisms, including personal attributes (such as bravery, optimism, perseverance, and inner strength); social support from friends, family, and the community of origin; and a wider social environment. For many displaced individuals, religion and faith are regarded as the cornerstones of resilience. In addition, Pertek (2022) found that in the aftermath of human trafficking, prayer, turning to God, and attending church services were important coping mechanisms, as were tasks that promoted contentment and concentration. Similar to this, Pertek (2022) also found that despite facing numerous forms of violence, migrants and refugees from Mexico and Central America depended on their faith, as well as their relationships with family and friends and inner strength, to get by during their travels and stay in the United States.

In their thorough examination of refugee women's resilience, Hutchinson and Dorsett (2012) and Hawkes et al. (2020) discovered religion to be a valuable resource, followed by tradition, children, social networks, families, education, and official support. According to some fathers, to avoid depression and cope with being away from their families, they focused more of their energy on their jobs and avoided thinking about them (Chereni, 2017). As a result, some fathers made the decision that they needed to emotionally distance themselves in order to guard against feeling unpleasant emotions like guilt (Lesch, 2022). They believed their children would have better options than they did and would not need to make the same sacrifices as they did (Lesch, 2022). Therefore, fathers are motivated by the idea that they are sacrificing time with their children for the sake of their own futures (Lesch, 2022).

2.12 Remittances

Financial stability is critical for transnational families (Abrego, 2009). Migrants frequently send a significant portion of their earnings back to their home countries, which is known as the sending of remittances (Aguayo-Téllez et al., 2021). Remittances are an important means of maintaining familial ties across long distances (Huennekes, 2018). They serve as the most concrete proof that migrants maintain connections to their home nations or communities while relocating (Katigbak, 2015). It has been discovered that money received from abroad is used to pay for accommodation, groceries, education, and medical care, among other necessities (Huennekes, 2018). In addition, research indicates that remittances are utilised by families to enhance their financial resources and enable their children to receive better medical care, and generally have better health (Cebotari et al., 2017).

2.12.1 *Emotional remittances*

Remittances can take many different forms, including economic, social, and emotional (Huennekes, 2018). Emotional remittances, according to Katigbak (2015), communicate the notion that items, money, and ideas that are exchanged between and among family members across international borders, do have an emotional significance associated with them (Katigbak 2015). As a result, emotional remittances serve a purpose other than simply supporting families left behind that are reliant on financial remittances (Katigbak, 2015).

Parreñas (2005), describes the experiences of Filipino women who had left their home country, emphasising that remittances are more than just a financial transaction. Migrant mothers foster a sense of belonging that transcends national boundaries (Parreñas, 2005) and feel that they should not go back to their native country because their sacrifice at least has allowed them to send some money thus meeting expectations from their families (Della Puppa & Ambrosini, 2022). Furthermore, a study conducted by Kilkey et al. (2014) featured Polish male migrants to the UK. The study discovered that fathers could use remittances as a means

of actively participating in the day-to-day activities of fatherhood (Kilkey et al., 2014). On the other hand, some fathers in the research discovered that the act of remitting money can serve as a lens through which to view the structure of power of transnational social relations.

2.12.2 Social Remittances

Katigbak (2015) contends that social remittances contribute to the longevity and integrity of transnational communities by preserving family ties. The idea is that migrants bring a variety of non-monetary resources with them (such as connections, identities, customs, and hierarchies) that influence how they integrate into and interact with their host communities; they also return with more than just cash (Isaakyan & Triandafyllidou, 2017). Positive and negative effects can result from social remittances; the latter can include family breakup, strong delusions of Western economic prosperity, and a persistent global terror threat. However, there is no clear advice on how to avoid such unfavourable effects (Isaakyan & Triandafyllidou, 2017). As a result, migrants create their social remittances with a specific intention to impact on the community, and they also engage in various interactions with both the sending and receiving communities throughout their lives (Isaakyan & Triandafyllidou, 2017).

2.12.3 Gender differences in remittances

Gender differences exist in patterns of remittance as well (Abrego, 2009). According to studies by Semyonov and Gorodzeisky (2005) and Houle and Schellenberg (2008), migrant men who make more money than women, tend to send more money (Abrego, 2009). In line with this theory, Semyonov and Gorodzeisky (2005) propose that men remit more because they are expected to do so since they typically provide for their families in their country of origin (Amoyaw, 2016). Furthermore, it was discovered that some men send more money than women, implying a wage disparity between the sexes (Semyonov & Gorodzeisky, 2005). It is noteworthy that remittances are influenced by various factors, including age, education level,

and length of overseas employment, in addition to gender (Semyonov & Gorodzeisky, 2005). Other research, however, shows that while women remit smaller amounts, they are more consistent and dependable remitters (Parreñas, 2001; Della Puppa & Ambrosini, 2022). Additionally, it was found that women's transnational and enduring roles as mothers and caregivers for their families make them more likely to remit (Amoyaw, 2016). As a result, it should not come as a surprise that immigrants' ideas regarding their roles as men and women, as defined in the home countries, influence their remittance behaviours (Abrego, 2009).

Abrego (2009) examined how the gender of migrant parents affects transnational families' financial well-being. Father-away families typically struggled, while mother-away families benefited financially when parents started new relationships in El Salvador or overseas (Abrego, 2009). Immigrant mothers were consistent remitters, irrespective of whether or not their relationships with former partners were in good shape (Abrego, 2009). Immigrant men, on the other hand, were more likely to reduce or stop sending remittances after beginning a new romantic relationship (Abrego, 2009). In contrast to the aforementioned research, some studies report that there are no gender differences and that both men and women routinely send money home to their families (Teye et al., 2023).

2.12.4 Methods of sending remittances

In the search for innovative and efficient methods of sending remittances, technological advances such as mobile remittance services received significant attention (Siegel & Fransen, 2013). People can send money using their mobile phones with the help of this payment system (Siegel & Fransen, 2013). These innovations are thought to reduce remittance costs and improve accessibility for both senders and recipients of remittances, particularly in remote locations (Siegel, & Fransen, 2013). Thus, one of the primary advantages of using mobile banking for remittances is the speed with which money transfers (Siegel & Fransen, 2013). Mobile remittance sending is currently available through providers of mobile banking services

in Zambia and South Africa (Siegel & Fransen, 2013). As a result, migrants can still provide financially for their families who have remained behind.

2.13 Conclusion

This chapter includes a summary of relevant literature that goes into detail about the difficulties that migrants face on a daily basis in South Africa. Given this context, the literature review has also provided a detailed explanation of transnational migration, along with an analysis of the experiences and obstacles fathers encounter when they must integrate into a new country while also being separated from their children. The study's objectives and research questions will be outlined in the next chapter, and will discuss in detail the methodology used.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter aims to provide an outline of the methodological considerations that were used during the entire research process. It begins by discussing the main tenets of qualitative research and the research design used, as well as the systemic theoretical framework underlining the study. It then presents the aims of the research and the research questions that flowed from it. Following that, a summary of the sample and sampling strategy, as well as information on the data collection process will be provided. Following that, the participants' experiences as well as the data analysis procedure will be provided. This chapter will conclude with an explanation of the procedures used to ensure reflexivity, ethical considerations, and qualitative rigour.

3.1 Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research is a collection of interpretive, practical methods that provide a way of seeing the world. The term "qualitative research" is used to describe a broad range of perspectives and investigation techniques that are intended to reveal how people perceive, comprehend, analyse, and create the social environment (Hammersley, 2013). Qualitative research adopts a naturalistic, interpretive perspective on the world. In addition, qualitative research creates representations and uses these as research tools. As a result, qualitative researchers focus on studying phenomena in their natural environments while attempting to understand phenomena in terms of the meanings that individuals assign to them (Scandroglio & Lopez Martinez, 2007). Case studies, personal experiences, life stories, interviews, observations, histories and interactions that describe common and troubling moments and meanings in people's lives are all used and collected as part of qualitative research (Scandroglio & Lopez Martinez, 2007). To do this, qualitative researchers use a variety of interrelated interpretive techniques, always hoping to gain a deeper understanding of the topic at hand

(Scandroglio & Lopez Martinez, 2007). Because the participants' lived experiences are inextricably linked to the environment in which they exist, the findings of qualitative research should reveal the subjective reality of the phenomenon under investigation while also situating it within the relevant context (Fossey et al., 2002). Thus, qualitative researchers are more interested in "the quality and nature of the experience" than cause-effect relationships (Willig, 2001, p.9).

3.1.2 Research Design

The study was grounded in an exploratory qualitative research design. Exploratory research is conducted when there is a lack of sufficient knowledge about a topic or an issue that is not well understood (Boru, 2018). It simply examines the research topic at various depths rather than attempting to offer definitive answers to the research questions (Boru, 2018). As a result, its focus is on solving novel issues for which little to no prior research has been conducted (Boru, 2018). In this study, the exploratory qualitative approach was chosen to explore the experiences of transnational African fathers who emigrated to South Africa, with a particular focus on how they maintained a relationship with their children while still residing in their country of origin. This approach is useful for describing and comprehending a topic of particular interest (Hunter et al., 2019). Qualitative methodology examines phenomena within their context using multiple data sources (Marchetti-Mercer, 2017). Given that the study aimed to explore the experiences of fatherhood in transnational migrants living in South Africa, the qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for this study (Marchetti-Mercer, 2017). The decision to focus on the experiences of transnational migrant fathers in South Africa was intentional, as most literature focuses on the experiences of transnational mothers or how the fathers being absent from home impacts the children's lives emotionally and socially. Most importantly, the experiences of transnational fatherhood are under studied in the African context, specifically in South Africa.

Therefore, the qualitative methodology was deemed appropriate as it allowed the researcher to be able to consider what transnational migrant fathers experience as they relate to their relationships with children.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

The Bowen family systems theory was used as a theoretical framework for this study. According to the central tenet of this theory, families and family members all operate as a single emotional system (Haefner, 2014). The family can be viewed as a system where changes in one area of the system are accompanied by changes in other areas of the system to compensate for those changes (Willis et al., 2021). The family is viewed as a complex system because each member's opinions, emotions, and actions are greatly influenced by the member's connections (Willis et al., 2021). As a result, in order to understand people, one should consider the context of their relationships with their families. Furthermore, the theory states that understanding how people think, feel, and behave requires understanding the family's context (Haefner, 2014). Additionally, family members are interdependent, and what happens to one will have a positive or negative effect on others, influencing their attitudes, sentiments, and actions (Haefner, 2014).

Boundaries are also an important concept in family systems as they create healthy and self-differentiated adults in the family (Wirick & Teufel-Prida, 2019). All families and couples naturally have boundaries (Wirick & Teufel-Prida, 2019). The roles that individuals and different family subsystems (such as children or parents) play, the duties of family members – these are all governed by boundaries. Some families have open boundaries which means that any family member can come and go as they please and certain family information is shared with anyone (Wirick & Teufel-Prida, 2019). This can affect the parent and child relationship; if a parent does not establish clear and concise boundaries for their children, it can lead to dysfunction of the family. Contrastingly, closed boundaries occur in instances where family

members have enforced family rules and do not allow the influence of people outside the family (Wirick & Teufel-Prida, 2019). In addition, a closed system is defined as an environment in which the boundaries between the family and the outside world are impervious (Wirick & Teufel-Prida, 2019). Closed systems are resistant to change because they are impermeable to extrafamilial influences (Wirick & Teufel-Prida, 2019).

Another important concept is circular causality where every component in a system influences every other component and each component's behaviour determines how the system is organised (Beauregard, 2020). In a cycle of cause and effect, A has an effect on B, which has an impact on A, which in turn impacts B, and so on (Beauregard, 2020). As a result, each member of the family has an impact on one another through their actions, feelings, and responses (LoBraico et al., 2020). For instance, the inability of a migrant father to stay in touch with his loved ones affects the behaviour and academic achievement of the children (Mao et al., 2020).

Another important concept is the idea of the nuclear family, namely, the traditional social unit of a couple and their offspring, which is generally recognised as a fundamental pillar of society, at least in Western contexts (Kalshoven, 2021). The nuclear family is a family structure made up of parents and their children, including the concept of an extended family and the associated emotional processes (Moyo, 2021). An extended family refers to the families of origin of the couple (Palombi, 2016). Grandmothers, aunts, and uncles are examples of extended family members. Additionally, members of the family have specific roles. In the more traditional nuclear family, the breadwinner, which was mostly the man, looks after the family's finances and provides security while the wife, who was responsible for the children, keeps the house in order, and ensures that the husband and children are cared for. In addition, this links to Bowen's multigenerational transmission process which deals with the interactions between parents and their offspring when generational patterns such as emotional processes are passed

from one generation to the next (Haefner, 2014). Parents' patterns and behaviours are passed down to their children, who then pass on the same patterns and behaviours to the next generation (Haefner, 2014). For instance, children might repeat the parenting styles they experienced as children with their own offspring. Increased and prolonged family conflict can result in clinical issues; the level of tension varies depending on the family's stress experiences, how they cope with it, and their relationships with other family members and the outside world (Haefner, 2014). The process of migration will have an impact on these relationship patterns, and once more, ICTs can be very helpful in reducing the stress that comes with being apart from one's immediate and extended family as well as helping people adjust to living abroad while emphasising the value of family (Moyo, 2020).

The idea that the family is an emotional unit is one of the distinctive contributions of the Bowen Theory (Bowen, 1978). The theory states that the way in which one generation functions will affect how the next generation functions (Bowen, 1978). This theory holds that a person's automatic and acquired physiological, mental, emotional, and behavioural processes are shaped and controlled in part by their family relationships (Bowen, 1978).

Emotional cut-off, according to the family systems theory, describes how people emotionally cut themselves off from their families to distance themselves emotionally from their families (Brown, 1999). An individual's emotional distance or emotional closeness from distant family members is determined by both physical separation and the nature of the relationship; individuals with poor relationships with their distant family members are more likely to encounter problems and symptoms of emotional cut-off (Moyo, 2022).

People grow apart when faced with intense emotional situations within the family. In extreme cases, a person may sever all ties with or distance themselves from their parents or grandparents (Papero, 2014). The distance can be extremely small or very large (Papero, 2014). Conversely, the absence of interaction seems to harden emotionally responsive mechanisms in

interpersonal relationships. The anxiety level of the cut-off person rises with each new relationship they enter after losing contact with their family of origin (Papero, 2014).

Differentiation is an adult's ability to live independently by making decisions for themselves while maintaining emotional ties to their birth family or nuclear family (Lampis et al., 2019). Since people who migrate, leave their families of origin behind but still need to negotiate their own autonomy and keep in touch with the people they have left behind, this idea may be applicable in transnational family systems (Lampis et al., 2019). A person who is well-differentiated can both function independently and acknowledge their realistic dependence on others (Lampis et al., 2019).

Bowen's model establishes intrapsychic and interpersonal characteristics as the foundation for self-differentiation (Lampis et al., 2019). The ability to maintain a healthy equilibrium between cognitive and emotional processes on an intrapsychic level, as well as the ability to form close, emotional bonds with others while maintaining some degree of independence from them on an interpersonal level, is defined as self-differentiation (Lampis et al., 2019). An individual with a higher degree of differentiation can adopt "I-positions", which are characterised by retaining one's identity in significant relationships or in unpredictable circumstances (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Highly differentiated people can be intimate with others without feeling suffocated in relationships, and they can maintain autonomy from others without suffering crippling fears and anxieties of abandonment (Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

Individuals with high differentiation have been shown to have better psychological adjustment, whereas less differentiated individuals are more likely to exhibit physical and psychological stress symptoms such as sensory overload, anxiousness, depression, and psychosis (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). This can be used to explain how migrants manage their roles when they are separated from their families - effective adaptation emphasises appropriate differentiation and lower levels of stress (Moyo, 2022). People who have low differentiation

tend to be less adaptive, flexible, and emotionally reliant on others around them (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). They are prone to dysfunction as a result of stress, and they struggle to break free (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). As a result, individuals with low differentiation levels are more prone to place the blame on themselves in the event that the nuclear family disintegrates or where migration creates emotional distance, particularly in situations where there is no communication with the nuclear family. Higher differentiators can handle life's stresses better, lead more successful, orderly lives, and exhibit a remarkable lack of interpersonal issues (Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

Triangulation, on the other hand, is a relational pattern that has the potential to be harmful (Bowen, 1978). Triangulation can become dysfunctional when the method of dealing with interpersonal anxiety involves the use of a third party to diffuse conflict, minimise accountability, or pit one person against another. As an example, parents may triangulate a child to divert attention away from marital discord (Heiden Rootes et al., 2010). Another possibility is that a subsystem consisting of the one parent and a child (or children) band together to oppose the other parent. Mothers have the potential to be key players in triangulation; if they do not get along with the child's father, they may use the child as a tool against him. As a result, the father's relationship with their child(ren) may be negatively affected (Whitehead, 2009). A mother-child coalition may form if the father is perceived to be overly strict, for example (Heiden Rootes et al., 2010).

According to Bowen (1988), a triangle made up of three distinct relationships has the capacity to handle more anxiety than the total of those three relationships combined because the triangle allows the system to transfer conflict and anxiety more easily between the different relationships in the triangle (Willis et al., 2021). Children would therefore be more likely to be triangulated if adults with low differentiation levels suffered from chronic anxiety (Willis, et al., 2021). Bradford et al. (2004) looked at 11 samples originating from nine nations and

discovered a significant impact in eight of the samples when they examined the relationship between youth-reported triangulation into marital conflict and adolescents' depressive symptoms. This research made use of young people's accounts of feeling torn between parents, and parental behaviour to measure triangulation (Bradford et al., 2004).

In conclusion, the family systems approach maintains that in order to understand human behaviour, one must understand the larger family (Willis et al., 2021).

3.2.1 Research Aims

The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of transnational African fathers who migrated to South Africa with specific emphasis on how they maintained a relationship with their children still living in their country of origin. It also aimed to explore the different tools and strategies migrant fathers used to maintain relationships with their children. Lastly, it explored the different coping mechanisms that migrant fathers use to deal with the separation from their children.

3.2.2 Research Questions

The following questions were asked at the start of the project:

1. What tools or strategies do African transnational migrant fathers living in South Africa use to maintain relationships with their children?
2. What resources do African transnational fathers use as coping mechanisms to deal with the separation from their children?
3. How do African transnational migrant fathers view their role as fathers?

3.3 Sampling and Recruitment

The sample for the study consisted of 10 Black African migrant men living in South Africa. This sample size was appropriate because of practical and theoretical considerations as each individual case can be analysed thoroughly (Vasileiou et al., 2018). The selection criteria

were that participants should be between the ages of 29 and 50 who have lived in South Africa for at least two years in order to identify transnational migrant fathers who have migrated to South Africa because of employment opportunities and left their children in their home country. Also, participants were supposed to be proficient in English to avoid the need for a translator.

Recruiting 10 participants proved to be more difficult than expected. Initially, I intended to recruit participants using purposive and snowball sampling techniques using social media and professional connections. However, I was unable to recruit sufficient participants using these strategies, so I used convenience and purposive sampling to find participants who lived in the greater Johannesburg area, with which I was familiar. I focused on specific work spaces that are typically reserved for foreign workers such as drivers for local supermarkets and waiters from restaurants. This can be seen as a form of convenience sampling which is also applicable to nearly any type of research since it entails using a sample that is readily available to the researchers (Tajik et al., 2023). For both population and clinical research, convenience sampling is widely employed (Stratton, 2021). Furthermore, convenience sampling is popular because it is simple, affordable, and requires less time than other sample methods (Stratton, 2021). Due to the fact that study participants had to meet specific requirements, a purposeful sampling technique was also employed. All of the participants fitted the selection requirements needed. The purposeful sampling technique is made up of elements that are representative and characteristic of the population for the study's purpose. Purposive sampling additionally aids researchers in locating participants who are appropriate for the study and who possess a deeper knowledge and understanding of the topic under investigation (Mpaata, 2020).

The participants' interviews provided in-depth data because most of the participants went into greater detail than the researcher asked and revealed more about their personal

histories and backgrounds, which influenced their current choices in life. As a result, the appropriate saturation level was reached.

3.4 Background Information of Participants

In terms of their country of origin, five participants originated from Zimbabwe, one from Malawi, one from Tanzania, one from Botswana, and two from Nigeria. Most of the participants came to South Africa between the years of 2004/2005 and lived in Johannesburg, South Africa from two years to over 10 years. Ten participants were deemed an appropriate sample size because data saturation was reached. When the researcher determines that all relevant data has been gathered and that no more data can be obtained from study participants or responders, this is referred to as saturation (Mwita, 2022).

In the following section some background information on the individual participants is provided using pseudonyms.

Participant One: Mike

Mike is a 41-year-old Black male from Zimbabwe. He was born in Bulawayo. He grew up with his father's family since he was about six years old. He was then taken and raised by his maternal grandmother when he was 13 years old. He received his education in rural schools in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. In 1999, he moved to South Africa for the first time. However, he was returned to Zimbabwe by social workers and South African police and was once again forced to live with his maternal grandmother. He then returned to South Africa for the third time, where he met a White woman who helped him and advised him to return to Zimbabwe to further his education. This woman had relatives in Zimbabwe and returned with Mike to assist him in writing his O and A levels in 2003. He was also working as a teacher and a farm worker at the time. He eventually earned a degree from the University of Zimbabwe. During this time, he met his children's mother, had a relationship with her, and she became pregnant with twins, a boy and a girl. Then, in 2008, he moved to South Africa. He came to South Africa

primarily to provide for his immediate family. He stayed in Cosmo City and Edenvale in one of the shacks. The White lady assisted him with finding a job as a petrol attendant at BP (British Petroleum) garage. He applied for asylum seeker status in 2009 after failing to obtain an identity document. He then applied for short courses in order to enter the South African labour market. Mike stated that coming to South Africa was never part of the plan; he attempted to stay in other African neighbouring countries of Zimbabwe, but that did not work out due to passport issues, police brutality, and difficulty in communicating in English. His life in South Africa has not been easy; as a foreigner, he has been subjected to a great deal of violence, including being shot with a gun and being hijacked and stabbed. He currently does not live with his children, who were 17 years old at the time of the interview. His son lives in Zimbabwe, while his daughter lives in the United Kingdom with her mother. He has no contact with his daughter because her mother divorced him and remarried. He communicates with his son, who visits South Africa twice a year.

Participant Two: Patrick

Patrick is a Black male in his late thirties. He was born in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. He was raised by both of his parents. His father died later in life, when Patrick was a little older. He was unable to continue his studies because his family was struggling financially because of his father's absence due to death. He moved to South Africa in 2004 in search of work after struggling to find work in Zimbabwe at the time. He already had a sister who was living in South Africa at the time, and he ended up staying with her for three months. During this time the sister was able to help him with connections and get him a job as a waiter. He has been working in the restaurant industry since then. He is currently married; he married five years ago and attempted to bring his wife to live in South Africa, but this was not possible due to visa restrictions. He has a two-year-old daughter who lives in Zimbabwe with her mother. It was only possible for him to visit every two to three years. However, he can now visit every

four months. Due to the high cost of airtime, he only communicates with his family every three to four days. He intends to return home and settle with his family in the long run.

Participant Three: Ntando

Ntando is a Black male in his late thirties. He was born in the countryside of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. He grew up with both of his parents and 14 siblings. He finished primary and secondary school and his O levels in Bulawayo's rural areas. He migrated to South Africa in 2006 when he was 20 years old because of economic challenges in Zimbabwe. He only returns to his hometown in December of each year. He met his child's mother in secondary school and left her in Zimbabwe while attempting to financially provide for both of them in South Africa. He began working in carpentry after being introduced to the trade by a friend. In the first five years of his son's life, he was unable to see his son on a regular basis. As a result, he now has full custody of his son since the mother abandoned the child due to a new relationship; the mother does not have contact with the son on her own volition. He wishes to return home or to settle in the United Kingdom at some point.

Participant Four: Thapelo

Thapelo is a Black man in his late thirties who was born in Botswana. He was raised by his grandmother because both his mother and father were in South Africa when he was a child. He used to visit South Africa as a child to see his mother and father, but he ended up getting stuck there. He only finished high school. The mother of his child currently lives in North West Province in South Africa; they are currently separated and the child lives with the mother. He only see his daughter when he can because he believes the mother arbitrarily requests money from him as an excuse to allow him access to his child. He had intended to take his daughter full-time, but his work schedule and living situation do not permit it. He only calls the mother a few times to speak to his daughter, but he dreads it because she always asks for money, which causes him to be estranged from his daughter. He never experienced

xenophobic violence in South Africa because he speaks Tswana, one of the 11 official languages of the country. He does intend to return to Botswana in the long run.

Participant Five: Raymond

Raymond is a Tanzanian Black male who is in his late fifties. He moved to South Africa with his sister and brother when he was seven years old. However, he moved back to Tanzania due to visa complications. His mother and father were both originally from Malawi and then moved to Tanzania. He finished school early and started working when he was 17 years old in Malawi. He did not continue his studies and did not attend university because of financial difficulties, which were common in his family. He then impregnated his child's mother while still in high school. His family was assisting him to take care of his son, however, he decided to get a job and not rely on others to take care of his family. He was able to pay for his child's school fees all the way until high school. However, he never had access to his child unless he could send money to the mother. After six months in South Africa, he got a job as a waiter and then was promoted to manager. The restaurant then closed, and he worked as a housekeeper for three years before starting at Checkers. He was unable to communicate with his child when he was young and he is unable to communicate with his son regularly now that his son is married. They have a distant relationship; he has never met his son's wife. He has struggled for years as a foreigner in South Africa, where he has faced discrimination and police brutality. Raymond is now married; his wife lives in Malawi, and he intends to stay in South Africa forever.

Participant Six: Lincoln

Lincoln is a Black male who is in his early thirties. He was born in Zimbabwe and moved to South Africa at the age of 19 to escape financial hardship in Zimbabwe and to find work. Because of financial constraints, he was unable to complete any schooling in Zimbabwe. He already had an uncle in South Africa at the time; his uncle was the one who assisted him in

settling in South Africa. He worked in the carpentry industry for four months after arriving in South Africa. He was unable to obtain an asylum seeker visa because it was difficult for him. He has a nine year old daughter who lives in Zimbabwe with his grandmother. Due to financial issues, he can only call his daughter twice a month because airtime is expensive. He visited his daughter in 2019, the last time he was able to travel back home. He is currently married and living with his wife in South Africa.

Participant Seven: Danny

Danny, a Black male from Nigeria, is currently in his late forties. He came to South Africa when he was 17 years old to live with his mother's family from the Free State Province in South Africa. He never looked for work in South Africa; instead, he created his own type of work by selling potatoes and tomatoes in the Johannesburg central business district (CBD). However, because he could not speak Afrikaans and was thus always vulnerable to violence in Johannesburg, he relocated to Pretoria. He then married, had two daughters with his wife, and lived in Pretoria; however, due to financial constraints, his wife and children were forced to return to Nigeria and live there because he could not afford to pay for the children's school fees and housing. He last saw his family three years ago and is in constant communication with them.

Participant Eight: Charlie

Charlie is a 30-year-old Black male who was born in Malawi. He was 23 years old when he migrated to South Africa. His reason for coming to South Africa is because of financial difficulties experienced by his family. He did not finish high school; his last education occurred when he was 15 years old. When he first arrived in South Africa, he began working as a helper on a farm in the North West Province, planting vegetables, and later as a gardener. He is now working in Centurion. When Charlie arrived in South Africa, he applied for refugee status. He shares a shack with a few other men in Olievenhoutbosch. He has a wife and a newborn baby,

both of whom are currently residing in Malawi. He had not seen his family in Malawi for two years.

Participant Nine: Matthew

Matthew is a Black male who was born in Nigeria. He was in his early thirties when he moved to South Africa in 2000. Matthew migrated to South Africa due to economic hardships in Nigeria, with the intention of starting his own business. However, that did not work out, so he applied for asylum and later married someone, resulting in a life partner visa, and they have two daughters. Unfortunately, his wife died, and he could not afford to care for his children; thus, his in-laws are currently caring for his children. He is currently employed as a barber in the Johannesburg suburb of Braamfontein. His children live in North West Province, South Africa, and due to his financial difficulties and inability to earn enough, he is only able to see them every few years.

Participant Ten: John

John is a Black male from Zimbabwe who is in his late thirties. He migrated to South Africa at the age of 19 years old. His mother is from the Western Cape Province, South Africa and his father is from Zimbabwe. He came to South Africa to study Actuarial Sciences at the University of Cape Town (UCT.) He has two children, a son and a daughter, but he has no access to them and is unable to communicate with them due to a strained relationship with their mother. He hopes to be reunited with his children one day.

3.5 Data Collection

The interviews were conducted one-on-one and in person. The interviews took place in a location which was convenient to both the participants and the researcher.

Before each participant's interview began, the purpose of the study was explained in detail and the participant information sheet (Appendix A) was discussed prior to them signing the consent form for both the audio recording and the study (See Appendix B and C).

3.6 Research Instruments

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to collect data from the participants. A semi-structured interview is used to gain insight into participants' perceptions regarding the topic of interest (De Vos et al., 2011). Furthermore, the use of open-ended questions gave the participants' more flexibility to express their thoughts and perceptions in relation to their experiences as transnational fathers (Mpaata, 2020). In addition, Silverman (2004) states that researchers cannot rely on their recollection of memories and field notes when it comes to interviews. This means that, if we use our memory to remember what participant's spoke about in interviews, the field notes taken during the interviews would not be accurate as we would write down what we think we remember (Silverman, 2004). Whereas, if we record interviews, we can hear utterances, pauses, and overlaps and they can be replayed as many times as possible (Silverman, 2004).

The interviews were conducted in English and ranged between approximately 30 minutes to 90 minutes.

I used an interview schedule (see Appendix A), that was curated by myself and my supervisor before the interviews. By using an interview schedule, you can ensure that all topics are covered during your interview and that a guided and focused interview is conducted (Utibe, 2020). Additionally, employing an interview schedule ensures that accurate data is gathered, enhancing the reliability and credibility of the researcher's data collection (Utibe, 2020). To avoid drawing conclusions or having false interpretations, I also asked the participants questions that were not on the original interview format during the interviews, allowing me to follow up with questions after they finished sharing their stories.

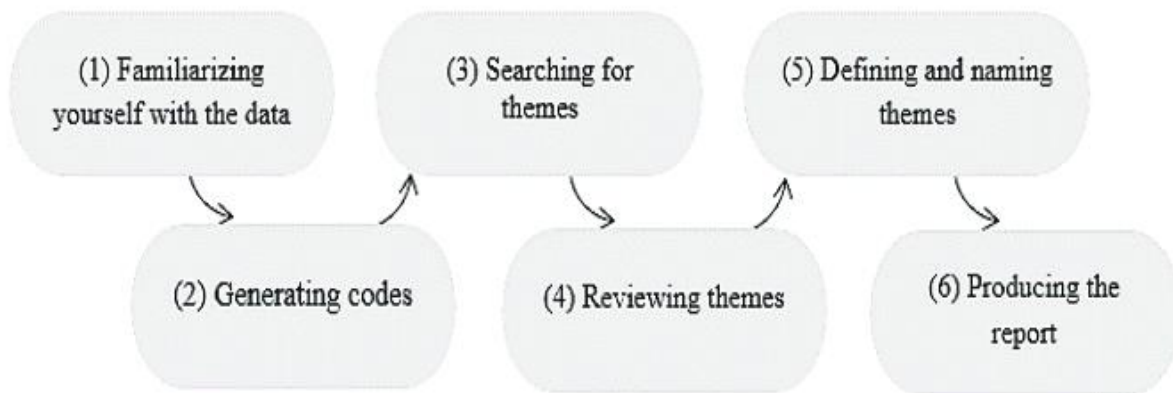
A digital recording of all interviews was made using my cell phone device (an iPhone). Field notes were taken during the interviews and then transcribed verbatim. After the interviews I imported the recordings onto my personal computer that is password protected and

then saved them on my Google Drive folder. In addition, the cellular phone I used was password protected to ensure that no one would have access to the recordings. In order to prevent unintentional omission of participant responses during the interviews, Mpaata (2020) contends that audio recording is crucial. Each participant was given a pseudonym at the point of transcription.

3.7 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data, following Braun and Clarke's (2019) guidelines. According to Braun and Clarke (2019), the inductive approach consists of allowing the data to reveal themes or patterns. Therefore, the inductive approach was appropriate to use during the analysis as I was interested in exploring the definitions and the experiences of transnational fathers in South Africa in relation to maintaining their relationships with their children.

Thematic analysis allows one to identify, analyse and report patterns (which are called themes) within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). It provides researchers with a description of the data set that is simple but detailed (Cavendish, 2011). In addition, thematic analysis analyses the research topic from various angles (Cavendish, 2011). Dawadi (2020) argues that thematic analysis serves as a foundation for qualitative research. Since it provides individuals with a set of core skills that will be useful when conducting other types of qualitative analysis, it should be the first method one should learn. In addition, Braun and Clarke (2019) state that thematic analysis is a method and not a methodology; it can be applied to many different types of research. Braun and Clarke (2019) describe a series of six phases which were employed in this study in conducting thematic analysis. The six phases are as follows, familiarising yourself with the data, generating codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

Figure 1*Steps for thematic analysis*

Note: The steps for conducting a thematic analysis are illustrated in this comprehensive mind map by Talip, Kifli, Murang, and Naing (2016).

3.7.1 Steps for Thematic analysis

Step One

The first phase is to familiarise yourself with the data. This step was executed by transcribing all sets of interviews into a written format and printing the transcriptions to be able to read the transcriptions better. Rather than using software to code the data, I transcribed it by listening to each recording and typing the content of these verbatim. According to Braun and Clarke (2019) the process of transcription is important as it is an excellent way to familiarise yourself with the data. This allowed me to engage in the analysis and immerse myself in the data well enough to be able to be familiar with the content of the data (Chamberlain, 2015). Dawadi (2020) states that the process of immersion usually involves reading the data repeatedly, as well as actively searching for meanings, patterns, and so forth.

Step Two

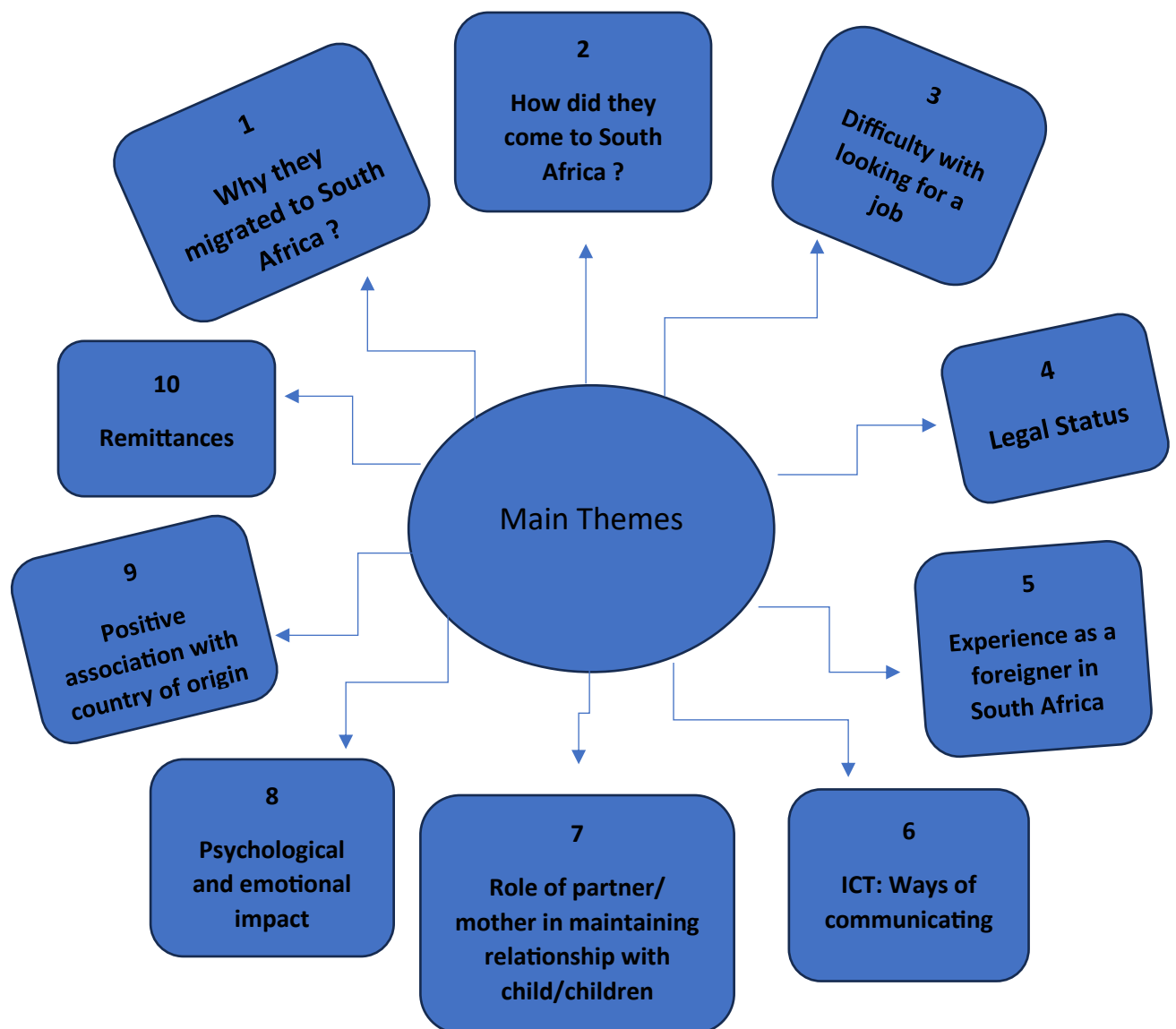
The second phase was generating initial codes from the data. This was done by categorising the codes from the transcription to the subject of the study. Every piece of data that answered the research question or revealed an intriguing finding was coded.

Step Three

Next, I looked for patterns of themes from the initial codes in phase 2. I then created a mind map with the initial codes and created themes for each codes. After that, the mind map was combined with more codes that shared a close relationship, to form potential themes and subthemes that dealt with the research aims and questions. Thereafter, the themes were examined to make sure that the extracts of data within each potential theme formed a logical pattern. Where needed, extracts were moved or themes were changed.

Step Four

I then proceeded to phase 4 where I reviewed the themes to make sure that they support and fit with the data set, by removing some of the initial codes that were not relevant and adjusting them as necessary. At this point, as patterns emerged throughout the whole data set, more data was coded. Once themes were clearly defined, I then finalised the mind map by creating the final themes as well as writing subthemes. I created a total of eight themes in total. I also made sure that there was a flow from theme one to theme eight and that the themes that were created were the most prevalent across the entire data set.

Figure 2:*Themes created during analysis*

Note: This figure shows the main themes that were found during the thematic analysis

Step Five

Phase 5 required defining and naming the themes. I did that by creating understandable names for each theme. As similarities and patterns emerged more clearly during this process, the themes were further clarified and broken down. This often meant going back over the initial transcripts and extracts of data to make sure that the context as well as the subject matter of each extract still made sense within the theme that it was grouped

under. In addition, certain quotes from the transcripts were used to support the identified material. The themes are presented in the findings chapter of this study.

Step Six

Lastly, phase 6 would require producing a report, and I did this by writing up an analysis for the data set before the initial codes were extracted from the dataset.

3.8 Benchmarks for Qualitative Rigour

Braun and Clarke (2019) emphasise the importance of applying theory and method rigorously to ensure that the appropriate quality of thematic analysis is carried out. In order to establish rigour in qualitative studies, four dimensions of trustworthiness criteria should be considered: dependability, confirmability, transferability, and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

3.8.2. Credibility

Credibility guarantees that the study accurately captures the participants' social reality and measures what is intended (Maher et al., 2018). Furthermore, credibility ensures that the results obtained from the participants (from their point of view) are accurate and credible. This was accomplished through the use of data triangulation and research reflexivity. Throughout the entire research process, I practiced research reflexivity by asking follow-up questions to participants to get clarification on any points I was unsure of during the interview process rather than making snap judgements. Furthermore, the results were interpreted and discussed using direct quotes from these interviews. Data triangulation is defined as an attempt to improve the qualitative research process through the use of multiple approaches (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I accomplished this by collecting information from a variety of people, using field notes and in-depth interviews as well.

3.8.2 Transferability

The ability of the results to be used in different contexts or situations is referred to as transferability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Furthermore, according to Maher et al. (2018) giving the reader a thick description of the specific research context is crucial because qualitative research is context-specific. This allows the reader to assess whether or not the research pertains to their own circumstances. This was achieved by describing the background histories of the participants. I also included specifics about the sample and sample strategy, the demographics, the interview process, and quotes from the interview schedule.

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability ensures that the analysis process is detailed and consistent enough for another researcher to conduct the same research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This entails allowing other researchers to replicate the study's choices in terms of objectives, sample, data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In order to achieve this, an extensive description of the research procedures as well as my rationale for the choices made were provided in this study. Furthermore, an audit trail was created by providing a comprehensive collection of notes regarding the research choices I made, my reflective thoughts, sampling, and the research materials I used.

3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability pertains to the neutrality aspect. The data's inter-subjectivity must be protected. Instead of your personal preferences and opinions, the interpretation must be supported by facts (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In addition, identifying researcher bias is intended to reduce investigator bias in this case.

This was achieved through the use of reflexivity. A qualitative researcher uses a reflexive mindset when gathering and analysing data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). A qualitative

researcher must consider how their personal experiences and perspectives influence the research process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Furthermore, rather than speculating on the meaning of specific terms or phrases, participants were asked to clarify them. As a result, it ensures that their meanings and interpretations, rather than mine, were clearly understood.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics refer to the principles that uphold morality and direct researchers as they conduct their studies (De Vos et al., 2011). Researchers must make use of ethical guidelines to make sure they comply with principles for ethical research practices (Mirza et al., 2023). In addition, research ethics hold researchers accountable and avoid research misconduct (De Vos et al., 2011). Additionally, by taking these ethical issues into account, research is ensured to be trustworthy by the general public (De Vos et al., 2011). The following are the principles of ethics that were followed throughout the research process, namely, voluntary participation, informed consent, non-deception of subjects and non-violation of anonymity and confidentiality, and avoidance of harm (De Vos et al., 2011).

Firstly, no participant in this study was threatened, pressured, harmed, or coerced into participating (De Vos et al., 2011). Before the commencement of the study, it was crucial to first receive ethical clearance from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) of the University of the Witwatersrand. Only once this permission was obtained did data collection begin.

3.9.1 Avoidance of harm

Participating in research entails some risk, as do all activities (Wiles, 2012). It is widely accepted that participants should not be subjected to more risk than necessary when participating in research, that researchers should assess any risks that may arise, and that

participants should be well-informed about both the risks and the benefits of participating in research (Wiles, 2012).

Participants were provided with an information sheet prior to the beginning of the interviews that included details about the study's objectives, the data collection method such as semi-structured interviews, my institution, and my supervisor's contact information. Furthermore, all ten interviews were conducted in public view, either in a public park or outside a hair salon or inside a restaurant. Additionally, participants were informed that free counselling would be provided if they experienced emotional distress during the interviews, and they were given the counsellor's contact information.

3.9.2 Voluntary participation

Informed consent and voluntary participation are two interconnected ethical considerations. Participation in a study, according to De Vos et al. (2011) should be entirely voluntary. I did this by ensuring that the participants' participation was entirely voluntary. Despite the fact that I actively recruited my participants, they were not required to participate, and those who met the requirements but were uninterested, chose not to. I did not mislead the participants by either withholding or giving incorrect information regarding the research and did not misrepresent the purpose of the research (De Vos et al., 2011). Lastly, participants were informed that they could ask to have their data removed from the study if they did not want it to be used for that purpose.

3.9.3 Informed consent

One of the fundamental ideas contained in professional guidelines for social science research is informed consent, which is an essential component of ethical research practice (Wiles, 2012). It entails informing participants in a straightforward manner about the responsibilities associated with participating in a research project and allowing them to make

their own decisions regarding participation (Wiles, 2012). Participants in research should be informed about the following topics in particular: the purpose and nature of the study; the source of funding; what happens to the results and how they will be shared; the nature of their participation in the project; potential risks and benefits; and the protocols for dealing with confidentiality and anonymity (Wiles, 2012). Prospective research participants must be informed that they are under no obligation to participate in the study and have the option to withdraw if they later decide not to partake in the study (Wiles, 2012).

To ensure informed consent before taking part in the study, the participants received a consent form and a sheet of information pertaining to the study. The consent forms were signed by the participants before participating in the interviews. In addition, I also printed out the interview schedules and showed them the questions I would be asking them to put the participants at ease, as they were initially confused about the purpose of the study. Moreover, the participants were given the right to withdraw from the study at any time; this was communicated to each participant prior to recording the interviews. Additionally, I also informed the participants that if they felt uncomfortable answering any of the questions, they could refuse to do so without explanation.

3.9.4 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Because participants must provide consent only after being fully informed about the management of confidentiality and anonymity, as well as the benefits and drawbacks of participating in relation to these issues, consent management and confidentiality and anonymity management are inextricably linked (Wiles, 2012). In general, confidentiality is understood to mean that information disclosed to another individual will not be repeated without that person's consent, much like the concepts of privacy and respect for autonomy (Wiles, 2012). Confidentiality in research is understood to mean that personally identifiable information gathered about participants will not be shared, and that their identities will be protected through

a variety of anonymisation techniques, unless they expressly request to be identified (Wiles, 2012). Anonymisation, which is accomplished by assigning pseudonyms to research participants, groups of people, and places, is the primary method by which researchers attempt to safeguard their research participants from unintentional breaches of confidentiality (Dube et al., 2014).

In terms of confidentiality, anonymity could not be ensured as I knew who the participants were, having interviewed them face-to-face and I had the participants' signed consent forms which contained their names and surnames. However, during data analysis and the write up of the project the participants were given fictitious names in order to maintain their confidentiality and their personal information, including names and surnames. The recording of the interviews, have been saved on a secure platform that only I can access. In order to protect participant confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in place of real names on the transcripts. Furthermore, before I began recording the interviews, I informed the participants about the recordings and asked if they were comfortable with their interview being recorded. After I explained the study to them and they signed the consent forms, all of the participants agreed to being recorded.

3.10 Researcher Reflexivity

Qualitative research relies on subjectivity, whereas a large portion of quantitative research aims to uncover (or at least approximate) fundamental facts that are not subject to researcher bias (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). Qualitative researchers need to be self-aware and reflective about their own roles in the process of gathering and analysing data, as well as in the preconceived notions they apply to their study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Reflexivity is linked to the researcher's capacity to make and convey morally complex decisions in the midst of the challenging task of producing real-world data that accurately captures the messy social practices and experiences of participants (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). Although the researcher's

perspective has many advantages, ignoring reflexivity can have a negative impact on the knowledge generated by qualitative research as well as those associated with it (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). If unexpected power dynamics between the interviewer and the participant are not taken into consideration, for instance, it may result in instances where certain participants feel silenced or under pressure to divulge personal information they are uncomfortable speaking about, which prevents them from sharing the entirety of their experience (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). In addition, participants may suffer in such situations, and the quality of the data can degrade. Reflexivity can assist researchers in avoiding these kinds of problems (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023).

Walsh (2003) states that reflexive processes have four interrelated and interconnected dimensions; methodological, contextual, interpersonal, and personal. To ensure that I was reflective while conducting my research, I used the personal reflexivity process. In order to practice personal reflexivity, researchers must consider and clarify their assumptions, expectations, and conscious and unconscious responses to events, persons, and data (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). Personal reflexivity should go beyond revealing each researcher's background and education to include elaborating on how their prior experiences and motivations may have shaped the decisions they made while working on the project, whether or not there is a positive, negative, or nil impact (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). Throughout the course of the research process, a continuous process of introspection and reflexivity should take place and be integrated into every facet of it, from the start of the research to the end (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). Furthermore, the research impact on the researcher should be considered during personal reflexivity (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023).

My first step in implementing personal reflexivity involved being aware that many of my research ideas stemmed from personal experiences and observations throughout my life journey. Furthermore, I went into the first few interviews believing that the majority of fathers

chose to abandon their children, and I did not expect to find the information that I did, leading me to conclude that this was not the case. All of the fathers who were not involved in their children's lives did not do so by choice, but rather due to specific personal circumstances. Throughout this process, I attempted to expand my awareness of the differences in education between myself and my participants and the effects this might have. Some participants believed that because I am a master's student studying psychology, I could help them directly with their child-related issues. After the interviews, one of the participants inquired about my ability to mediate in his relationship with his children's mother, as well as whether I could possibly provide therapy for her. I realised then that they had no idea what a research psychology master student does; instead, they believed that because I worked in the "field" of psychology, I was automatically a therapist. The participant eventually approached me and requested my telephone number so that I could assist them.

This made me feel uncomfortable because I knew the participants were giving me their time by participating in my study without being compensated. I had to set boundaries, tell them that I could not help with that, and request them to contact my student email if they had any questions so that I could respond to these and also provide the appropriate information should they need counselling. In relation to this, I became aware in some of the interviews that participants seeing me as a psychologist, brought with it an association of wealth, which could have detrimental effects on participants who might believe that I could assist them financially. Hence, the importance of conducting the interviews outside wherever the participants were, was evident. For example, I found a few of the participants standing outside their work premises as they were drivers for Checkers 60 - I interviewed them on the spot with their permission to do so without having to schedule an interview at a specific location, which could have led to them thinking I would pay for their transportation.

Furthermore, due to time constraints, some participants were unable to speak to me for more than an hour because they needed to return to work; in some cases I interviewed them after they had left work, so they were rushing to catch a taxi home. In other instances, I was able to interview participants for a approximately 90 minutes. The difficulties in establishing rapport may have influenced the data gathered because more themes could have been discovered. Furthermore, I understand that because this was a potentially sensitive subject for the participants, they may have needed more time to share their experiences.

3.11 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an overview of the methodological considerations that were used during the course of this research study as well as to provide a summary of the research process that was followed. The findings from this study will be discussed and further explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

Using the approach developed by Braun and Clarke (2019) this chapter presents the themes identified from the data analysis. This method enabled the identification of themes and subthemes relevant to the research topic, which will be supplemented by quotes from participant interviews. Although I had intended for my research to focus on the experiences of transnational migrant fathers, other themes emerged that focused on participants' overall migration experiences and these are also included. The main themes identified from the data analysis were as follows: 1) Push and pull factors to immigration, 2) Lack of belonging , 3) The psychological and emotional impact of migration on the father-child relationship, 4) coping mechanisms, 5) Maintaining relationships with children left, 6) The role of the mother

The following sections will discuss each of these themes and their associated subthemes.

4.2 Push factors to immigration

This theme explores the driving forces behind the migrant fathers' decisions to migrate to South Africa and leave their native countries. It also describes the participants' experiences related to their decision to immigrate to South Africa such as how difficult it was for them because of the dire economic conditions in their home countries and their inability to find jobs there. This forced them to travel to South Africa. Furthermore, a few participants shared their personal accounts of encountering violence in their native countries, which also motivated them to move to South Africa as a safer alternative.

4.2.1 Economic Hardships in the home country

All participants experienced difficult economic conditions in their home countries, driving their decision to migrate. The participants explained the economic circumstances and

difficulties they encountered in their home countries. Even though some of the participants had jobs in their native countries, these did not provide sufficient income to allow them to support themselves let alone their families.

Mike explains his reason for migrating as follows: *“In 2008/2009 things were really bad in Zimbabwe. You literally get paid now, now; you are in Cholutjo and you travel with a bus that is not going to arrive the same day because the bus is not being serviced, so a 4-hour bus can take you two days to be in town”*. He also mentioned: *“You put your bank card in trying to withdraw money, you can’t, your whole salary inflation is 0%, so you are literally working for free.”*

Matthew shared a similar experience driving him to migrate to South Africa: *“I came to South Africa for a vital purpose, because Nigeria was a little bit unbearable in terms of economically, there are no jobs, so I told myself, let me go and try in South Africa.”*

Raymond reiterated: *“It’s not easy to get a job back home unless you work as a criminal investigator, which is what I was doing, my father didn’t like it because it was dangerous, he told me to quit and told me to come to South Africa because there wasn’t money at home.”*

4.2.2 Limited educational opportunities in the home country

The harsh conditions in their native countries prevented most of the participants from completing their high school education or earning a degree. Their family could not afford to pay for them to complete their education, so they were forced to begin working at a young age.

Mike explains as follows: *“I couldn’t continue my primary school, because there was no money so I had to sit at home a bit, only years later I was able to write my grade seven and then I went to form one up to form four, years passed by as I couldn’t continue.”*

Charlie from Malawi explained his situation as follows: *“I studied until form 3 (Grade 9), I was 15 years old, I have no matric, I had to stop because there was no money to continue*

my education, I stayed at home, I tried to look for jobs in my country but I couldn't find jobs, So I was selling small things but it wasn't enough to provide."

Patrick from Zimbabwe explains his employment and academic struggles as follows: *"I tried to look for a job for the longest time back at home and I couldn't get anything, so I started seeing people migrating to South Africa, then I thought, what do I do, should I stay here? The worst part was that I couldn't complete my academics because my father had passed away, the financial stretch was a struggle."*

Like Patrick, Lincoln described how his family's financial struggles kept him from finishing high school and drove him to travel to South Africa in search of employment, which was one of the reasons he came to South Africa. *"I had to go back to primary school in Zimbabwe but there was no money in my family to continue school, I came to South Africa at the age of 9 years old in 2009."*

Mike pointed out that even having a degree did not ensure that one could find employment: *"Even after getting a degree, there were no jobs in Zimbabwe, I had to work at the farm, my parents didn't like it because it was dangerous and then I worked as a temporary teacher part time but that did not work as it was not paying well, I went to work with torn shoes, because I couldn't even afford to get basic shoes."*

4.2.3 The prevalence of violence in the home country

The participants' personal exposure to violence in their home countries also played a role in their decision to emigrate. The violence prevented them from working because they no longer felt safe. Participants described how they would be physically assaulted as a result of either domestic political unrest in their nation or workplace violence as related by Mike: *"I am a victim of political violence in Zimbabwe, there were times, as a student, I worked as a research assistant in quite a number of projects. There is a company called the Mass Public Opinion Institute. So, it was, it was, it was led by the directors of that Masurungu, he was a*

politician, and he is a lecturer now. But he's a strong political figure in Zimbabwe. So, once you work for him, you are under the spotlight so, so yeah, so you obviously go there and get beaten, but I was beaten in 2005. I remember that 2005 election. There was serious violence because SADC."

Raymond also experienced violence as part of his work in Malawi: *"Because I was doing criminal investigation work, I was exposed to a lot of violence, where people wanted to beat me and they did beat me, it was just too much."*

4.3 Pull factors to emigration

Participants also shared what attracted them to choose to emigrate from their home countries and come to South Africa specifically, rather than other African countries.

4.3.1 The perceived sense of freedom afforded by South Africa

Some of the participants stated that they chose to immigrate to South Africa because they believed that it permits people to live and work anywhere they choose, in contrast to other African nations. This is true for Mike from Zimbabwe as he was motivated to come to South Africa due to its freedom of movement: *"So yeah, one of the things that drew me to South Africa is their freedom of movement, so South Africa has a lot of opportunities."*

Furthermore, some participants conveyed how financial resources grant individuals the freedom to choose their residence and place of employment in South Africa, as related by Danny from Nigeria: *"Because in South Africa you can go work wherever you want to work and live wherever you want to live."*

4.3.2 Economic opportunities available in South Africa

The majority of participants stated that compared to their home countries, where they were unable to find work, South Africa was one of the most appealing African countries to

immigrate to. Mike explains as follows: *“So it’s kind of a 50/50 situation, but for South Africa, I never thought I would come here. But I came here for job opportunities.”*

In addition, the participants also stated how it was easier for them to find general employment in South Africa that paid a consistent monthly salary rather than struggling to find employment in their own countries. Mike shared his experience: *“I was able to work at a BP garage for 10 years upon my arrival in South Africa, after that then I left the BP garage, Kelly found me a job at one of the courier companies. The first courier company I used to earn a lot of money, R8 000 was a lot at the time.”*

Raymond also acknowledged this: *“I started working in a restaurant in Rosebank and after that I got promoted to being the store manager, after that I was able to work as a housekeeper for three years and then from there I started working for Checkers in Sandton in 2007.”*

Ntando and Lincoln, on the other hand, shared different stories about their work experiences which required them to acquire new skills. Ntando described his experience: *“I started doing carpentry work, however, it didn’t pay that much, so I started working for Checkers 60, even if there are some dangers on the road.”*

Lincoln shared his experience as well: *“I started doing carpentry work and after that, I have been working as a car guard for a shopping centre in Birnam.”*

Danny’s experience differed from the others in that, after arriving in South Africa, he created his own job rather than searching for one: *“Eish I never tried to get a job, I tried to create a job for myself here in Joburg. We used to sell mazambane in the street, you know when you don’t have anything to do, so I tried all those things. It worked for me; I can make a living out of those things.”*

Charlie also created new job opportunities for himself: *“Yes, I came looking for a job. Then I started working in North West Province, in a farm. I was planting vegetables and*

planting what, what, I was working there from 2014-2016 and now I work as a gardener in Centurion.”

Patrick described how he had to enter the hospitality industry in order to find work: *“There was an open job at a restaurant when I came to South Africa, and I started working there and that is how I got to be in this industry.”*

4.3.3 Educational opportunities in South Africa

The participants also cited that South Africa offered them the opportunity to complete their education, which was another justification for moving to South Africa. Mike was raised in poverty and was unable to continue his education and explained how South Africa gave him the opportunity to further his education: *“Then in 2011, I applied for an MBA here at WITS, I got accepted, after a few years I applied to UCT as they were going to get me funding and I did my other honours there, then I did my other masters at Wits.”*

While John was raised in middle class society, he explained how South Africa also gave him the opportunity to further his education: *“I was able to do my degree at UCT for actuarial sciences, but along my journey I was able to complete a few certificates for my career from SAGE.”*

4.3.4 Relational connections linked to decision to migrate

Most participants who arrived in South Africa did so through the connection of a friend or family member who was already living there and could help them settle in. This was true for Mike: *“I came to South Africa again. Then I was lucky to get a White woman who really took care of me. Her name was Kelly.”*

Ntando had friends in South Africa who were also from Zimbabwe to assist him: *“I came to South Africa. So, some of my friends here connected me to some other guy who was doing carpentry.”*

Furthermore, by virtue of these relationships, the participants were able to find employment. This was related by Mike: *“When I came back to South Africa permanently, Kelly was able to help me find a job at a BP garage and help me with a lot of other things through my journey in South Africa.”*

Through the help of their friends’ network, they were also often able to obtain the required paperwork, such as identity documents, which enabled them to apply for the appropriate kind of work permits as explained by Mike: *“Kelly helped me do my IDs, everything, and all that.”*

Thapelo from Botswana was linked to South Africa through his family: *“My main family was in Botswana and mom and dad were here (South Africa), so we just used to come to South Africa to visit mom and dad, most of the times, even me, I found myself stuck here without going back.”*

Similar to Thapelo, Lincoln and Patrick had family members who had moved to South Africa before they did. As a result, they were able to get help from their relatives to find employment more quickly. Lincoln advised: *“I came to South Africa through a connection of my uncle, he was already living in South Africa. I started working in carpentry, and my uncle helped me get that job.”*

Patrick described his connection: *“I had a sister who was already in South Africa, she connected me to a job, where she was working and there was an open job, and I had her support as well and I stayed with her after a few months.”*

4.4 Lack of belonging

The participants discussed some of the difficulties they had encountered upon arrival in South Africa. These include being perceived as outsiders, having difficulty in obtaining certain documents such as work permits, being constantly at risk of violence, mistreatment by

locals because they did not know any South African language, and having difficulty in finding employment.

4.4.1 Material Hardships

4.4.1 Difficulties in securing Employment

Despite the fact that all of the participants were eventually able to secure employment, they all noted that it took some time to find general employment. A few participants shared that it took them years, while others said it only took them a few months to find employment in South Africa. Notably the majority of participants did not find good jobs and had to adapt to whatever they could find in order to make a living.

This was true for Matthew, who stated that he was unable to find employment for years due to the requirements of seeking asylum despite having a degree: *“It took some years for me to get a job in South Africa. Remember, I already had a degree that I got from Nigeria before I came to South Africa. Then I had to learn to be a barber and cut hair and that’s what I am doing now.”*

This also applied to Mike, who had a higher education but was forced to work in a general workplace in South Africa: *“When I arrived in South Africa, I worked as a petrol attendant at BP garage for 10 years, even with my education, as I said I already had A and O levels coming to South Africa.”*

The remaining participants who did not have tertiary qualifications, also mentioned how difficult it was to find work in South Africa. Charlie explained his difficulties: *“I struggled to look for job in SA, it took some time and only then I was able to get a job in a farm and just plant vegetables.”* Similarly Lincoln explains: *“I struggled to look for a job, it took me nine months to find a job, I started working in carpentry and I had to learn that skill.”*

Lastly, Ntando expressed his experience: *“When I came to South Africa, I started doing carpentry work, I learned carpentry, but it wasn’t paying anything, you would earn like R50 to R80, so I couldn’t save money or even send money.”*

Finally, Patrick noted that it had taken him some time to find employment in South Africa: *“When I came here in South Africa, I stayed with my sister for three months until I got a job. And I worked at a restaurant as a waiter.”*

4.4.2 Documentation

Several participants described how challenging it was for them once they arrived in South Africa because the majority of them lacked the necessary legal documentation. The experiences of the participants differed in terms of their immigration status.

Matthew describes his experience of how he ended up seeking asylum: *“I told myself, let me go and try other places and seek asylum. I was given the asylum. I wasn’t given any problem. When you seek asylum, they don’t allow you to work.”*

Matthew further explained how he was given advice on what type of documents to apply for which could further his career in South Africa: *“When I sought advice from people and they said to me it would be very great to upgrade your status, either you marry a South African woman or you do a working permit, and on that process I began to look for someone of which we will marry each other. Luckily for me, I met the mother of my children. Around 2001/2003, they introduced life partner, which was about friendship of a thing, when I told her about it, we applied for life partner. Mhmm they sat us down, interrogated me. And they gave us life partner.”*

Lincoln talked about the difficulties he had in getting an asylum status: *“Because I didn’t have any papers, it was very difficult to get a visa, I came in as an asylum seeker and it was approved.”*

Thapelo had parents who had already moved to South Africa and they assisted him in obtaining the necessary paperwork: *“Because I am from Botswana, coming to South Africa wasn’t difficult because my siblings and I used to come to South Africa to visit mom and dad, when I was little, most of the times, we were in and out, so getting a visa was not hard.”*

When Charlie first arrived in South Africa, he had to file an application for refugee status: *“Now I am a refugee, but I am using refugee in my passport, and it was a very difficult process to get that refugee status, you stand in queues all day long, the people who work there, act like they are doing you a favour to give you refugee status.”*

Raymond arrived in South Africa as a foreigner and over time managed to obtain a South African identity document. However he managed to obtain South African citizenship: *“I came to South Africa as a foreigner. I come from Malawi and now have a South African green book, ID. I identify myself as a South African, even though my ID says that I was born outside of the country.”*

Those who who entered South Africa illegally faced different challenges. Ntando from Zimbabwe entered South Africa using his brother’s passport and never had any problems at the borders: *“I came here as a civil servant. * **Started laughing** * At home, I used my brother’s passport to come here because we look alike. It wasn’t a problem at the border. I used that until they gave us those ZPB permits.”*

Unlike the other participants, Mike did not travel to South Africa on his own. He travelled to South Africa with a lady whom he called his mentor. He provides the following explanation of how he entered the nation and the kind of permit he was given: *“I am an economic migrant, but we obviously need to be strategic about it, need to exercise urgency. In 2009, I applied for asylum because, Kelly, we failed to get an ID for me. Yeah...Then after failing to get an ID, Kelly suggested the asylum, we got the asylum. And I begin to improve my own life.”*

Only two participants held dual citizenship and consequently their adjustment process was not as challenging as that of the others.

The first participant with dual citizenship was Danny: *“I wasn’t born here, I didn’t grow up here, I grew up in West Africa, I came with my people to the Free State, which is part of my family. My mother is from the Free State, she is Sotho. So, I am part of South Africa, and I am part of the West.”*

John came to South Africa from Zimbabwe but had a South African mother: *“I consider myself South African, even though I was born in Zimbabwe, but my mother is from South Africa, Cape Town and my father is Zimbabwean, I have my South African ID.”*

4.4.3 Difficulties related to Language

Some participants felt that their inability to speak a South African language affected their integration into South African society – it revealed that they were foreign nationals and potentially put them at risk.

This was particularly true for Danny: *“I only struggled when it came to not being able to speak the South African languages; then it was very bad that if you don’t speak Afrikaans, nobody will look at you, once you speak Afrikaans, you can get anything you want, but because of the danger of being a foreigner who can’t speak I had to leave Joburg CBD.”*

Danny was also unable to conceal the fact that he was a foreign national: *“The police used to say to me why are you not speaking Sotho. So, they would fight me sometimes.”*

Ntando felt that being able to speak IsiZulu protected him: *“I don’t feel safe in South Africa, I have ancestors who are Zulu, and so in order to fit in the South African culture, I had to use my Zulu name and surname and speak the language. If people found out I was a foreigner, they would ill-treat me.”*

4.5 Emotional Hardships

4.5.1 Experience of violence in South Africa

All of the participants stated that they felt unsafe in South Africa. Participants discussed how, as foreign nationals, they would always be vulnerable to violence. Danny's comments highlighted this clearly: *"They hijacked me in Hillbrow at gunpoint; about six guys were speaking Zulu. I told them, they can take the car and go so that I don't die."*

Matthew shared similar experiences: *"Yeahhhh, I was about to get robbed. I have been robbed once, but several occasions I was about to be robbed, and by grace I succeeded. Just last year, few guys wanted to rob me, they came to grab me, we fought."*

In addition, participants also stated that they are the first to be suspected of a crime because of being foreign nationals and must constantly prove their innocence, especially to police officers. Raymond described a scenario in which he encountered this situation: *"Yes, other police when they see me just standing outside on the front where I stay and they ask me what are you doing here and I say I am waiting for my friend and then they say I am a Tsotsi (a criminal) and then they start hitting me and I explain to them I am not a Tsotsi."*

Furthermore, a few participants expressed how they would not want their own children living in South Africa due to their own experiences of violence. For example, Mike described the horrible ordeal he went through: *".... South Africa has more brutality from the police than the state, so I wouldn't want my children coming here. Zimbabwe is like that."*

Lincoln had similar concerns about experiencing violence as a foreigner in South Africa: *"I do fear for my life being a foreigner in South Africa, because I do have a Zimbabwe accent and you can hear I am not from here, so I have to stay indoors if I am not working."*

This was also noted by Charlie as well: *"I did experience violence and it is difficult to stay where it is not your country."*

Moreover, Patrick explained how foreigners are always vulnerable to xenophobic attacks: *“Yes, honestly speaking, when you look at things when I came here to South Africa, things was good, and now it is so unpredictable and these xenophobic attacks and all that stuff you don’t know where we are going to be in the next year or two.”*

4.5.2 Lack of sense of belonging in South Africa

Because of the difficulties they faced in South Africa the vast majority of participants expressed a desire to eventually return to their home country where they could feel accepted. Most of them felt that it was impossible for them to be authentic in South Africa and felt as if they did not belong in South Africa. Ntando explained as follows: *“At home, I can be myself and show my identity. Here in South Africa, people do not accept foreigners; they want to hit you or bully you.”*

Because he does not have his family with him, Charlie clarified, he does not feel like he belongs in South Africa: *“Here in South Africa, you are lonely without your family; you have nowhere to go to, and South African people don’t like us foreigners, so it is difficult to stay here, I want to take care of my family.”*

This was also mentioned by Matthew, who added that living in Nigeria allowed him to be himself and feel secure: *“I have brothers (not biological), they say to me, in the US, you can be yourself, no one cares if you are a foreigner or where you come from, you can do your things, as long as you don’t commit crime.”*

John mentioned: *“I want to be able to retire in my country, you can’t raise your children the same, there are slay queens everywhere, our daughters are not safe here.”*

Thapelo also associated home with a sense of rootedness: *“I need to make my life, I believe home is always the best place. If I am planning to buy a house or have my own family, Then I would definitely need to go back to Botswana.”*

Patrick shared his disillusionment with South Africa: *“Yes, things are not so rosy here anymore; they don’t look so fine, home is always best.”*

Charlie also explained: *“I want to go back home because home is the best.”*

4.5.3 Xenophobia in South Africa

The majority of participants described their negative experiences of xenophobia as foreigners in South Africa irrespective of their migration status.

This was the case for John: *“I did experience racism, and I think the racism I received was because I was a foreigner. They try to use my nationality against me and that has worked before because then I got fired due to that, so yeah.”*

Furthermore, participants mentioned how they were always called names, always sworn at, and were always associated with a negative view of their country of origin. This is true for Matthew: *“My experience in South Africa, I am always painted as a bad guy because I am from Nigeria, and they believe all Nigerians are selling drugs, and I have never seen drugs in my life, But street talk, people will tell you voetsek and whatever and names.”*

Some of the participants who are South African citizens are constantly being harassed by law enforcement. Raymond expressed his experience living in Johannesburg: *“The police are also very corrupt and violent towards foreigners. I have a South African green book, ID but when the police see me in the streets, they demand money from me.”*

Furthermore, some participants found themselves in situations where police officers have stated that they are lying about their citizenship. In the end, participants would have to always have their identity documents (IDs) on them and present it to police officers. This related to Raymond: *“Because my ID says I was born outside of SA, I said to the officer, you call me a foreigner, but how do you allow me to vote for you? To show that I am a citizen of SA, I pay my tax, so how come you call me a foreigner?”*

This is also evident in Charlie's comments: *"Because I am a foreigner, it has been difficult living in South Africa. I don't have money, even in my own country I struggled to get a job."*

4.5 The Psychological and emotional impact of migration on the father- children relationship

The majority of participants talked about how being away from their children has affected their role as fathers; it hurts them and impacts on their mental health. Participants also discussed the coping mechanisms they use to deal with this. Lastly, participants discussed how they believed their children experienced stress and anxiety as a result of being away from them.

4.5.1 Perceptions of Fatherhood

As a result of the separation from their children, participants had to reflect on their role and experiences as fathers. Mike expressed that because he is not physically present in his children's lives, he feels as if he has failed as a father: *"I feel I have failed as a father, they really needed me more as a role model and protector, for example, the girl who was sexually abused. Where was I? In South Africa, no one tells me. Even if they told me, what was I going to do."* He also felt that he was unintentionally replicating the same behaviours he experienced when he was child: *"When I lose sleep at night, I always think there is a curse somehow. Because what my father did to me is exactly what I am doing to my son, not intentionally. My father never did anything for me, and I was just a few kilometres away from him. I am 1 000 kilometres away from my son, which is not an excuse. I really miss being a father. Of which I missed the opportunity."*

Some participants on the other hand, believe that given the circumstances, they did the best they could as described by Patrick: *"It is painful, sometimes I wish they were here with*

me, more often I think I shouldn't have let them go and sometimes I say no, maybe it was for the best. If it so happens we will go back together and be a family again, like I say, it had to come with a lot of sacrifices."

Ntando felt that he did everything within his power as a father when he reflected on his role: *"I did all my best to play as a dad. I would make sure that when I knock off, I would quickly run to see him as much as I could. I have done everything as a parent. I have been with the boy since he was six years old, I was washing his clothes, ironing his clothes, and accompanying him to school. I did all my best with the challenges I faced."*

Thapelo expressed similar feelings to Ntando: *"It was a very hard decision to leave the mother and my daughter when she was small, very hard, I even lost weight, it was painful. But it was a decision that I had to make."*

Danny believed that his migration was the right choice for his family. He explained this the following way: *"It bothers me when they are not there, I can't play my father role, sometimes I have to tell myself because of the situation of things they have to be there. I decided, and my wife also told me that that side (Nigeria) can be much cheaper."*

Other participants were uncomfortable with the concept of single parenting. John related this: *"I believe a child needs two parents. There are no co-parentings in the African culture. How can a woman teach a man how to be a man? How can a woman teach my daughter how to treat a man?"*

Raymond shared similar reservations: *"It is painful as a human being because a child to grow in a proper way needs to have two parents. Not only having one side, but it does also not make sense."*

4.5.2 The impact of separation the Father's mental health

Several participants expressed their anxieties about their children's well-being, as they cannot protect, mentor, or model good behaviour for them. This was especially true for Mike:

“The boy, I am worried, Zim is becoming, particularly Bulawayo’s side. It is becoming more like South Africa, full of drugs, and all of that. I wish I was there to mentor him, in as much as there is alcohol and this, your life is much better when you educate yourself.... I should be more involved; the issue is involvement. It’s not nice to only see him (son) for two weeks, you miss the moments of seeing him.”

Mike would also have liked to be more present in his daughter’s life: *“It would have been nice to see my daughter develop her breasts and how she manoeuvres, it would be nicer to see my daughter when she is going out now and speak to her about boys and warn her.”*

John expressed how much it hurts him to be separated from his children and expressed his concern that his children will never value him as a father: *“It is very painful, sometimes I feel like a sperm donor. It breaks my heart to not see my children grow up, will they ever see me as their father? My boy looks exactly like me and yet I cannot be with him.”*

According to Ntando, when he separated from the mother of his child, he also had to separate from his son because the mother was the primary caregiver. This was extremely difficult: *“I felt very torn, it was very bad. As I am saying the bond that I have with the boy right now is still the one that we had when he was small. It was very painful.”*

Lincoln expressed how much it hurt him to be apart from his daughter: *“It is very painful that I cannot be with my daughter, it really hurts me as a father. This makes me feel very bad and sometimes it is difficult because I need to stay with my family.”*

Similar to this, Charlie also shared similar sentiments: *“Yeah, my heart breaks because I don’t see my baby.”*

Danny expressed his deep sadness at not being able to physically be with his children, leaving him to be concerned about their whereabouts: *“Eish, you know when you are not with your children it is tough, where they are, you don’t know where they are, are they okay? You*

don't know who they speak with or who they play with. Eish Onthatile to tell you the truth it is tough, very very tough to not see your children."

4.6 Coping Mechanisms

Participants shared how they deal with the pain of not being able to see their children.

Raymond admitted that it was difficult for him to accept that he was now living a life without his son: *"It did take time, it was a shock because I never expected my life to turn out that way. Before it was hurting me, now with the woman I am married to I carry fear, I even told her, I don't want to see what I saw before, if you do what I saw before I will leave."*

Danny emphasised the importance of maintaining a relationship with God, claiming that his faith provides him with strength and motivation on a daily basis. He went on to say that he tries not to let the fact that he is separated from his family affect him because it will eventually lead to depression: *"What motivates me is my relationship with God, I am very strong with the Lord, even though I am alone, I find myself with God and faith is what keeps me going. That is what makes me strong, and I know that my children are there for a purpose, and one day they will understand what I was telling them. I do not let this get to me because when I let it get to me I am going to be down."*

John, like Danny, felt that having a relationship with God is what gives him strength: *"Honestly, God keeps me going, I have good days and sometimes I have bad days, where I feel I have failed."*

Patrick, explained that communicating with his family helps him feel better and that staying in contact with his family does provide emotional support: *"Talking to them makes me feel much better, and when they demand things and if I have given them what they want, then I feel better."*

4.7 Maintaining relationships with children left behind

Fathers discussed how they used ICTs to maintain contact and relationships with their children, and how they managed to stay involved in their children's lives despite living far apart.

4.7.1 The use of ICT in communicating with children left behind

Participants related how they use ICTs to stay in touch with those who were left behind in their countries of origin, especially their children, in order to maintain and develop relationships. The participants described the different types of ICTs they use and how often they use them for family communication. They also related the nature of the communication between them and their loved ones. Lastly the participants also discussed the challenges they encountered when using ICTs to communicate with their loved ones.

4.7.2 Types of ICTs used to communicate with loved ones

Some participants reported that WhatsApp was the primary tool they use to communicate with their children. John indicated: *“When I used to speak to my daughter, I used to communicate with her on WhatsApp, because it was easier.”*

This was the case for Matthew as well: *“I speak to my children always, I speak to them every day on WhatsApp.”*

Charlie also expressed his preference for WhatsApp to communicate with his family: *“I chat via WhatsApp. I use WhatsApp every day, we chat with my wife, because WhatsApp is very easy to chat to someone.”*

However, some participants preferred to call their loved ones because of the poor quality of connection on WhatsApp. Lincoln shared: *“I sometimes call my daughter.”*

Ntando also shared how he communicated: *“I was communicating with her (the mother), I would call.”*

And Thapelo also shared: *“I do, call, when I call the mother, I speak over the phone to my daughter.”*

However phone calls were expensive as explained by Patrick: *“I contact them after three-four days. Airtime is expensive. You buy R20 airtime and only talk to them for a minute or two.”*

Danny, on the other hand, did not have any preferences: *“I speak with them every day, I video call them, talk on the phone. I use WhatsApp and phone calls; I can use both of them to communicate with them because it depends on when they come back from school.”*

Like Danny, Raymond revealed that depending on his financial situation, he would use both calling via the cellphone and WhatsApp for communication: *“I communicate via phone; most of the times I use WhatsApp, and other times I call him. It depends, sometimes, twice sometimes, I don’t call him at all.”*

Mike explained that given his situation he used social media platforms such as Facebook: *“The girl uses fake Facebook accounts to try to talk to me and then deletes the accounts after immediately, because her step father is monitoring her. The boy calls me a lot, he has my number.”*

4.7.3 Nature of communication

Some participants described that when their children call, they want to know when their fathers will return home. Danny stated: *“I ask them guys how was school, what did you do today at school, and they tell me all these stories of teacher did this and teacher did that, but it is tough, because they ask me daddy when are you going to visit and I say guys give me time and then I will visit not now.”*

Ntando also shared how his son was always enquiring on the phone about when his father would return home because he did not know that the mother and father had split up: *“Every time I would call my son, he would say ‘Where is dad, I want to see dad’. When I would*

arrive, *'Daddy why didn't you come yesterday? I didn't see you, please come, what is happening?' I would lie and say no my boy I was at work for the past week I'm sorry, I'm working far so I cannot be here every day.'*

Some participants however, highlighted that some of their children would ask for specific items or money. Mathew advised: *"When I speak to both my daughters, it's always me advising them about life and then they always asking me 'Daddy can I please have money for this' and I can give them money, I do, I also try to instil God with my daughters, even though I do not live with them, I send them bible verses."*

On the other hand, other participants like Mike explained they used the time to advise their children: *"Because I only speak to my son, I try to mentor him, I try to tell him to read books and go the library, so that he is not focused on the street life, because Zimbabwe is starting to become like South Africa, with drugs everywhere."*

Lincoln rarely speaks with his daughter due to financial difficulties, but when he does, he primarily inquiries about her well-being: *"Because I cannot speak to my daughter a lot, when I do call her, it is for a short time and I just ask her how is doing, how is school and how is her granny."*

Thapelo communicates with his daughter via the mother. She will then hand over the phone to the daughter and simultaneously ask for items: *"When she calls me it's because she wants something for my daughter or for herself."*

Thapelo stated that because of his daughter's young age, he primarily spoke with the mother over the phone to enquire about how his daughter was doing: *"Because my daughter is two years old, when I call, I just speak to the mother, and she would ask for things on the phone, that they need, she would say I need bread and I need airtime, and I just ask her how she is doing, she would tell me the struggles they are facing at home."*

4.7.4 Challenges of using ICTs

The participants agreed that while the use ICTs to maintain relationships with their families was beneficial, they also faced some significant challenges. These difficulties included the financial costs related to staying in touch, as explained by Charlie: *“I chat via WhatsApp; it is difficult to use airtime to call, it is expensive, it wastes money.”*

Raymond shared a similar experience: *“When my son was young I hardly called him because airtime is expensive, sometimes I didn’t even call him at all.”*

The costs related to smartphones which are capable of downloading specific applications, such as WhatsApp was also a challenge as related by Lincoln: *“But because data and airtime is expensive, I call my daughter twice in a month, I cannot WhatsApp her, I don’t have those type of phones.”*

Patrick explained the issues related to home connectivity: *“I normally do not use WhatsApp that much to call them. Because, eish I don’t know, sometimes it is just a poor connection. So, I prefer calling them on the phone.”*

4.7.5 The different purposes of remittances

The participants went into great detail about the purposes to which the monies or remittances were applied. In many instances participants mentioned that remittances were intended to meet their children’s basic needs such as education. Raymond prioritised his son’s tuition fees: *“I made sure that I took care of my son until he finished school, I was paying for his school fees, and I continued supporting my son until he finished high school.”*

Matthew expressed similar sentiments to Raymond: *“Because my daughters do not live with me and they are in high school, I try to contribute with paying their school fees.”*

Mike also clarified that because his children were still infants, the remittances he sent home were used to meet their basic needs: *“I would also send money home for my twins, for nappies and to take care of my twins. The kids were growing up, kids needed to have a money*

to go to school.” Furthermore, he stated that he made an effort to send money to help the mother of his children as well: *“I was also trying to get my wife to get back to school and finish her A levels.”*

Danny on the other hand, frequently discusses with his wife what she and the children need, so he knew exactly what the requested money would be used for: *“I would send my wife money and she would use it in Nigeria to buy my daughters food. Like I said earlier, in Nigeria, there is a lot of Malaria, so I would have to send my family money for them to get good water and food.”*

Two participants, on the other hand, were unsure about the purpose of the remittances and whether they were actually used to meet the needs of the children. As explained by Thapelo: *“To be honest, I do not know what the money I send to the mother of my child was used for, I don’t even know if she even used the money for my child or for herself.”*

Similarly, Raymond was unsure if the mother was being completely honest when requesting money: *“The mother of my son made demands for money and always said the child needs this and that and that I must send the money, so I don’t know if it was really true that the child needed this and that, I just send the money.”*

4.7.6 Emotional remittances

Some participants saw their ability to provide for their families financially as also fulfilling their role as fathers and breadwinners. This was true for Patrick who discussed that providing for his family makes him feel like a man and a provider: *“When they demand things and if I have given them what they want, then I feel better as a man.”*

John also clarified that he works hard to ensure his children have a secure financial future: *“I know I have worked very hard for the past decade to make sure that my children will never lack for generations to come. My job as a father is to make sure my children are set for life. My job is to provide for my children, not for just now, but for the long term.”*

However, being unable to meet those expectations caused emotional distress in the case of Mike: *“But I don’t think after 18 years and not taking care of them, they will one day say they respect me as their father. I am failing to take care of my son, because I am not working.”*

4.8 The Role of the mother

Most of the participants highlighted the important role that the mothers played in enabling the fathers to stay in touch with their children. Some participants talked about how the mother’s lack of support for the father-child bond, harms the father’s future relationship with his children. However, others felt that the mother of their children did not negatively affect their relationship with their children but in fact, positively contributed to it. This relates to how fathers maintain relationships with their children left behind.

4.8.1 Mother not supporting the relationship between father-child

Raymond described how the mother of his son would make unwarranted demands in order for him to see his son: *“Yes, she (the mother) gave me a tough time, she made demands to me and if I gave her the demands, then she gave me access to see my son. Yes, she would always say the child needs this and that, tomorrow send me money, if you not going to send me money I am going to send this child to your mother.”*

This also applied to Thapelo, who had a similar experience: *“Before, I never had access to my daughter because of the mother. Most of the times I find myself in a situation where, for me to access the kid or to be happy, I need to send money or if she is in a good mood, so if I send something to her then yeah, it’s very easy for me to see the child.”*

In Mike’s instance, the mother of his children, stopped all communication once she began a new relationship: *“The mother of my child moved to London, she is no longer*

contacting me, changes her number, everything. However, then she made decisions regarding my daughter without me.”

John was in a similar predicament in that his daughter’s mother did not encourage their relationship: *“The mother of my daughter is the main reason why I do not have a relationship with my daughter, ever since my daughter was a baby, she made decisions without me, about her schooling and everything. To the point where she is even living in a different continent with my daughter.”*

4.8.2 Mother supporting the relationship

In some instances, the mothers supported the relationship and encouraged communication between the father and the children. For example, in the case of Danny, despite experiencing marital issues with his wife, she still encourages communication with his daughters: *“Even though my wife and I are going through our marital issues, and she is now in Nigeria with my daughters, she does not keep them away from me, she calls me every day and lets me know about the progress of the girls.”*

Patrick shared similar experiences: *“My wife doesn’t keep my daughter away from me even though she is two years old and they are living in Zimbabwe.”*

This was similar for Matthew: *“The mother of my child passed away, but she never tried to keep my daughters away from me, even now they live with my in-laws and the family of my daughters are very supportive.”*

Ntando also mentioned that he was also allowed access when his son was staying with the mother: *“I had access during that time when the mother was staying with my son, she didn’t give me a hard time. She would call for me to speak to my son.”*

4.9 Conclusion

The primary themes that were identified were discussed in this section. In the following chapter, the findings will be contextualised within the larger context of the existing literature and also linked to the systemic theoretical framework.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

As highlighted in Chapter 2 there have been studies focusing on the experiences and origins of African immigration to South Africa (Aderanti, 2003; Crush et al., 2005; Rutherford, 2008) and some that have focused on how relationships with the family left behind are maintained through the use of ICTs (Marchetti-Mercer et al., 2020; Marchetti-Mercer et al., 2023). However, migrant fathers' experiences of transnational fatherhood and how they specifically maintain relationships with their children left behind has been understudied (Mpaata, 2020). Similarly, there is little research in family studies focusing on the experiences of fathers who are away from their families. Most studies tend to focus on the stress the mother experiences with the father being away and having to take care of the home and the children, or on the experiences of mothers who are separated from their children through migration (Lesch, 2022). Therefore, this study aimed to make a contribution to this field by exploring the definitions and the experiences of fatherhood among a sample of transnational African migrants living in Johannesburg, South Africa.

At the start of the project, the following research questions were posed.

1. What tools or strategies do African transnational migrant fathers living in South Africa use to maintain relationships with their children?
2. What resources do African transnational fathers use as coping mechanisms to deal with the separation from their children?
3. How do African transnational migrant fathers view their role as fathers?

In this chapter I will show how these research questions were answered in relation to the different themes that were identified in the data analysis, against the context of the chosen theoretical framework.

5.2 Theoretical framework and discussion of findings

The findings of this study suggest that economic motivations were the main push factor behind participants' migration to South Africa. These experiences are consistent with the literature, especially the works of Rugunanan and Xulu-Gama (2022) and Dinbabo and Nyasulu (2015), which claim that the primary driving force behind foreigners' decisions to relocate to South Africa's inner cities, is often the economic unrest in their own neighbouring countries. In addition, Dinbabo and Nyasulu (2015) also explain that a mixture of both **push and pull factors** drive migrants into coming to South Africa. The push factors are extreme poverty, unemployment, and socio-economic unrest present in some African nations. These were reflected in Patrick's words: *"I tried to look for a job for the longest time back at home and I couldn't get anything. The financial stretch was a struggle."* This was also related to the fact that participants were already struggling to find work, preventing them from migrating with their loved ones or children. As a result, the individuals involved were forced to leave their families behind in order to provide for them.

They were also reflected in Matthew's experiences: *"I came to South Africa for a vital purpose, because Nigeria was a little bit unbearable in terms of economically, there are no jobs, so I told myself, let me go and try in South Africa"*.

In addition to economic reasons, the possibility of being granted political asylum and securing job opportunities also contributed to the massive influx of migrants (Adepoju, 2003; Dinbabo & Nyasulu, 2015; Rugunanan & Xulu- Gama, 2022). Many participants also related their personal experiences with violence in their home countries contributing to their decision to emigrate: *"I am a victim of political violence in Zimbabwe. But I was beaten in 2005. There was serious violence."* (Mike). The majority of African migrants who move to South Africa seem do so because the situation in their home countries has deteriorated (Dinbabo & Nyasulu, 2015).

Most domestic and foreign migrants reside in the Gauteng Province because of its dominant economic position throughout the country and the entire Southern African region (Moyo, 2020). As a result of the influx of immigrants from both within and outside the country, Johannesburg has become known as the South African city with the fastest rate of growth (Maviza, 2020). This was evident in the participants' stories as they were all living in Johannesburg where they had come specifically to look for work. However, immigrants often face difficult conditions in adjusting to South Africa due to their foreign status, despite their desire to better their own lot in life (Mpaata, 2020). These include dealing with xenophobia, feeling unwelcome by locals, and problems with their immigration statuses in their new home. These challenges experienced were evident in the negative experiences described by the participants in this study.

The most common negative experience faced in South Africa was feeling unsafe and being vulnerable to violence (Opfermann, 2020). In South Africa, the majority of xenophobia is directed at Black African migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers (Opfermann, 2020). This was evident in the study as all the participants were Black migrants. Similarly, Merry et al., (2017) argue that the migration paths for refugees, asylum seekers and people without legal status are particularly difficult. They are more likely than other migrants to have experienced abuse and trauma before and during the migration. This was evident in the findings of this study as all of the participants stated that they felt unsafe in South Africa. Danny stated: *"They hijacked me in Hillbrow at gunpoint"* and Lincoln stated: *"I do fear for my life being a foreigner in South Africa. So, I have to stay indoors if I am not working."*

In addition, not being able to speak a South African language affected some of the participants' integration into the South African society and revealed them as being foreign nationals, potentially putting them at risk. This reflects the findings of Jang and Tang (2022) who explained that the difficulties that immigrants face, such as communication issues brought

on by language and cultural barriers, adjusting and acculturation, can have an impact on employment opportunities, social status, and their settling in. In addition, not being able to speak a South African language clearly identified their status as a foreigner, as described by Danny: *“The police used to say to me why are you not speaking Sotho. So, they would fight me sometimes.”*

This resonates with Adsera and Pytlikova’s (2015) argument that fluency in the language of the host country and the capacity to pick it up quickly have both been demonstrated to be crucial for the migration of existing human capital to other nations and to generally increase immigrants’ success on the job market in their new home countries. Liu et al., (2020) have also shown that improved language skills enhance immigrants’ social integration in the host nation, and migrants and natives are also more likely to feel socially integrated when they speak the same language. This was experienced by Ntando: *“So in order to fit in the South African culture, I had to use my Zulu name and surname and speak the language. If people found out I was a foreigner, they would ill-treat me.”* Along with these exclusionary experiences, participants also encounter additional difficulties finding work in South Africa, despite their initial expectation that job opportunities would be available to them when coming to South Africa.

Kalitanyi and Visser (2009) explain that even with their education and experience, immigrants find it difficult to secure employment. This was true for Mike: *“As I said I already had A and O levels coming to South Africa, I worked as a petrol attendant at BP garage.”*

As a result of the difficulty in finding work, some immigrants are forced to settle for low-skilled or general work, despite having a higher level of education (Gao, 2022; Viljoen et al., 2019). This was also the case for many of the participants of this study. Some of the participants therefore had to create their own job opportunities in South Africa as a result of the difficulties they were experiencing. This reflects the work of Kalitanyi and Visser (2009),

who showed that immigrants often turn to entrepreneurship on the basis of necessity as shown in the case of Danny: *“Eish I never tried to get a job, I tried to create a job for myself here in Joburg.”*

Another challenge the participants faced was obtaining the necessary immigration status in South Africa, as explained by Lincoln: *“Because I didn’t have any papers, it was very difficult to get a visa, I came in as an asylum seeker.”*

Vanyoro (2023) established that many migrants travel to South Africa as refugees or economic migrants, but because they lack proper documentation, many attempt to apply as labour migrants or asylum seekers in order to gain protection and job security. Mike indicated: *“I am an economic migrant, but we obviously need to be strategic about it, need to exercise urgency. In 2009, I applied for asylum.”* In addition, Vanyoro (2023) points out that applying for asylum is difficult because, while the Refugee Reception Offices are available to assist migrants, in practice, they have developed several de facto gatekeeping techniques that prevent migrants from accessing such assistance.

The poor employment possibilities and feelings of exclusion may have played a role in the participants’ desire to return home as described by Charlie : *“Here in South Africa, you are lonely without your family; you have nowhere to go to, and South African people don’t like us foreigners, so it is difficult to stay here.”* This is in line with Antonsich’s (2010) views that in order to feel at home one needs to feel connected and safe in one’s space. Furthermore, Kunuroglu (2016) suggests that immigrants’ decisions to return and feel a sense of belonging may be influenced by the host country’s negative attitudes towards them, which are reflected in people’s prejudices against immigrant groups.

Leaving one’s country and loved ones behind has an impact on all the family members and affects the family system and dynamics. According to Mpaata (2020), the majority of the time, nuclear family roles will change when migration takes place and transnational practices

take over. One of the difficulties that family members encounter during the post-migration phase is a reallocation of family roles (Willerton et al., 2011). When tasks are delegated and rearranged, and current household responsibilities are changed to address issues resulting from the migrated parents, the household and family systems are affected (Tesfaw & Minaye, 2022). Furthermore, as a result of migration, fathers' roles in children's lives change. Fathers who are not physically present for their children may feel they are unable to provide them with the advice and support: "...it would be nicer to see my daughter when she is going out now and speak to her about boys and warn her" (Mike). When fathers are absent, mothers are often expected to take on the dual roles of mother and father at home because fathers are unable to assume the parental responsibilities of discipline and protection – these are delegated to mothers (Willerton et al., 2011). Therefore, family roles rearrange themselves after the fathers' departure and in many cases mothers have taken on many of the fathers' roles in the daily running of the homes. In addition, in most African societies, the father is regarded as the head of the household which entails that he makes all the final decisions pertaining to the family, serves as the primary provider and protector of the household, and is also responsible for disciplining the children (Mpaata, 2020). This was true for Danny whose role changed as the protector of his children due to migrating: "*Eish, you know when you are not with your children it is tough, where they are, you don't know where they are, are they okay? You don't know who they speak with or who they play with.*"

Related to this, is cultural transmission across generations. The transfer of values, knowledge, and customs from one generation to the next is referred to as intergenerational transmission of culture. Therefore, cultural transmission is understood as the process through which a culture is passed on in every generation that follows (Trommsdorff, 2009). Parents' patterns and behaviours are passed down to their children, who then pass on the same patterns and behaviours to the next generation (Haefner, 2014). This was evident in the study carried

out by Lesch (2022), who found that the fathers in her study found it difficult to express love and affection over the phone to their children because it was something that they did not experience in their own families of origin (Lesch, 2022). This example of cultural transmission is reflected in Mike's experience: *"When I lose sleep at night, I always think there is a curse somehow. Because what my father did to me is exactly what I am doing to my son, not intentionally. My father never did anything for me, and I was just a few kilometres away from him. I am 1 000 kilometres away from my son."*

According to Lesch (2022), fathers who are separated from their children due to migration are psychologically impacted even if they make efforts to stay in touch and send remittances. To John, being physically separated from his children had caused him emotional stress: *"It is very painful, sometimes I feel like a sperm donor. It breaks my heart to not see my children grow up."* Highly differentiated individuals have been shown to have better psychological adjustment, whereas less differentiated individuals are more likely to exhibit physical and psychological stress symptoms such as sensory overload, anxiousness, depression, and psychosis (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). This can be used to explain how migrants manage their roles when they are separated from their families; effective adaptation emphasises appropriate differentiation and lower levels of stress (Moyo, 2022). This was demonstrated by one of the participants with lower levels of differentiation: *"I feel so empty as a man, I don't know what to do, I'm useless to my girl child, I'm useless to my son. I feel I have failed as a father."* (Mike). These findings support the view that people who have low differentiation tend to be less adaptive, inflexible, and emotionally reliant on others around them (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Higher differentiators are able to handle life's stresses better, lead more successful, orderly lives, and exhibit a remarkable lack of interpersonal issues (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). The experiences of Ntando reflect this: *"I did all my best to play as a dad. I did all my best with the challenges I faced."* The fathers that were separated from their children acknowledged feeling

guilt and regret as they yearned for a stronger emotional bond and affection with their children (Lesch, 2022).

When fathers are physically separated from their children, it also affects their perception on how they view their role and sense of identity as fathers. Lesch (2022) found in her study that fathers felt like they were only part-time parents and thought that not being present at home physically reduced their ability to be a good parent. According to Lesch (2022), the fathers in her study felt that despite the fact that migration helped them with material provision, it made their own perceptions of themselves as fathers difficult and complicated. This was reflected in the present study by the high levels of distress related by participants as a result of their physical separation from their children: *“It is very painful that I cannot be with my daughter, it really hurts me as a father. This makes me feel very bad and sometimes it is difficult because I need to stay with my family.”* (Lincoln).

Nevertheless, it is crucial to remember that the father’s relationship with his child or children can also be influenced by the mother’s role in the family system. Other qualitative research suggests that mothers can encourage fathers to be actively involved in their children’s lives (Clark et al., 2015). However they can also play a less supportive role as was found in the present study where evidence of triangulation was present. Triangulation is a relational pattern that has the potential to be harmful (Bowen 1978). Triangulation can become dysfunctional as it deals with interpersonal anxiety by involving the use of a third party to diffuse conflict, minimise accountability, or pit one person against another (Bowen, 1978). This was evident in some instances in the present study. For example, Thapelo can only communicate with his daughter via the mother who decides if he can speak to his daughter, depending on whether the father meets her financial demands: *“Before, I never had access to my daughter because of the mother. Most of the times I find myself in a situation where, for me to access the kid or to be*

happy, I need to send money or if she is in a good mood.” Consequently, this is likely to have a negative impact on the child.

Some participants also believed that the separation had had a negative psychological impact on the children. This can also connect to circular causality, where every component in a system influences every other component and each component’s behaviour determines how the system is organised (Beauregard, 2020). As a result, each member of the family has an impact on one another through their actions, feelings, and responses (LoBraico et al., 2020). The study’s findings support this, revealing that migration has increased tension in nuclear families, affecting children as well: *“My baby was affected psychologically being away from me. Because it took her long time to even start speaking.”* (Thapelo). This was also described by Ntando : *“It was very painful, it even went to the extent of disturbing him at school.”* The participants described how parental conflict, the breakdown of the relationship between the mother and father, and the physical distance brought about by migration also had an effect on their children.

Because the process of migration has such a deep impact on relationship patterns, communication by means of ICTs can be very helpful in reducing the stress that comes with being apart from one’s immediate and extended family as well as helping people adjust to living abroad while emphasising the value of family (Moyo, 2022). As also evident in the research of Davalos (2020), Marchetti-Mercer et al. (2020) and Mpaata (2020), the majority of participants in this study maintained contact with their children back home primarily through the use of ICTs. According to Calvo et al. (2023), using social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram provide emotional support to irregular migrants by keeping them in touch with friends and family back home as well as the cultural and social norms of their new city. According to previous research, it is not only a more practical and efficient way to stay in touch and send money back home, but it is also the most cost-effective way for these working-

class migrants to stay in regular contact (Siegel & Fransen, 2013). WhatsApp is a particularly useful platform as it a free messaging application that is more affordable and can be used anywhere there is an internet connection. It allows users to communicate with each other through text messages, voice and video calls, and other features (Aidoo-Frimpong et al., 2023). This was true for some of the participants in the study as they explained that they mostly use WhatsApp to communicate with their families left behind as in the case of Charlie: *“I chat via WhatsApp. I use WhatsApp every day, we chat with my wife, because WhatsApp is very easy to chat to someone; it is difficult to use airtime to call, it is expensive, it wastes money.”*

However, due to financial constraints, not all participants can use ICTs effectively to communicate with their families. The findings supported Baldassar’s (2008) claim that the frequency and duration of migrant-to-migrant contact are determined by their access to resources, limiting their ability to engage in transnational contact. In addition, not all family members have access to smartphones or are able to afford data (Chereni, 2017). Raymond indicated: *“When my son was young I hardly called him because airtime is expensive, sometimes I didn’t even call him at all.”*

This demonstrates the limitations experienced by migrants from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, who face difficulties and may need to expend a great deal of energy despite their limited resources in order to preserve their relationships across borders (Salma et al., 2021). This points to the concept of digital inequality which is another major barrier for vulnerable migrants (Haile, 2021). The disparities that exist between different groups access to, use of, and benefits from ICTs as a result of rights, gender, geographic location, authority, and financial standing, among other factors, are referred to as digital inequality (Haile, 2021). This was evident in the study as some participants explained their communication to their families was limited due to not having a smartphone: *“I cannot WhatsApp her, I don’t have those type of phones.” (Lincoln)*. In addition, the participants also

explained that because of costs of airtime, it also limited the amount of times they are able to communicate with their families: *“I contact them after three to four days. Airtime is expensive. You buy R20 airtime and only talk to them for a minute or two.”* (Patrick).

In terms of the psychological benefit of communication while migrant parents are physically absent from their families, Marchetti-Mercer et al. (2020) found that they can still be psychologically present in their family’s lives. Transnational fathers are able to still maintain a supportive relationship with their children and fulfil the father role while being physically absent (Parke & Cookston, 2021). According to Davalos (2020), communication is crucial between transnational fathers and the family members who are left behind in order to preserve their close social ties and maintain a sense of virtual co-presence. Additionally, in a study by Davalos (2020) who studied Ghanaian migrant fathers, it was found that fathers who used online communication with their children had a positive improvement in their relationship with their children because they were able to know what happened in their children’s daily lives, how they were doing in school, what sports they were playing, and were also able to mentor their children over the phone. This is highlighted by Danny’s words: *“I ask them guys how was school, what did you do today at school, and they tell me all these stories of teacher did this and teacher did that.”* Therefore, transnational fathers who maintain regular communication with their children are able to create stronger emotional and encouraging bonds (Davalos, 2020; Mpaata, 2020). Some participants also reflected on the fact that utilising ICTs to stay in touch with others improves their ability to cope: *“Talking to them makes me feel much better.”* (Patrick). Although ICTs help families stay in touch and form emotional bonds, they can also make people feel excluded because they cannot spend time with their children in person. Furthermore, this contributes to migrant fathers’ feelings of disengagement from their children’s lives and inability to see them grow up (Lesch, 2022). When there is no

communication, fathers are unable to connect with their children, which results in them becoming emotionally distant from them (Lesch,2022).

Overall, participants employ a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with being separated from their children. Often, in order to avoid depression and cope with being away from their families, migrant fathers focus more of their energy on their jobs in order to avoid thinking about them (Chereni, 2017). In some instances faith was used as a coping mechanism to deal with the negative feelings experienced: *“What motivates me is my relationship with God, I am very strong with the Lord, even though I am alone, I find myself with God and faith is what keeps me going. That is what makes me strong.”* (Danny).

In terms of transnational remittances, literature has shown that migrants send money home to maintain relationships and a sense of responsibility within their families (Huennekes, 2018). Huenneke (2018) points out that money received from abroad is used to pay for accommodation, groceries, education, and medical care, among other necessities. This was similar in the present study where remittances served as the most concrete proof that the migrant father maintains connections to their home nations or communities while relocating (Katigbak, 2015).

However, Makusha et al. (2012) found that the presence of a strained or non-existent relationship between the mother and father frequently influences the father’s decision to provide financial support. Fathers may also find it difficult to financially support their children when they do not live with the mother because they are unsure whether the money they are giving will be used to meet the child’s needs and desires. This is reflected in Raymond’s words: *“The mother of my son made demands for money and always said the child needs this and that and that I must send the money, so I don’t know if it was really true that the child needed this and that.”*

However, it is important to note that remittances can take many different forms, including economic, social, and emotional (Huennekes, 2018). The findings of the present study reflect the importance of emotional remittances (Katibak, 2015), which communicate the idea that items, money, and ideas that are exchanged between and among family members across international borders do have an emotional significance associated with them: *“I know I have worked very hard for the past decade to make sure that my children will never lack for generations to come. My job as a father is to make sure my children are set for life. My job is to provide for my children, not for just now, but for the long term.”* (John). Some participants expressed a sense of kinship with families and a sense of obligation to send money home to care for their children: *“I made sure that I took care of my son until he finished school, I was paying for his school fees, and I continued supporting my son until he finished high school.”* (Matthew).

5.3 Conclusion

Upon addressing the research questions initially presented, the study highlighted firstly that the migration of fathers affects the family system as roles have to change. Fathers seem to miss being part of their children’s lives and want to continue a relationship with them (*experience*). They do so mostly through the use of ICTs as well as different types of remittances, despite the many difficulties they experience in their new lives in South Africa (*strategies*). Secondly, the findings suggest that the separation affects male migrants’ perceptions of their identity as fathers as they feel they are not really part of their children’s lives (*experiences*). Difficult relationships with the mothers of their children also sometimes negatively affect their relationship with their children (*strategies*). Consequently, migrant fathers often focus more of their energy on their jobs and avoid thinking about their children and families, while some rely on their faith to make sense of the experience (*coping mechanisms*). The findings suggest that distance between fathers and their children may affect

the mental health of both, as fathers specifically suffered from their inability to fulfil their fatherly responsibilities and their lack of knowledge about their children's well-being; and some children seemed to be psychologically affected due to fathers' distance. Different types of remittances, both financial and emotional, were used as a form of fulfilling these responsibilities. The findings' broader implications for research in the field of transnational families will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Closing remarks

The study aimed to contribute to the body of research exploring the definitions and experiences of transnational migrant fathers who live in South Africa. Specifically, it examined how migrant fathers maintain a relationship with their children living in the country of origin. The study explored the different tools migrant fathers use to maintain relationships with their children as well as exploring the different strategies migrant fathers use as coping mechanisms to deal with separation from their children. In terms of reflexivity, I had assumed that the majority of the fathers chose to abandon their children. I did not expect to find the information that I did, leading me to conclude that this was not the case. According to the findings, because of unfavourable conditions in their country of origin, in order to take care of family members, fathers choose to migrate and provide care for their loved ones from a distance. Migrating was thought to be a personal sacrifice made to better the lives of relatives who remained behind.

The primary causes of migration were socio-economic factors. The findings show that while some migrants had family support for their migration, others made the decision to migrate on their own. Nonetheless, the advantages of migration, such as the opportunity for economic and educational advancement, reinforced the decision to migrate. The study reveals that in order to maintain relationships, migrants and their families left behind frequently used ICTs to communicate. The use of ICTs in the transnational family setting demonstrated migrants' desire to practice and maintain family life despite their distance, as well as their desire to lessen the negative effects of being apart. The study found that accessibility, affordability, and convenience all had an impact on the technologies that were adopted. Although ICTs have made it easier for migrants to stay in touch with their families, emotional closeness has been found to be lacking due to the necessity of physical proximity, which is

actually seeing each other. This is in line with other findings which have suggested that virtual communication lacks the kind of interpersonal intimacy people aspire to (Marchetti-Mercer, 2017). The findings suggest that distance between fathers and their children may affect the mental health of both, as fathers specifically suffered from their inability to fulfil their fatherly responsibilities and their lack of knowledge about their children's well-being; as some children were psychologically affected due to father distance. Different types of remittance, both financial and emotional, were used as a form of fulfilling these responsibilities.

6.2 Limitations

It is imperative to draw attention to certain limitations of this study in order to identify potential areas for further research improvement.

The relatively small number of participants was one of the limitations especially given the number of migrants residing in South Africa. Even though the data collection process had reached saturation, more participants may have contributed more data, providing more variety and insight into transnational migrants' experiences. For instance, having more participants of varying socio-economic status could have introduced new perspectives on the reasons for their migration, the ICTs they used, and their experiences as providers in a transnational family environment.

The second limitation of this study was that it identified possible research participants through the use of snowball sampling. I had little control over the sampling procedure because I was primarily reliant on referrals for participants as well as my own efforts to find participants.

Lastly, the unequal power dynamics between the participants and me as the researcher may have compromised the data that was gathered. Disparities in positionality and class may have hindered participants' confidence and comfort levels during the interviews, which may have lowered their willingness to be open and honest about their experiences. It seemed that

some individuals had anticipated receiving compensation such as giving their families free therapy for participating in the interviews, despite me making it clear that this was not the case. Some may have responded in a way that they thought would be socially desirable as a result of these expectations.

6.3 Recommendations

Despite its limitations, the study provides some insights into the experiences of African transnational fathers who migrated to South Africa. Men's experiences of migration, transnational fatherhood, and the lived realities of male migrants have been understudied in Africa in previous studies (Mpaata, 2020). As such, further research is needed to explore the experiences of transnational migrant fathers who live in South Africa and thereby make a contribution to a broader knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon of transnational migration in South Africa.

The study found that a lack of financial resources worsens African migrants' experiences in South Africa and probably has an adverse effect on their sense of belonging and how and when they interact with their families back home. In addition, fathers do not choose to leave their children or abandon them; they are forced to leave because of financial situations and seem to try to maintain a relationship with them but this is often impaired by the resources needed to use ICTs and the role of a mother. Therefore, due to severe financial constraints, migrants from lower socio-economic backgrounds may be forced to choose between supporting their existing households back home or building a new home in South Africa. With the extreme lack of resources that many South African migrants face, it may be difficult to establish and maintain two homes in different countries. As a result, additional research is needed to determine the potential impact of money on the emergence or growth of a sense of transnational belonging as well as maintaining relationships with their children left behind. Future research could examine both sides of transnational families in the African

context, providing a holistic perspective from both the mother and the father, to better understand why some mothers are not supportive of keeping father-child relationships intact.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Research Information Sheet

Experiences of transnational migrant fathers in South Africa

Good day!

My name is Onthatile Sekano, and I am currently doing my Master in Social and Psychological Research at the University of the Witwatersrand. Part of the degree involves the completion of a research project. I am working on a project that is exploring the experiences of migrant fathers who live in South Africa. My aim is to understand what challenges fathers experience when being away from their children, how do they maintain those relationships and how do they overcome their challenges.

Participation in the study is open to black African migrant fathers over the age of 29 who have lived in South Africa without their families for over two years. The participants must be able to speak English fluently. Your participation would be greatly appreciated if you meet these criteria. An audio recording of the interview will be made so that the content can be transcribed and analysed. All participation is voluntary, and if you are uncomfortable participating, you are free to withdraw at any time.

When I share the results of the research study, I will not include your name or anything else that could identify you. With your permission, other researchers may use the data collected from this research study, but your name and any personal information will not be used or passed on. If you decide to take part in the research study, it should be because you want to volunteer. You do not have to take part. You can stop being in the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. Taking part in the research study will not cost you anything. You will not be paid for being in this research study.

Some of the questions asked may make you feel sad or upset. If you need some support or counselling services following the interview, these are available free of charge at Emthonjeni centre. The name of the contact person is Ms Paballo Lepota and the contact details for the counselling service are 0117174513.

If additional information is required, please do not hesitate to contact me (contact details provided below).

Onthatile Sekano

osekano3@gmail.com

0605845321

Supervisor

Prof Maria Marchetti- Mercer

Maria.marchetti-mercero@wits.ac.za

Tell: 0117174518

Appendix B: Consent Form

Consent Form

Experiences of transnational fathers in South Africa

Onthatile Sekano

I,, agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about

I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study

YES NO

I agree that the interview may be audio recorded

I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in their research report and other academic outputs

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name or other identifying data will not be used by the researcher in their research report)

I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on

YES NO

..... (signature)

..... (name of participant)

..... (date)

..... (signature)

..... (name of researcher/person seeking consent)

..... (date)

Appendix C: Interview Question Schedule

1. Tell me something about yourself and your family?
2. When did you migrate to South Africa?
3. Why did you decide to migrate to South Africa?
4. Please explain the transition from your country of origin to South Africa?
5. What challenges did you encounter when you came to South Africa?
6. How do you stay in touch with your family? Did you use any form of technology or visit your family?
7. How often do you specifically stay in you contact with your children?
8. How do you experience communicating with your children with technology?
9. How would you describe your relationship with your children?
10. How do you see your role as a father in the family?
11. Do you think migration has made a difference in your relationship with your children?
12. What are your plans? Do you plan to stay in SA or go back home?

Appendix D: Ethics Certificate



SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: MASPR/23/11

PROJECT TITLE:

Experiences of transnational migrant fathers in South Africa.

INVESTIGATOR

Sekano Onthatile (1108286)

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR

SHCD/Psychology

DATE CONSIDERED

01 June 2023

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

Approved unconditionally

RISK LEVEL

Low Risk

EXPIRY DATE

31 December 2025

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE

05 June 2023

CHAIRPERSON

Aline Ferreira Correia
 (Dr Aline Ferreira Correia)

cc: Prof. Maria Marchetti-Mercer (Supervisor)

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

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 be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, I/we undertake to submit an amendment of the protocol to the Committee.

Signature

Date

_____/_____/_____