



University of the Witwatersrand

The role of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Zimbabwean migrants' experiences of maintaining care of transnational family.

Siko Martin Moyo

Student number: 1432425

Supervisor: Prof. Maria Marchetti-Mercer

**A research paper submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Arts in
Community Based Counselling Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities**

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Abstract

The migration of Zimbabweans to South Africa is a common phenomenon. Migration is for various reasons, but socio-economic reasons are more common. Individuals migrate based on the need to take care of their families, something that they fail to do if they remained in Zimbabwe. Transnational families are created as a result. Very few studies have looked into how transnational relationships continue to exist over a long distance in the sub-Saharan African context. Furthermore, the role Information Communication Technologies (ICT's) play in facilitating various forms of care such as emotional, moral, and financial has not been explored. The study consisted of nine Zimbabwean migrants residing in South Africa who had family that they cared for in Zimbabwe. The findings of this study reveal that ICT's such as WhatsApp have been heavily adopted in these transnational families. This has been on account of convenience which the WhatsApp platform affords, such as being readily available, affordable, and comprehensive through calling, messaging and media share functions. These ICT's have been found to assist people in remaining emotionally connected. ICT's were used in rendering financial care, allowing migrants to pay for groceries and sending money. Other forms of care, such as medical care were found to be possible through use of these communication technologies. Lastly, the findings point out to ICT's having disadvantages in the rendering of care as some care needs cannot be fulfilled online such as witnessing children grow or doing simple things like hugging loved ones. Other barriers for care using ICT's involved high cost of ICT's, and underdeveloped infrastructure which negatively impacted care relations. The need for physical contact, through visits, was confirmed as an additional disadvantage which ICT's presented for transnational family care.

Key words: ICT's, transnational families, care, migration, family systems

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	8
1.1 Title.....	8
1.2 Introduction	8
1.3 Rationale.....	10
1.4 Summary of chapters.....	11
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.1 Introduction	13
2.2 Zimbabwean migration to South Africa	13
2.3 Migration, Transnational Families, Care and ICT's	14
2.4 ICT use in Africa	17
2.4.1 The use of ICT's in caring for family members across distance.	18
2.4.2 Types of ICT's used in family care	22
2.4.3 Challenges in ICT use.....	23
2.4.4 The Role of visits as a way of addressing shortcomings of ICT's.	29
2.4.4 Covid-19 pandemic and caring via ICT's.....	30
2.5 Theoretical Framework.....	31
2.5 Conclusion.....	33
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	35
3.1 Introduction	35
3.2 Research Aims	35
3.3 Research Questions	35
3.4 Research Design	35
3.4.1 Qualitative approach.....	36
3.5 Participants and Sampling.....	36
3.5.1 Participant accounts.....	38
3.6 Data collection.....	41
3.7 Data Analysis.....	42
3.8 Benchmarks for qualitative rigour	43
3.9 Ethical considerations	44
3.10 Reflexivity	45
3.11 Conclusion.....	46
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS.....	47
4.1 Reasons for migration.....	47
4.1.1 Migration linked to economic difficulties and inability to take care of one's family	47

4.1.2 South Africa perceived as a place of opportunities	48
4.1.3 Political refuge.....	49
4.1.4 Migration as an act of sacrifice	49
4.2 Family's reaction to the decision to migrate	50
4.3 The types of ICT's used in maintaining family relationships	52
4.3.1 WhatsApp most commonly used form of communication	52
4.3.2 Use of video calls	53
4.3.3 The importance of group chats	54
4.3.4 Use of normal phone calls in emergency situations.	55
4.3.5 Synchronous versus asynchronous communication	55
4.4 Patterns of caregiving through ICT use.....	56
4.4.1 Sustaining familial connections	57
4.4.2 Use of ICT's to care for family members left behind	59
4.5 Limitations of ICT's	61
4.5.1 Lack of infrastructure and access to ICT's	62
4.5.2 High cost of data and other ICT's	63
4.5.3 Hiding difficult information from family members	64
4.5.4 Intrusiveness of use of ICT's	65
4.5.5 Lack of physical presence	66
4.6 Role of visits	67
4.7 The impact of Covid-19 on family relationships.....	68
4.8 Conclusion.....	70
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION	71
5.1 Introduction	71
5.2 Summary of key findings.....	71
5.3 Conclusion.....	85
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	86
6.1 Closing remarks	86
6.2 Limitations	87
6.3 Recommendations.....	88
6.4 Suggestions for future research.....	88
REFERENCES	90
APPENDICES	107
Appendix A: Participant information sheet.....	107
Appendix B: Participant Consent Form	109
Appendix C: Consent form for interview recording	110
Appendix D: Semi-structured interview schedule	112

Appendix E: Ethics certificate.....113

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Title

The role of Information Communication Technologies (ICT's) in Zimbabwean migrants' experiences of maintaining care of transnational family.

1.2 Introduction

Zimbabwean migration to South Africa dates back to the 20th century characterized by young men migrating to work in the mines and farms (Crush, Chikanda & Tawodzera, 2015; Mlambo 2010; Zinyama 1990; van Onselen 1976). It has been motivated by the country's economic collapse in the 21st century, with notable movement to South Africa recorded from the year 2000 (Latham & Cohen, 2011). Crush (2015) suggests that most of the Zimbabwean migrants are breadwinners in their households. Zimbabwe is the largest producer of immigrants in South Africa, accounting for 24% of all immigrants (Migration Policy Institute, 2021). This highlights that the burden of care, especially financially, lies with migrants as they have to care for family in the country of origin.

However, care is not restricted to financial remittances. It is a “social process of daily human activity”, that defines people's daily interactions. From this, an assertion can be made that care exists in caring networks that view individuals as relational, interconnected and embedded in their personal relationships (Reynolds & Zontini, 2006, p.5). Care involves contact and emotional attachment, which involves emotional functions linked to sociability, advice, comfort and self-validation with communication in whatever form, being an important element of this type of care (Reynolds & Zontini, 2006). It also encompasses hands-on care-giving, rendered at a personal level, highlighting that “Care is not just about communication-it is also about practical issues” (Reynolds & Zontini, 2006 as cited in Marchetti-Mercer & Swartz, 2019, p.416).

Concern for each other does not end despite being separated by enormous geographic distances. Hence, continuous caring practices can be seen in the case of so-called transnational families, revealing how family practices evolve throughout an individual's life course, family life cycle and stages of migration (Baldassar, 2007). Advances and changes in technology have translated care in novel ways in transnational families (Marchetti-Mercer & Swartz, 2019). Prior to modern

technologies, migrants were not guaranteed that they would ever see or talk to their family members again after migration. Currently, although not certain, many platforms such as WhatsApp, Skype, and similar technologies have allowed transnational families to have instant contact with each other (Lim, 2016). In the past, distance that existed in transnational families impeded care practices. Distance was pathologized and argued to be the reason for problems in care practices and relationships in transnational families (Baldassar, 2016).

Innovations in Information Communication Technologies (ICT's) have allowed for people living in multiple locations to have their activities distributed across a number of spaces rather than being spatially contained, thus being significant in allowing for a number of relational activities across distance (Line, Jain & Lyons, 2011). Mobile communication in Africa has made it possible for people to perform various activities and also tend to social activities from a distance (Powell, 2015). It also allows for monitoring and controlling of non-migrant kin (Powell, 2015). Despite Africa being an under resourced continent, penetration of ICT's has been recorded at a steady rate mainly driven by migration (Hunter, 2015). This is based on people who have migrated needing to stay connected to family back home, as well as sending remittances to families (Hunter, 2015). ICT's, therefore, facilitate transactions at both ends of the migratory spectrum, that is, those left behind and those who have migrated (Hunter, 2015). The need to maintain connection and be aware of what is happening in closely related people, has also been a key driver of adoption of ICT's in sub-Saharan Africa (Porter, et al., 2018). The trend has impelled the need to accept modernity of new life, whilst maintaining the emotional security of family and tradition in the native home (Porter, et al., 2018). In Zimbabwe, ICT's have specifically allowed for the maintenance of connections between family members that are distances apart, which has extended to even facilitating healthy connections with the ancestral home (Chirozva, Mubaya & Mukamuri, 2007). Technology is also being increasingly used to maintain relationships of care between distant family members. These kind of practices leads to a notion of the family unit that is increasingly changing, and practising family may be done in fluid ways that may prove to be successful despite distance, through the adoption of different types of technologies.

Present day family life is now carried out across different time zones, multiple places and with multiple actors. This is a result of globalisation and mobility, with the concept of family and

belonging being constantly renegotiated, as well as the way in which relationships are maintained across distance (Bailey, Hallad & James, 2018). By comparison to research carried out in the global north, (for example, Baldassar, 2007; Wilding, 2006), little research has been done with respect to how African migrant families living in South Africa make use of ICT's to maintain relationships, especially given the high cost associated with mobile communication and data. Data costs in South Africa have been shown to be very expensive compared to non-African countries, inhibiting adoption by people in situations where they could use ICT's for important services (Van Belle, 2011). This has serious consequences for families living in different geographic locations as their way of doing or practicing family may be impeded by exorbitant data costs. Consequently, there is a need to investigate how this population with demographic characteristics which are different from other continents, deals with issues of ICT's and maintaining connections across distance and how this impacts their ability to care for non-migrant family members.

Furthermore, there is little knowledge of how ICT's are being used by Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa, in maintaining care and communicating with their transnational family members. This research study hopes to bring insight into the phenomenon, highlighting how ICT's have been used, its benefits and challenges it holds for these families. While there has been extensive research in the role of ICT's in care relationships in transnational families in the global north by comparison, there is paucity of such research in Africa.

1.3 Rationale

This research study therefore aims to explore how ICT's are used in African transnational families, especially with regard to issues of care of non-migratory family members. It hopes to open up the need to develop policy that will make ICT's more accessible to migrant communities. This will aid making connectedness much easier for people in transnational families and they can tap into their channels of support that existed prior to migration. A feeling of having support or being cared for is likely to maintain and promote positive mental wellbeing of transnational families. This is could also avoid family disintegration as families can remain connected via ICT's. It also hopes to add to the understanding of a more globalised view of the family, emphasising that family cannot be just viewed or defined based on geography, but should be viewed as evolving and able to be practised transnationally. Consequently, exploring the role of advanced technologies in facilitating

communication and care practices becomes important, whilst making people understand why some individuals resort to migration as a way of improving family life.

I will therefore use the example of migrants from Zimbabwe living in South Africa, to explore and highlight the foregoing critical issues.

1.4 Summary of chapters

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter orients the reader to the research study through providing the title of the topic under investigation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of the impact of migration on family relationships and the general use of ICT's in Africa. A section is dedicated to theories exploring definitions of migration, transnational families, care and ICT's. Some of the reasons underlying migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa are explored alongside specific ICT's uses amongst transnational families, engaging with how and for what reasons they are adopted. This chapter further assesses the disadvantages of using ICT's in caregiving in transnational families whilst discussing the role of visits in alleviating the disadvantages of ICT use. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on distant care and the role ICT's have come to play in this crucial time.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter provides the research methodology highlighting the aims of the research and research questions. Additionally, Bowen's (1978) Family systems theory as a framework to which migrants decide to exercise care for family members through use of ICT's is discussed. It also discusses the research design utilised in the study. Moreover, the chapter describes the sampling technique used to provide information on the participants. The data collection method and use of thematic analysis are also described. Finally, the chapter presents ethics of trustworthiness and credibility to show the integrity of the study.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study that emerged from the collected data and analysis, using the thematic analysis approach developed by Braun and Clarke (2012). The findings are presented according to themes that were identified from the semi-structured interviews with the participants and are supported by direct quotes from participants who partook in this study. The most notable themes identified from the study are namely, the reasons why participants chose to migrate, their families' reaction to the decision to move, the type of ICT's they adopted upon migration, patterns of caregiving, limitations of using ICT's, the role of visits and finally, the impact of the covid-19 pandemic in caring for each other within transnational families. The subthemes related to these themes are discussed as well.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter answers the research questions posed in the beginning of this research project through interpretation of research results and comparison of findings with the existing literature highlighted in the literature review chapter.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter concludes this study by summarizing the relevant findings, highlighting the limitations of the study and recommendations in assisting with the future directions of the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of the impact of migration on family relationships and the general use of ICT's in Africa. I will explore some of the reasons underlying migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa. A section will be dedicated to theories exploring definitions of migration, transnational families, care and ICT's. I will then look at the specific use of ICT's amongst transnational families, engaging with how and for what reasons they are adopted. In engaging with use of ICT's in rendering care in transnational families, this literature review will offer different perspectives on ICT use in different parts of the world. Disadvantages of using ICT's in caregiving in transnational families will also be discussed. Thereafter, the role of visits in transnational families will be examined in so far as the role they play in maintaining family ties. the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on distant care and the role ICT's have come to play in this crucial time will also be discussed. Finally, the last section will touch on the theoretical framework that outlines this study.

2.2 Zimbabwean migration to South Africa

The end of apartheid resulted in greater ease of movement to South Africa from other African countries without the fear of being harassed by the apartheid police and the army, making the destination desirable (Crush, Chikanda & Towodzera, 2015). Prior to the year 2000, the migration of Zimbabweans had been characterised by the movement of better educated and skilled white people into South Africa and other destinations such as the UK and Australia (Tevera & Zinyama, 2002). Post 2000, unprecedented numbers of black Zimbabweans migrated to South Africa as a result of the severe economic collapse in their own country, with South Africa being viewed as economically advanced compared to other countries in the region (Lathan & Cohen, 2011). This was seen as a brain drain as a result of a large educated, skilled, black labour force migrating, with a deteriorating economy being the main push factor (De Jager & Musuva, 2016). To date, migration into South Africa is characterised by both highly regulated and unregulated, informal and undocumented people (Crush, 2003).

However, the influx of Zimbabwean migrants into South Africa is often characterised as only as a result of an economic crisis, turning a blind eye to the political crisis that goes hand-in-hand with the economic crisis that has been exacerbated by bad governance (De Jager & Musuva, 2016). Patterns of migration changed between 2005 and 2010 with individuals reporting in 2005 that their travel to South Africa was temporary and post 2005, with more than two thirds of a sample reporting that they intended to settle permanently (Crush et al., 2015). Change in motivations for staying are largely associated with the deteriorating economic system of Zimbabwe and the perceived prospects of a better life in South Africa. There has also been a question of how these individuals psychologically adjust to a different environment considering the fact that their family members are often absent (Idemudia, Williams & Wyatt, 2013).

Migration to South Africa has also been suggested to be circular i.e., temporarily moving to South Africa for economic opportunities, returning home regularly and sending remittances (Crush & Tevera, 2010). Home visits highlight that migrants view themselves as “temporary exiles” based on the regular pattern of migration between South Africa and Zimbabwe (Crush & Tevera, 2010 p. 37).

2.3 Migration, Transnational Families, Care and ICT's

Different scholars hold diverse views as to why people migrate, ranging from individual benefit to those involving families and wider socio-political and economic factors (for example, Mazzucato & Schans, 2011); Ryan, 2004). Whatever the reason, it can be argued that migration greatly impacts family relationships. According to the migration system theory, migration can improve the lives of family members through sending of remittances. Consequently, both economic and social development are recorded not only for the family but for the sending country (Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016). Individuals' migration related choices are therefore impacted by family members' needs (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). The role of remittances signify loyalty to the family, as sometimes migration may appear as an individual decision, but there exist underlying family considerations as well as mutual support, and continued loyalty (Ryan, 2004).

It can be argued that migration is a way of fulfilling familial obligations negotiated through being privy to family expectations, one's duty to the family, and being loyal to the family. However, there is also the possibility that elderly parents may experience deteriorating physical health in cases where their children migrate (Antman, 2010). This has been suggested to be due to migrant children establishing their own families in countries of destination resulting in parents in the country of origin remaining isolated (Antman, 2010). Migration may also impact people's mental health, sense of belonging, security, identity and hope for the future (Merla, Kilkey & Baldassar, 2020). Moreover, migration is viewed as causing the geographical separation of families, interfering with generational respect, cohabitation and respect (Vithoo et al., 2020). The present study hopes to provide a different view of migration compared to previous studies discussed in the foregoing sections, as it shows how migration can disrupt family systems and processes that have been in place for some time.

Migrants should not be analysed from a point of being existent in just a single space. Rather, it can be seen as being situated in social fields that span across borders and play a role in shaping and enabling migration processes and outcomes (Carling & Collins, 2018). Transnationalism refers to the advent of a social process whereby migrants establish social fields that span across geographic, cultural and political borders (Schiller et al., 1992). Multiple relations that span across such as familial, economic, social, organizational, political and religions are developed and maintained across borders (Schiller et al., 1992). Transnationalism puts more emphasis on family networks rather than space and place (Coe, 2011). People are therefore emotionally and politically connected to social field through networks generated by migrants and their families remaining behind, ability to communicate via cell phones, transfer money and pay visits without being restricted by international borders or physical distance (Coe, 2011). A central element in transnationalism is how migrants are able to become involved in both the home and host environment in a number of ways (Schiller et al., 1992).

Transnational families are families which continue to maintain close ties and relationships despite family members being in different countries (Schmalzbauer, 2004). Bryceson (2019) views transnational families as evolving institutional forms of human interdependence, which are key in serving emotional and material needs in the new era of globalisation. Migration in transnational

families is negotiated through contending that families of any kind can withstand the test of physical separation (Bryceson, 2019). The concept of transnational family disrupts that idea of families and households being co-resident and fixed in time and space (Zontini, 2004). However, as transnational family members try to settle in countries of destination, they must still cope with family separation and related difficulties (Shih, 2016). Painful and lengthy separation are often the consequence of migration, as providing economically and materially for families left behind, is deemed important. On the other hand, various factors such as high cost of travelling and fear of losing employment impedes migrants from being frequently physically present as they would like (Shih, 2016).

Migration is sometimes not supported by family members, hence the lack of the so-called "licence to leave" (Baldassar, 2007), which is expected to impact the adaptation to a new country. Baldassar (2007) further suggested that lack of "licence to leave" resulted in the migration being termed unsuccessful despite individual achievements and strained transnational family relationships that are common where the decision to migrate is not supported. Marchetti-Mercer (2012) suggests that although parents tend to accept the decision to leave because of the benefits presented by migration to their children, they still experience ambivalence because of the loss in the relationship.

One of the tools that transnational families can use to deal with separation and to maintain relationships is through the use ICT's which refer to an extensive collection of technological gear and resources for the purposes of communication, and generation, distribution, collection and administering of information (Sarkar, 2012). In addition to the aforementioned purposes, ICT's transform human lives through ways of living their lives (Olatokun, 2009). Furthermore, the significant feature of ICT's is their capacity to harness, access and apply information and diffuse knowledge at electronic speed to different types of human activities including migration, giving rise to modern knowledge-based economies and societies (Olatokun, 2009). ICT's exist in many forms such as cellular, broadcast, cable, satellite, postal systems and networks, internet, voice, mail, radio, and television (Sarkar, 2012). They are arguably changing constantly, with users needing to adapt to newer more developed types as the old ones become redundant (Hanninen, Taipale & Luostari, 2020). ICT's are relevant in migration for mainly two reasons: bonding – staying in contact with left behind family, and, bridging – integration in the new country through

finding relevant information such as healthcare (Collin, 2012). Social media in particular has been used by migrants in forming social networks that can be formulated into a form of social capital (Merisalo & Jauhiainen, 2020). Social capital becomes important in gaining new information and strengthening relations (Merisalo & Jauhiainen, 2020). ICT's in their various forms, such as cell phones have been suggested to provide migrants with cultural communicative values, whereas computers and the internet have been used for assessing information (Holmes & Janson, 2008). Access and ability to use ICT's is essential in participating in an information-based society (Servon & Nelson, 2001).

2.4 ICT use in Africa

Kayisire and Wei (2016) suggest that ICT adoption in Africa has increased due to affordability of mobile phones and widespread internet access. For example, Kenya has seen an increased use of ICT's due to widespread adoption of mobile money transfer platforms, which have been hailed as much faster, cheaper and easily accessible compared to banking systems (Kayisire & Wei, 2016). Furthermore, ICT's have been used by migrant families in rendering financial assistance to people left back home. In remote areas of Africa, information sharing has been practiced through mobile phones to connect people and has, aided farmers to obtain agricultural related information subsequently aiding in economic growth and development (Solomon & van Klyton, 2020) the adoption of new information related to innovative farming practices and creation of awareness in these fields of human life (Hudson, Leclair, Pelletier & Sullivan, 2017). African people have managed to benefit from learning opportunities and have been exposed to a diverse set of content (Solomon & van Klyton, 2020). This has been realised more in educational spaces and has aided the development of African countries (Solomon & van Klyton, 2020).

As of 2020, the average 4G coverage in Africa stood at 62%, with North Africa having nearly 87% of its population with access to 4G technology, West Africa at 59%, Southern Africa at 65.1% and East Africa at 60% (Faria, 2022). WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Facebook Messenger and Twitter are the most common social media platforms used in South Africa (Galal, 2022). The most prominent social media platforms in Zimbabwe are WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter (Mugari, 2020). The subscriber base in Zimbabwe rose from 11.4 million in 2014 to 14 million in

2017, with WhatsApp data bundles accounting for 47% of data bundles purchased by the subscribers (Media Institute of Southern Africa, 2018 as cited in Mugari, 2020).

2.4.1 The use of ICT's in caring for family members across distance.

Information Communication Technologies (ICT's) have the potential to offer care in terms of emotional support allowing family members to negotiate extended separation from loved ones, alleviating the mental health effect and well-being of isolation from loved ones which often comes with challenges (Gonzalez & Katz, 2016). ICT's are able to provide a tool which families can use to take care of each other despite the distance. Care and transnational familyhood involves emotions, as exemplified by the pain and distress caused by separation, with ICT's playing a mediating role through connecting families (Wilding et al., 2020). In caring for families across a distance and maintaining co-presence, emotions (of longing for and missing kin) become a driving force in engaging in digital practices (ICT use) and rituals of staying in touch (Baldassar, 2008). Different degrees and forms of communication and interaction are the main characteristics of transnational family care giving (Baldassar, 2020). Emotional and practical care is rendered using various platforms such as telephones, faxes, letters, emails, and cellphone messaging (Baldassar, 2020).

Care over short, medium- and long-term durations, care of the dependent namely children, the elderly and the ill can be done through provision of basic needs over quite a distance (Bryceson, 2019). Transnational caring involves day to day care and nurturing of family members, and adopting supporting roles represented by division of labour while considering the aspect of distance (Bryceson, 2019). Hoang and Yeoh (2012, p.308) suggest that care is rendered through families working overseas and supporting other family members through a system they call "global householding". This entails care through pooling resources across and within borders and the household, aiding in the economic survival of the household (Cuban, 2019). Furthermore, information is exchanged, needs are determined, and support is rendered, whether emotional or material, through the use of ICT's (Cuban, 2019). People outside the transnational family set-up, such as extended family and non-family members can be incorporated into the family system to become carers on short- or long-term basis as the need arises (Bryceson, 2019). Baldassar (2007) asserts that care takes the form of emotional, practical, financial support and accommodation, with

flow of care being either direct, that is, face- to-face, or indirect through communication mediated platforms over a distance. Baldassar and Merla (2013) disagree that care in transnational families is one sided by arguing that care is rather circulated, whereby it is reciprocal, asymmetric and multidirectional changing over the life course, and affected by social, economic, political and cultural factors in both countries of destination and origin.

Care exchange in transnational families is expressed through negotiated commitments that are determined by family histories and personal relationships within families (Finch & Mason, 1993). Provision of care is also possible if there is a sense of obligation, which at most times is entrenched in cultural practices around being dutiful to aging parents through taking over some social roles and responsibilities (Baldassar, 2007). Maintaining care in transnational families via ICT's takes collective effort and skill, with a family being able to display and affirm their relationships despite geographical distance revealing a performance of family (Share, Williams & Kerrins, 2018). Virtual communication and co-presence cannot be equated to being "less than real" as transnational families can still be able to experience the significance of relationships in their fullest through this type of communication (Baldassar, 2014, p.394). Merla, Kilkey and Baldassar (2020, p.4) suggest that distant and proximate care are not 'either or scenarios', but rather play a certain, complementary role in transnational care circulation throughout the lifetime of transnational families. ICT's become part of the infrastructure of transnational families through changing the spatial definition of home and transforming the temporal meaning of family routine (Livingston, 2002). This counters the argument that for family life to continue, people must be physically close together (Share, Williams & Kerrins, 2018).

ICT's have thus allowed for the conservation of family ties, allowing for the better coordination of family activities, distance parenting and caregiving (Hanninen, Taipale & Korhonen, 2018). Different types of ICT's provide transnational families with different aspects of performing family activities such as people having digital lives and the ability to display life via video which increases the frequency and accessibility to family interaction with others. ICT's like Facebook are contended to be useful in relationship building (Francisco, 2015). Care is provided through integrating the lives of those in the country of origin and those in destination countries, allowing for family to share everyday lives and demonstrating strategies of keeping family intact (Francisco,

2015). Use of ICT's through the very act of calling portray an act of care for the left behind elderly as it offers a way of showing affection, allowing them to communicate their feelings, revealing more than just basic solidarity amongst transnational family members (Nedelcu & Wyss, 2016; Ahlin, 2019). Ahlin (2019) suggests that use of ICT's in itself through calling or texting is very much indicative of the act of caring; with this very act able to portray love, trust, but also contain loneliness, worry and fear of being abandoned in the virtual space. ICT's are viewed as offering virtual immediacy that tends to become a source of emotional support helping migrants re-establish connection that had been disturbed by moving to another country (Gonzalez & Katz, 2016). Adoption of ICT's is driven by the need to maintain a connection with others, and these connections are key in alleviating feelings of disconnectedness that are often as a result of migration (Gonzalez & Katz, 2016). The meanings attributed to ICT's in transnational families provides a wider insight into family dynamics, with the involvement of parents' being representative of their deep investment in remaining close to people faraway encouraged by the need for closeness or a desire in long-distance caregiving (Gonzalez & Katz, 2016).

A number of studies have explored the various ways in which ICT's are increasingly being used to maintain relationships across geographical distance. A study focussing on Indian migrants found out that migrants used ICT's not to share meaningful information always but rather share everydayness and spend time together through the utilisation of webcams (Ahlin, 2018). ICT's are not solely capable of transnational family care and improvement of family bonds, the emphasis is rather on everyday practices related to family talk over a long distance which is key to the improvement of family life (Cuban, 2018). Baldassar, Nedelcu, Merla & Wilding (2016) suggest that these everyday practices are important in the creation of what it means to be family by creating rituals through co-presence, thereby, arguing for the continued family practices long after migration. Despite the existence of distance, the contact represents the fluidity or the changing aspects of doing family (Baldassar, et al., 2016). Continuing family life across distance and establishing a normal kind of everyday practices are possible despite distance through adoption of ICT's upon migration (Baldassar, et al., 2016). Emotional and affective care can still be facilitated through offering guidance and continuing to have intimate and democratic relationships which offer emotional support, comprehensive listening, advice and supervising children thereby maintaining the central aspects of appropriate parenting regardless of physical presence (Monini,

2018). Furthermore, despite distance, through the use of ICT's the same routines that exist within regular families can be transferred to transnational families continuing to achieve care relationships that mimic the normal kinds of families through the establishment of virtual co-presence (Monini, 2018).

Family obligations have been aptly carried out through use of ICT's enabling exchange of care through the phone, such as rendering emotional support allowing one to be termed a good daughter or good son (Baldassar, 2014). The 'material presence' of the remittance as a tangible aspect of the 'bodies, spaces and artefacts' of the family communication across and within borders (Aagaard & Matthisen, 2016, pp:33-34). Cuban (2019) is of the view that remittances are a form of care, that aids the survival of family members and should not be viewed as replacing physical presence of migrant children. Although previous studies have revealed that migrant children send remittances to their parents as a form of care, Antman (2013) suggests that this is not a form of care but rather a form of repayment. This differing perspective is based on the fact that parents might have helped with the process of migration, and remittances then become a form of repayment (Antman, 2013). Antman (2013) also argues that financial remittances are a compensation for time spent absent from aging parents, in comparison to other siblings who are present. This reveals differing perspectives on the role played by remittances in transnational family care.

Baldassar (2007) suggests that the need for migration is not always for economic gain, but rather the need to care for family members is what drives people to migrate. Hence, ICT's are a way of provision of care. Support systems of older people have become not local or proximate as ICT's have allowed for the emotional and other forms of support to be rendered from beyond borders (Wilding & Baldassar, 2018). Through focusing on the elderly left behind, the use of different kinds of ICT's allows family members to practice effective forms of care through creation of a sense of 'being there' for each other despite the physical distance that exists (Baldassar, 2016). Baldassar (2016) argues that the exchange of informal care in families is something that spans across one's lifetime, with care exchanged between older and younger family members changing to different degrees across the life course, with new technologies adopted to facilitate distant co-presence when families stay distances apart. On account that the primary reason for migrating

might be for economic benefit, however a sense of family obligation pushes migrants towards contributing to the welfare of the family (van Dijk, 2002; Clough, 2018).

ICT's allow for transnational families to be virtually co-present and imagine the life of the other allowing for care to take place. White, Cito, Veale and Mazzucato (2019) found that technologies, such as social media, allowed for Nigerian parents living in the Netherlands and Ireland and their left behind children to participate in imaginative mobility and to imagine the life of the other, thereby supporting the quality of everyday relating and improving their emotional wellbeing. In line with the idea of imagination facilitated by the use of ICT's, Monini (2018) suggests that ambient and imagined co-presences of family life allowed for transnational parents to be strategic in calling their left behind children at the right time or avoid contact as a way of respecting their children's privacy. Monini (2018) asserts that ICT's can allow people to be emotionally available in the most demanding and crucial times through what has been termed as virtual co-presence, and facilitate synchronized communication, thereby, being readily available. Francisco (2015) contends that through video communication one is able to imagine what is going on in the life of someone who is distant allowing for intimacy, a form of care, between family members as they can be emotionally present and be familiar with happenings of every aspect of the family.

2.4.2 Types of ICT's used in family care

The type of ICT's adopted by migrants may differ depending on various factors that include cost of communication, ease of access, as well as laws that are in place in the host country. ICT's adopted will be highly impacted by social factors in the receiving country and the country of origin, with technological infrastructure in both countries significant in which and how ICT's will be utilised (Skouby et al., 2017). Baldassar (2008) points to the absence of appropriate infrastructure as affecting care within transnational families. The adoption of different types of ICT's corresponds to the form of care needed at that time and therefore convenient for the family members at a certain point in time (Baldassar, 2016). Madianou and Miller (2011) argue that what constitutes the use of different ICT's is rather class related, with migrants from middle class backgrounds having access to a wider range of ICT's whilst making sure that people left behind have access to the same for seamless communication and care. Worrall, Ballantyne and Kendall

(2019) take a different perspective pointing out that ICT choice is guided more by the types of technologies that exist in the country of origin. ICT's adopted included Viber, WeChat and Weibo. On the other hand, developing a trend of being attached to certain types of ICT's not popular in the country of destination (Worrall, Ballantyne & Kendall, 2019). A key theme emerged from a study focusing on migrants residing in Australia as families and informal support networks were found to thrive across distance when there was access to diverse digital communication tools creating what is termed as "polymedia" environment (Miller & Madianou, 2012). This plays a huge role in family relationships, conveying different degrees and types of closeness through the selection of different media such as voice calls, video calls, text messages and so forth. (Baldassar & Wilding, 2019). Wilding et al., (2020) contend that sustaining familyhood (care) via ICT's reveals global asymmetries of access, affordability and digital literacy that transnational families have to go through in navigating care.

2.4.3 Challenges in ICT use

One of the challenges of using ICT's in the South African and Zimbabwean contexts is the high cost of internet and ultimately access to ICT's thereby affecting care in these transnational family setups. Brandhorst (2017) argues that lack of access to ICT's may result in withdrawal of care and legitimise distancing from family in the country of origin. This brings in a different perspective whereby migrants take advantage of the fact that certain factors form a barrier for communication with family back home, ultimately resulting in care being withdrawn (Brandhorst, 2017). Challenges in maintaining care stem from navigating demands for remittances, decreased intimacy due to sluggish internet speeds which distort and restrict the flow of intimacy. (Wilding et al., 2020). This exposes transnational families to the harsh reminders of the experiences of distance, as physical and digital co-presence is prevented due to persistent inequalities in global economies and politics (Wilding et al., 2020).

A different perspective looks into transnational care is affected by primary factors, apart from issues at meso level, such as lack of infrastructure. Baldassar, Baldock and Wilding (2007) assert that transnational family care is facilitated by the capacity (ability and opportunity) and culturally bound sense of obligation, negotiated family commitments for certain family members to provide care within the family. Baldassar (2020) asserts that transnational family care has to be understood

as intersections of individual choice (micro patterns of kinship and obligation) with more formal structures and infrastructures (or absence of them) of relevant services, technologies, and resources at a much wider/larger level (state). Miller (2012) furthermore raises an important factor in that even though the infrastructure in both countries might allow for care in transnational families, what is rather important will be whether transnational family members are skilled in using the different types of ICT's, with generational differences affecting this. Aging parents with migrant children are more likely to have trouble using ICT's. They therefore need to learn how to use these ICT's in order to communicate with their migrant children (Miller, 2012). A gap might exist in exchange of care as aging parents might not be able to utilise some ICT's that might in fact work better in the care exchange, indicating negative effects caused by the digital divide. The availability of ICT's can heighten loss and conflict in families in situations where some members cannot use ICT's which at most times is the older generation (Marchetti-Mercer & Swartz, 2020). While ICT's might help in rendering care in transnational families for "normal" bodies, it might prove difficult for those who need direct and physical care, such as the elderly and the disabled (Swartz & Marchetti-Mercer, 2019).

Pre-existing relationships are key in analysing of whether people adopt ICT's in instances where family relationships have to exist outside the normal bounds of geographical connectedness (Gherhel & Le Gall, 2016). Tensions, misunderstandings, and frustrations are some aspects that have arisen in maintaining care in transnational families, affected by willingness and capacity to maintain connection with family members in the country of origin (Wilding et al., 2020). Although ICT's carry certain advantages, exchanging deeper emotions, such as trust closeness, and familiarity which fuse together to form the basis of intimacy within the family, may be lacking (Francisco, 2013). Marchetti-Mercer and Swartz (2020) suggest that the ease of contact facilitated by ICT's can be a disadvantage due to distant kin not having exposure to local embodied relationships, affecting the development of deep local bonds, and not allowing relationships to be as complex as possible as the case in proximate relationships. Furthermore, the use of ICT's in this context may also be experienced by some family members as encouraging too much interference and creating a sense of surveillance (Marchetti-Mercer & Swartz, 2020). Marchetti-Mercer (2016) highlights the fact that ICT's have shortcomings where physical proximity is concerned, as the feeling of family is not felt in a complete manner. For example, the aged may not be part of their

grandchildren's lives, or part of the daily happenings of other family members. The import of this argument is that ICT's are constricted in providing full experiences of engaging in other aspects of being in a family that close proximity allows.

Gherghel and Le Gall (2016) argue that the use and impact of ICT's in transnational families is largely dependent on pre-existing relationships, meaning there has to be unpacking of the individual's ideology on family and ethnic belonging. ICT's in this instance consolidate existing configurations of family setups and are not necessarily there to create new networks or replace other forms of intimacy (Gherghel & Le Gall, 2016). Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) support this argument and further suggest that transnational family care engages in a selective process, with cherished family members being those that are successful in the exchange of mutual benefit rooted in acceptable levels of dependence and interdependence. Baldassar (2016) contends that ICT's cannot be looked at in the negative rather, care within families can break down whether there is distance or not and this opens up to the unpacking of how families differ from each other. Rather the experience of ICT's is incorporated into already existing patterns of communication and moreover create support and reproduces ways transnational families can remain social despite being geographically distanced from each other (Wilding, 2006). ICT's somewhat diminish distance as a factor in maintaining a sense of family network, as there is the idea that as more people adopt ICT's, the more people become involved in communicating across distance and the more frequency of communication (Baldassar, 2014). Licoppe (2004) argues that viewing ICT's as compensation for absence of close family members is rather problematic. Instead, ICT's should be viewed as allowing the continued pattern of mediated interactions that integrate connected relationships resulting in boundaries between absence and presence becoming unclear.

Communication cannot be viewed solely as a way of exchanging information but also as a medium which allows people to engage with each other emotionally, allowing for the checking of well-being, exchanging advice, reprimanding, providing of comfort and also giving instructions in transnational families thereby articulating care through active involvement, albeit via screen, audio or text (Carling, Menjivar & Schmalzbauer, 2012). Acts of communication should not be viewed as impressionistic presence of the other or something without meaning but should rather be viewed as aiding geographically isolated people to maintain close, supportive and involved relationships

(Baldassar & Wilding, 2019). Vithoo et al. (2020) in a study examining international migration from South Africa, found that migration was viewed with loss of anticipated care with migrating adult children breaking the cycle of generational reciprocity of love and care of their parents. This further highlights the negative perceptions of ICT's as they cannot be fully sufficient for the continuing of family processes. The African family structure and set up may be different from the more Western models and in this instance, ICT's may not bring out the full reciprocal relationship that exists between adult migrant children and their parents. In this regard, ICT's may not be able to fully cover all aspects of care, thereby giving rise of the need of family members to negotiate their roles differently. For older people in transnational family systems, care via ICT's might not be satisfactory. This is because physical, more proximate care, support and social involvement will be lacking, and older people will feel impeded from taking part in traditional roles, such as raising grandchildren as is the norm in traditional extended family setups (Kropf & Burnette, 2003; Sachimba, Mooya & Mesman, 2017). Benitez (2012) suggests that there need to explore how different generations of people in transnational families make meaning, negotiate and understand conflict's from socio-cultural perspective within the family setup. This may cause family members to alter communication habits intentionally (Pham & Lim, 2018; Francisco, 2015). The argument is that conflict may emerge by not allowing individuals to maintain a healthy distance from other family members as overuse of ICT's may lead to over-involvement (Pham & Lim, 2018). Cabalquinto (2018) argues that ICT's deny migrant adults their individuality through a constant need to perform multiple roles, obligations and commitments enabled by being connected.

ICT's in transnational families have been flagged for creating a sense of surveillance and control (Lim et al., 2016). Furthermore, Lim and Pham (2016) argue that ICT's can offer migrant children and their parents care particularly through staying social and emotionally connected to the family however ICT's impede migrant children from engaging with the new environment. Differentiation from the family becomes an issue due to ICT's not allowing people to co-exist outside the family system or gain some sort of independence. ICT's seem to offer excessive or less than ideal forms of care that become unhealthy in the family as these do not offer individual development. Under a family systems perspective, such surveillance can equate to too much interdependence that would tend to be unhealthy for continued family function.

Caring from a distance may also be affected by the withholding of information by physical care providers back home who may hide information so as not to cause concern when problems such as health problems arise (Poeze, 2019). A study focusing on Romanian refugees found that respondents hid certain information, such as professional difficulties or urgent needs, highlighting the negative connotations of migration which involve painful feelings of separation and wanting to protect family members from negative information (Nedelcu & Wyss, 2016). Another study focusing on white middle class transnational families in South Africa revealed that ICT's aided in the hiding of information in separated families to avoid unnecessary burden on relatives (Marchetti-Mercer, 2017). This happens as a result of trying to keep an ideal family and ideal migration image, whilst not realising the unintended consequence of decreasing shared knowledge and increased emotional distance amongst families (Baldassar, 2007). Although much of the extant literature has favoured the use of ICT's in transnational family care, several studies have found that ICT's may be disadvantageous amongst migrants due to the pressure they create of always being contacted frequently for the financial aspects of care (Hunter, 2015). In this aspect, financial support is suggested to be more important than emotional care by left behind family members, resulting in migrants choosing to ignore their families due to the increased pressure they are subjected (Hunter, 2015). Hsu (2019, p.11) argues that withholding of information may be a way of upholding filial duty, through what she terms as "virtual absence, challenging the idea of virtual co-presence. The argument is that it is better for parents not to know that their migrant children are facing emotional and physical difficulties as a way of avoiding anxiety and distress within the transnational family, in line with the cultural principle of not causing worry to parents (Hsu, 2019). This argument is further extended to the idea that withholding of information might be a way migrant children assert their independence through the idea of virtual absence (Hsu, 2019). Brandhorst, Baldassar and Wilding (2020) suggest that silence does not equate to withdrawal of care, rather it is a form of care, stemming from the need to not worry or upset aging parents in the country of origin.

Although ICT's can create a sense of co-presence offering routine and episodic interactions, however, they also create feelings of loss or disconnectedness that stems from stress related to trying to secure the well-being of others in the country of origin (Gonzalez & Katz, 2016). A related view is the fact that ICT's create perpetual connectivity that carries certain negatives. For

example, migrants are viewed as not being cognisant of the needs and desires of those in destination countries due to the fact that they are regarded as the ones who are more obligated in the family dynamic to provide care with financial care being highly regarded (Cabalquinto, 2020). Transnational family dynamics are characterised by the constant management of unsettling feelings due to the burden that exists in sustaining family across a geographical distance with ICT's not offering transparency of such burdens within families (Cabalquinto, 2020). From a family systems perspective, the concept of differentiation might not be afforded by ICT's in transnational families whereby migrant children have numerous roles, obligations and commitments that leave feelings of being independent being denied through suppression of their feelings and being selfless (Cabalquinto, 2018).

In managing their lives via ICT's, some migrants also put out an image of success despite experiencing some difficulties in the country of destination. A study investigating migrant women living in Johannesburg, South Africa found that some migrant women fail to live up to the expectations of sending remittances and this results in a loss of status which she refers to as "social death" (Kihato, 2013, p. 47). Hence these women fail to return home when facing hardships and choose to remain in Johannesburg portraying a successful like through photographs sent to family in the country of origin and sending few remittances. This exemplifies how migrants are able to carefully select information for sharing and not sharing via ICT's so that some parts of the migrants' lives are left unknown.

For some migrants, there is no wish to maintain continuous communication with family or some family members in the country of origin (Bacigalupe & Camara, 2012). Remittances have been suggested to be a burden for some migrants, hence ICT's make it easy for families to talk about remittances hence there is a preference for some people to escape these obligations through not maintaining any form of communication. Hsu (2019) suggests that in Asian cultures the moral responsibility to care for family in the country of origin becomes a burden for women as they are culturally mandated to do so. Therefore, despite the availability of different types of ICT's, they fulfil this role in the most minimalist way possible for example, avoiding use of video technologies such as Skype and only calling using landlines. Some reasons for this are unresolved family

conflict or pursuing of activities that the family in the country-of-origin did not support (Bacigalupe & Camara, 2012).

2.4.4 The Role of visits as a way of addressing shortcomings of ICT's.

Although ICT's carry possibilities of care, Ahlin (2018) found that physical visits still play a role in the emotional needs of transnational families. Poeze (2019) also points to the fact that face to face interaction is still relevant as it was found that parents who had left their children behind still felt an emotional void due to not having physical contact with their children. Bryceson (2019) suggest that lack of face-to-face interaction weakens bonds of familial sentiment and identity. Consequently, a number of studies have focused on the benefits of visits as a way of augmenting migratory relationships. For example, Baldassar (2007) was of the view that through visitation, migrants are able to 'fit back' into family life effortlessly, allowing for people to have active transnational family relations. Marchetti-Mercer, Swartz and Baldassar (2021, p.10) emphasise the importance of visits as transnational families express the need for physical "visibility" to each other and they also address the embodied need for a human relationship. There is also an impelling need to see with their own eyes, as opposed to imagining how their loved ones are living or being in virtual contact (Marchetti-Mercer et al., 2021). Baldassar (2008, p.260) asserts that migrants often perceive the need to see other family members "with their own eyes" as a confirmation of their health status and ICT's fail to sufficiently address this hence revealing the importance of physical visits.

Baldassar (2014) views transnational caregiving as involving more than just ICT's, where visits are incorporated into caregiving to becoming a main feature/characteristic of transnational caregiving, such as in situations where there is a crisis and physical caregiving is warranted. ICT's are still important in this situation because they represent long histories of exchange of virtual contact and physical visits become key in ensuring that obligations to provide crisis modes of care are strongly felt (Baldassar, 2014). Research findings are contradictory, as on one end ICT's offer older parents social support, and on the other end old age might make it impossible for them to utilise ICT's due to the skill required and this could possibly have an impact on how they are cared for. ICT's might also not be beneficial in the family setup and practical, more proximate care might be needed. This is an argument that is worth raising in the current research based on the fact that

migrant children might have older parents, and how they navigate the issue of care in situations where ICT's might not be viewed as easy to use or where they need more practical care due to old age comes to the fore.

Although visits might help in achieving care practices that are not otherwise possible via ICT's, practical factors in rendering physical care have to be taken into account in transnational families. Merla, Kilkey and Baldassar (2020a) argue that due to migration policies in countries of destination, families are impeded from rendering physical care especially in times of sickness. These practices are limiting, rendering migrant children immobile as they cannot travel to exchange proximate forms of care, affecting mostly intergenerational care relationships (Merla et al., 2020). Restrictions are mostly related to stringent visa requirements that do not allow older people in the country of origin to be reunited with their transnational family members (Merla et al., 2020). Transnational family members could also be restricted from staying for more than a certain period of time in their country of origin due to citizenship requirements (Merla et al., 2020).

2.4.4 Covid-19 pandemic and caring via ICT's

The Covid-19 pandemic has further impacted the experiences of migrant and transnational families. Lockdowns and travel restrictions especially at the beginning of the pandemic have made the possibility of visits impossible further emphasising the importance of ICT's and their role in providing care in both migrant and non-migrant families (Brandhorst, Baldassar & Wilding, 2020). Covid-19 restrictions and lockdowns have affected hands on physical care as transnational family members have been rendered immobile by way of enforced immobility (Brandhorst et al., 2020). Hence, in crisis situations such as sickness, care at a distance becomes insufficient, a disadvantage resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, hence physical care is put on hold (Popyk & Pustluka, 2020). It can also be argued that Covid-19 creates a double burden for care, further strain and a feeling of guilt for not being present due to enforced immobility (Brandhorst, Baldassar & Wilding, 2020). This has affected care roles and strategies, leading to a strain in relationships and affected social and emotional connectedness ((Brandhorst et al., 2020).

Some studies suggest that ICT use in transnational families has not been impacted by Covid-19 as such families have been exercising care at a distance by adopting various technologies long before

the start of the pandemic (Fuchs, 2020; Merla, 2020; Baldassar & Krzyzowski, 2020). This is given credence by Popyk and Pustulka (2021) who indicate that emotional and intergenerational communication remained similar to before the pandemic and greatly reliant on ICT's. Furthermore, Hari, Nardon and Zhang (2020) argue that the frequency and intensity of communication may have increased during the Covid-19 pandemic, which in turn resulted in increased levels of intimacy as ICT's allowed migrants to spend more time with their family virtually in comparison to pre-pandemic times. The Covid-19 pandemic is rather a peculiar factor that has not been considered to have an impact on family care in transnational families. Its impact might be different from people outside Africa and migrants residing in South Africa. Therefore, there is need to look into how care is affected in situations where there is potential loss of livelihoods and migrants might be impacted through not affording data, and also looking at the fact that even long-distance travel is affected through travel bans.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of this study, a family systems approach was used as a theoretical framework. The family systems theory is rooted in the general systems approach whereby a disturbance in one part of the system has an effect on other parts as well (Bowen, 1978). In other words, a change in the functioning of one family member is automatically followed by a compensatory change in other parts of the family system (Bowen, 1978). The family systems approach is based on the view that individuals within families are intricately connected to one another and experiences in one part of the system affect other parts as well, with individual's behaviours having a reciprocal influence (Murray, 2006). Behaviours in a family are interrelated with problems viewed in terms of relationship struggles rather than blaming a single individual (Yerby, 1995). The family systems theory further asserts that healthy interpersonal boundaries encourage appropriate degrees of emotional intimacy between two people (Johnson & Ray, 2016). It presupposes that one cannot not communicate and that family members are always constantly trying to define their relationship (Johnson & Ray, 2016). It also focuses on how a family functions when its members all become adults, how they maintain continuous relationships, allow for change and adaptation, and why families might treat individual members in different ways (Fingerman & Berman, 2000). It also assesses communication, transactional patterns, conflict, separateness and connectedness, cohesion and adaptation to stress (Fingerman & Berman, 2000).

An important concept is the nuclear family, which is a family setup consisting of a father, mother and their children and also the concept of extended family and its connected emotional processes (Bowen, 1974). Clinical problems may develop in situations of heightened and prolonged family tension, with tension levels depending on stress encountered by the family and how the family adapts to it and the family's connection with extended family and social networks (Haefner, 2014). These relationships patterns will be affected in the process of migration and again ICT's can play an important role in alleviating the stress associated with distance from one's nuclear and extended families their adaptation to living transnationally whilst highlighting the importance of family.

A number of important systemic concepts and processes specifically relevant to the present study. The next is the concept of differentiation. This refers to the capacity of an adult individual to function autonomously through making self-directed choices, whilst staying emotionally connected to the nuclear family or family of origin (Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Brown, 1991). This concept may be applicable in transnational family systems as individuals leave their family of origin when they migrate but still have to maintain relationships with those left behind, whilst negotiating their own autonomy. A well-differentiated person has the ability to recognise his/her realistic dependence on others but is also able to function in an autonomous manner.

A higher level of differentiation experienced by an individual allows for one to take "I-positions", characterised by maintaining a sense of self in important relationships or in the uncertain situations (Bowen, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Highly differentiated individuals have the ability to maintain autonomy from others without experiencing debilitating fears and anxiety of abandonment and intimacy with others without feeling suffocated in relationships (Bowen, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Better psychological adjustment is recorded in highly differentiated individuals, with less differentiated people most likely to experience psychological and physical symptoms in stressful situations which include anxiety, somatization, depression and psychosis (Bowen, 1976; Bowen 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998; Titelman, 1998). The exploration of the individual's level of differentiation moderates the link between stress and adaptation (Bowen, 1976; Bowen 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). This can be applied to how migrants are able to negotiate their roles from a distance, with successful adaptation highlighting adequate differentiation and reduced stress.

The family systems theory asserts that healthy autonomy is not necessarily defined by clear attitudinal differences or separation between individuals and their parents (Bowen, 1978). Thus, the ability to take the “I” position in relationships is dependent on thoughtful consideration, weighing out the pros and cons in light of one’s convictions and beliefs, instead of the automatic acceptance or rejection of family of origin’s values (Skowron, Wester & Azen, 2004). Boundaries in the family systems theory ascertain who is included and excluded in the family system with family functioning best if a member is part of a subsystem, with each subsystem having a balance of access and privacy (Schwartz, 1995). Boundaries can be either enmeshed or polarized, with the former being diffuse and the latter rigid (Schwartz, 1995). Polarizations and Enmeshments aid in family members adopting extreme roles and prevent them from adopting preferred roles in the family which negatively impacts relationships (Schwartz, 1995).

Emotional cut-off in the family systems theory refers to how individuals distance themselves from one’s the family or emotionally break ties with the family (Brown, 1999). This may be an outcome of migration and often has a negative impact upon family relationships. Emotional closeness or distance is determined by a combination of physical distance and quality of relationship, with people not well involved with their distant parental families at risk of problems and symptoms (Bowen, 1974).

In conclusion, the family systems approach is of the view that the driving forces underlying all human behaviour stem from processes between family members trying to maintain and balance between togetherness and distance (Wylie, 1990) This brings into focus the role of ICT’s as allowing individuals in maintaining appropriate distance and togetherness as a way of encouraging healthy family functioning.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed theoretical aspects linked to migration, ICT’s and transnational families. I discussed how ICT’s are used to provide care for distant family members within a transnational family setting through use of relevant literature. I also discussed some of the challenges that have

been found to exist in exercising care via ICT's and how visits are used to mitigate these challenges. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was also highlighted.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodology used in this research study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological considerations followed throughout the research process. It outlines the research aims and research questions posed at the beginning of this project. It further explains the chosen exploratory research design. The sample and sampling technique used will then be described together with the participants' stories. Thereafter the data collection and procedure for the study explained. The data analysis process chosen will be described subsequently. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the ethical considerations which guided the study as well as trustworthiness and credibility as a way of showing how the integrity of the study through.

3.2 Research Aims

- a) To explore how Zimbabwean migrants living in South Africa maintain relationships of care with their parents and other family members back home through the use of ICT's.
- b) To understand the role that ICT's play in the maintenance of these family relationships.
- c) To understand whether there are any challenges and/or benefits to the relationships of care when people migrate.

3.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were posed at the beginning of the project;

- a) What influences the use of ICT's in Zimbabwean migrants living in South Africa given their transnational family system?
- b) How do Zimbabwean migrants understand the relationship between care and ICT's in general?
- c) Does the use of ICT's disrupt or add value to existing family processes and functioning?

3.4 Research Design

The study adopted an exploratory research design as it allowed for the investigation of a social phenomenon to provide new insights and understandings (Creswell, 2013). Exploratory research is often adopted where researchers have little or no scientific knowledge about a group, process or activity under examination, however there is a reason to believe that the exploration is worthwhile

(Stebbins, 2001). It was deemed appropriate ideal for this study due to the limited research in the role of ICT's in the African setting.

3.4.1 Qualitative approach

This exploratory study followed a qualitative approach. Qualitative research involved different methodologies that describes and explain people's experiences, behaviours, interactions and social contexts in a broad manner, without use of statistical apparatus or quantification (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Hence, description and interpretation of subjective meanings linked to situations and actions, making important theoretical links from patterns and connections in qualitative data are important aspects of qualitative research (Fossey et al., 2002). It aims to gather in-depth understanding of certain phenomena based on research questions initially asked to reflect the aims of a given research project (Fossey et al., 2002). Human experiences are viewed as richly textured and researchers thereby relying on participants to offer in-depth answers to questions posed by the research study based on how they construct or understand their experiences (Jackson et al., 2007). Generalisability is not possible and perhaps not even desirable due to a small number of participants selected, hence generalizability is sacrificed to make room for more detailed human experiences (Jackson et al., 2007).

A qualitative approach was deemed to be an appropriate given the nature of the study focusing on the subjective experiences of the use of ICT's amongst Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa.

3.5 Participants and Sampling

Sampling refers to the process of selecting participants from the population who hold similar characteristics to the people the study hopes to investigate. The sample comprised of nine (9) Zimbabwean migrants living in Johannesburg. The participants ranged from 28 years to 40 years of age. Johannesburg is the largest city in South Africa and is estimated to have a population of about 6 million people (World Population Review, 2022). Immigrants in South Africa are estimated to be around 3.95 million (Stats SA, 2021). Gordon (2022) suggests that these estimates are erroneous due to a very high number of undocumented migrants in South Africa. As a result of inconsistent data, I could not find the population estimates of the number of Zimbabwean migrants living in Johannesburg. Johannesburg has an unemployment rate of 37.3% (Stats SA, 2021).

Snowball sampling was adopted as it was very convenient to get referrals from initial participants who had known other people who were suitable to be participants of the study. Snowball sampling is a method that yields a study sample through referrals among people who share or know of others who have similar characteristics that are of research interest (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). As migration is a sensitive topic in South Africa due to xenophobic violence that has occurred in the past and legality of the migrants stay in South Africa, snowball sampling was deemed appropriate. The participants were recruited through my existing contacts. Two people I know identified participants who fit the research criteria and some of the participants also recommended potential participants. One participant was selected from social media. The participant was approached on Twitter as he prominently talked about his migration from Zimbabwe. I informed the participant about the research I was doing via Twitter messaging platform, and he agreed to be part of the study.

Although there may be a perception that participants selected via snowball sampling may be from the same network or geographical area this was not the case. The participants were selected from different areas of Johannesburg. Random sampling could have been utilized to deal with problems associated with snowball sampling, however it could have been too cumbersome due to Zimbabwean migrants being a minority population and not many people willing to be interviewed due to different reasons such as legality of stay in South Africa.

Sampling criteria provided the characteristics that were essential to be involved in the study from the target population, thereby delimiting the population of interest (Burns & Grove, 2001). The participants comprised of five (5) females and four (4) males over the age of eighteen who had lived in South Africa for at least three years and up to twenty years. The participants needed to have parents living in Zimbabwe and able to communicate in English to partake in this study. Participants needed to have utilised ICT's in the past by way of communicating with family living in Zimbabwe. Their migration status i.e., whether documented or undocumented was not taken into consideration neither during sampling was their employment status.

The sample was deemed sufficient to allow for the unfolding of a new and rich textured understanding of the role of ICT's in relationships of care in transnational families considering their unique demographics. However, it was also small enough, so that a deep case oriented analysis could be carried out. Data collection was discontinued after collecting data from nine participants. Similar information was being now collected for participants hence an indication that saturation had been reached. I was mindful that the aim of collecting usable data was very important regardless of the size of the sample as long as the themes had been saturated (Sandelowski, 1996; Morse, 2000).

3.5.1 Participant accounts

The following provides some background information on the participants who participated in the study. The names used here are pseudonyms designed to protect the actual identity of the participants.

Participant one: Thando

Thando is a black woman who migrated to South Africa in 2008 and was 35 years old at the time of the interview. She is a political refugee¹, hence political reasons and an economic collapse were factors for her migration. She also described having emigrated to seek “greener pastures”. She has her mother and siblings in Zimbabwe, although some of her siblings also reside in South Africa. She supports her mother and siblings through sending remittances regularly. She is currently unemployed due to the effects of covid-19 lockdown.

Participant two: Sihle

Sihle is a black woman who left Zimbabwe in 2008 initially for a visit over the December holidays and then decided to stay. She was 31 years old at the time of the interview. She had completed her ordinary level schooling but did not get any employment opportunities in Zimbabwe. She has a younger brother in Zimbabwe and extended family, with her parents deceased. She is currently unemployed but mentions that during times that she was, she could support her family.

¹¹ I relied on the description of their migration status regardless of their official status.

Participant three: Nkosi

Nkosi is a black man with parents in Zimbabwe, five siblings in South Africa and one in the UK. He was 37 years old at the time of the interview. He moved to South Africa for economic reasons as he was not able to take care of his family in Zimbabwe with a salary that was very little to sustain himself, making it difficult to provide for his parents. He moved to South Africa in 2008. He stayed away from home before migrating hence it was easier for him to move to South Africa and leave a huge distance away from his parents. He supports his parents through sending money, grocery and medication regularly.

Participant four: Nomathemba

Nomathemba was 28 years old at the time of the interview and is a black Zimbabwean woman who is the 4th born out of a family of five girls. Her two siblings reside in Zimbabwe with her mother and her other two siblings stay in Canada and Zambia. Nomathemba indicated that she migrated to South Africa when she was young with her parents, and they already have a home in South Africa. She again migrated in 2016 in order to secure employment in the sports industry as she had failed to secure employment for what she was skilled in in Zimbabwe. Nomathemba and her siblings support their mother on a regular basis through sending her money and groceries.

Participant five: Shamiso

Shamiso emigrated from Zimbabwe in to Johannesburg initially in 2009 and now stays with her aunt and uncle and works for them. She was 32 years old at the time of interviewing. Her parents decided that she needed to migrate in order to get employment and she saw this as an opportunity to take care of her child and assist her father who was the only bread winner at the time of her migration. She has a child, parents and two siblings in Zimbabwe. She financially supports her child, parents and siblings.

Participant Six: Bongani

Bongani is a black man who is a political refugee. He was 40 years old at the time of interviewing. He migrated in 2008 as his life was under threat. He was a political activist in Zimbabwe making him a target hence he decided to flee for safety. His parents are deceased; however, he has his

grandmother and siblings in Zimbabwe, whom he financially supports and calls them on regular basis to check up on them. He is a qualified teacher and is currently employed.

Participant seven: Kwando

Kwando is a black man who migrated to South Africa in 2007. He was 37 years old at the time of interviewing. Before migrating, his mother had already migrated to South Africa although she was now deceased at the time of interviewing, and his father had also died in the beginning of the year 2020. He used to care for him by financially supporting him and calling to check on his wellbeing. All of his siblings migrated to South Africa. His nephews and nieces are the only family remaining in Zimbabwe. He migrated due to economic challenges, as he was unemployed. He holds a university qualification.

Participant eight: Nyasha

Nyasha is a black woman who migrated to South Africa around 2016/7 and was 40 years old at the time of the interview. She left her 7-year-old son in the care of her mother. Initially, her mother did not support her decision to migrate as she had concerns about her living in South Africa away from family. Her only sibling also lives in South Africa. She migrated for greener pastures and professional development as she felt stuck in Zimbabwe. She found it difficult to find a job that she was qualified for in Zimbabwe. She is currently working full time and pursuing her studies, whilst caring for her son and mother financially, emotionally and spiritually.

Participant nine: Tendai

Tendai is a black man who has parents and 3 siblings in Zimbabwe and his twin brother in South Africa. He was 30 years old at the time of the interview. He initially came to South Africa in 2013 on exchange programme and then came back in 2017 to pursue postgraduate studies and part-time employment. His motivation for migrating was better employment, career and education opportunities. He also describes the push to migrate because of the deteriorating economy. He sends remittances to his parents and siblings regularly and maintains regular contact with them.

3.6 Data collection

The research study used semi-structured interviews as way of collecting data. The interview questions were derived from a larger study of which this research is part of and further developed so that they aligned with the focus of the project. The interviews were initially planned to be done face-to-face in English with participants residing in Johannesburg. However due to the lockdown restrictions due to Covid-19 The interviews were then conducted online using the Zoom platform as a way of avoiding face-to-face contact. Due to the fact that the Covid-19 virus is transmitted through contact, physical interviews proved inappropriate, hence even though I had thought about precautions, such as maintaining social distance and use of hand sanitizer, making sure that we do not shake hands, washing of hands with soap and use of gloves and masks if necessary, I ended up opting for online interviews. Online interviews became synonymous with the Covid-19 pandemic, as physical movement and social events were restricted as a way of minimising infections (Nguyen et al., 2021). This affected face-to-face field work thereby a need to modify research methods to conduct the interviews using online means (Nguyen et al., 2021). Immobility as a result of the Covid-19 lockdown also meant that online interviews were more advantageous for this current study.

Fieldwork consists of leaving one's home institution to acquire data, information that forms part of one's research or being immersed with gaining first-hand information about other people's lives (Kapiszerwski et al., 2015; Shaffir & Stebbins, 1991). New platforms can offer innovative methodologies to study topics related to human behaviour and experience that offer real honesty that resembles onsite interviews e.g., video calling allows one to assess verbal and nonverbal cues that are as authentic as in-person interviews (Howlett, 2022). Online methods allow for researchers to be grounded in a site with participants despite the people looking at each other via a screen (Howlett, 2022). This was applicable in my research study as I was investigating people who already communicated using video platforms with their families hence, they were more privy to use of technologies and an online fieldwork seemed appropriate for this study. I therefore viewed participants as individuals who are knowledgeable about online communities making online fieldwork easier for them and myself. Through the use of online interviews a sense of co-presence was created. The Internet offers researchers and their participants co-presences that allows for personable and intimate exchanges when being in the same location is impossible (Howlett, 2022).

Semi-structured interviews, as a data collection technique, make use of close and open-ended questions, that go further into asking the why and how questions. This allows the researcher to focus more on the topics on the agenda rather than adhering to a standardized procedure, furthermore allowing for the probing of totally unforeseen issues (Adams, 2015). Semi-structured interviews are useful in exploring, probing and asking questions that elucidate and illuminate the particular subject. They are a way of building conversation within a particular topic which in this case is exploration of ICT use by transnational families in how they care for each other despite being located within different geographies (Kajornboon, 2005). Probing of more information and clarification of answers is possible through adoption of semi-structured interviews (Bariball, 1994). The interview schedule was reviewed by my supervisor. The interview schedule was adapted from the larger research study. However, for the current study they were formulated to understand the migration process, its effect on the family and more importantly types of ICT's used to care for families and their pros and cons. The interviews lasted on average for between 30 and 40 minutes. Participants utilized their own data for the duration of the interviews. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed by the researcher.

3.7 Data Analysis

I used the thematic analysis framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2012) to analyse the data. This allowed for “systematically identifying, organizing and offering insight into patterns of themes across a data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p.57). In the first phase, I familiarised myself with the data through thorough reading of the data that I had collected and taking note of important aspects of the data, actively, analytically and critically engaging with the data and thinking what the data meant (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In the second phase, I systematically analysed the data and generated initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The third phase involved searching for themes, which entailed the important aspects of the data in relation to the aforementioned research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The fourth phase involved reviewing the potential themes in relation to the data coded data and entire data set. This entailed developing relevant themes that were and important in relation to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The fifth phase involved defining and naming the themes, by expressing what was distinctive and explicit about each of them (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The sixth and final phase focused on reporting on the themes

in a manner that exuded logic and meaningfulness with the aim of coming up with a coherent report, which went beyond description to make a relevant argument (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This meant addressing each theme separately and developing arguments through assessing current results with findings from previous studies.

3.8 Benchmarks for qualitative rigour

Trustworthiness in qualitative research encompasses credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility deals with whether the findings are consistent with reality and has been argued to be one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). A credible research study is characterised by findings and communication that represent the real experiences of participants and should also be relatable to individuals who have similar experiences (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Reflexivity, peer debriefing and member checking are methods used to achieve this (see for example Bowen, 2005; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Direct quotes from participants were also used. Credibility can be ensured through having honest participants, that are given opportunities to refuse to participate leaving the research having genuinely willing people who offer their experiences for free, with the right to withdraw at any time (Shenton, 2004). This study ensured credibility through allowing participants the opportunity to refuse to partake in the study or to withdraw from it at any time. Consequently, they were not coerced to take part in the study and they were made aware that no economic benefit was linked to the study. Credibility was also ensured through scrutiny of the project by my supervisor, allowing for the challenging of the assumptions I made as the researcher, and constant refinement (Shenton, 2004). Sufficient contextual information about the fieldwork sites was provided as a way of enabling the readers to transfer results to contexts similar to the one used in the research thereby enabling transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Firestone, 1993).

Dependability assesses the issues of reliability through showing that if the same research was done in the same context, with the same methods and participants, similar results will be established (Shenton, 1995 as cited in Shenton, 2004). Confirmability “gives an evaluation of the extent to which the findings are qualitatively confirmable through the analysis of what is grounded in the data and the audit trail” (Hannes, 2011, p.4). The study ensured confirmability through making

sure that interpretation was not based on my own predisposition but from that data from the participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Dependability and confirmability was ensured through use of an audit trail (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This was done through provision of notes of all the decisions taken in the research project, research team meetings, reflective journal, sampling, research methods used, emergence of findings and information about data managements aiding in making the research path transparent (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethics deals with the quality of research procedures, highlighting the legal, professional, and social obligations the researcher has towards the participants in the study (Polit & Beck, 2004). Ethical clearance was sought from the University of the Witwatersrand Non-Medical Ethics Committee before any data collection could take place. The researcher adhered to the necessary ethical principles elaborated below.

The research participants were given information sheets which briefly explained the aims of the research as well as the procedure followed to become part of the study. Consent forms for the interview, as well as audio-recording were also be handed out to participants before any research was carried out. Each participant signed the consent form as way of acknowledging that they understood what partaking in the study entailed and how their information was going to be protected. The consent forms indicated that participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time and that if they did withdraw the information they would have provided was not going to be used. The participant information sheet and consent forms were sent to participants via WhatsApp and email. The consent forms were signed electronically and sent back via the same platforms.

Anonymity was guaranteed through ensuring that no personally identifying information was linked to the participants in the study through use of pseudonyms and not their actual names when writing the research report. However, in the data collection process anonymity was not possible since I was able to identify the participant.

Confidentiality was ensured by guaranteeing the participants that the contents of the interview were not going to be discussed with anyone, other than my supervisor. The data collected from participants via audio recorders was stored in a password protected computer and the consent forms and audio transcripts were stored in an online folder that had password protection as well. In order to address any potential distress experienced during the interviews certain procedures were put in place. A referral procedure was available through the Emthonjeni Community Centre at the University of the Witwatersrand for provision of counselling services. The Emthonjeni centre operated online throughout the pandemic and therefore counselling services were offered online. Participants were also given the option to contact counselling organisations like LifeLine which offer the services for free and online.

3.10 Reflexivity

“A researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions” (Malterud, 2001, pp.483-484). The advantage carried by myself as the researcher in this study is the fact that I am also a Zimbabwean citizen and therefore it was much easier to conduct the research as I was dealing with participants that I am familiar with. The research population was easily accessible. However, my reasons from migrating were for educational advancement as a postgraduate student with academic qualifications. Most people interviewed were people who specifically came to South Africa primarily motivated to finding employment. Therefore, my academic status perhaps made the participants respond in a manner that was socially desirable forgetting that we had some shared similarity in our lived experiences. With this in mind, I tried to be as objective as possible and not bring any preconceived ideas into the research study, such as how ICT's have facilitated care in my own family.

Maintaining self-awareness as the researcher is greatly enhanced by bracketing as it has the potential to enrich data collection, research findings and interpretation (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Bracketing is a process whereby a researcher acknowledges their beliefs and biases in the beginning of the research process so that the reader understands those positions and suspends them as the study progresses (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I was aware that my emotional reactions and

past experiences and cognitive biases could affect the data collection and interpretation process (Tufford & Newman, 2010). I was aware that the research participants might not be able to divulge certain aspects of why they left Zimbabwe due to fear of persecution and I therefore tried to create a sensitive atmosphere and non-judgmental approach so that I could get as much information as possible without causing discomfort. The selection and interpretation of themes needed me to detach my own interpretation and an understanding that the emerging themes and conclusion were not always what I expected. I upheld the presence of multiple realities that emerged from the findings. This allowed me to understand how perspectives of people differ from mine. This enabled me to reflect on the real experiences of participants and individuals with similar backgrounds.

3.11 Conclusion

The chapter aimed to outline the research methodology used to answer the research questions. The research design underlying the study were discussed as well as the process of data collection and analysis. Chapter four will provide the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

In this chapter, the findings of the study obtained from the interview data, and analysed according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis procedure, are presented. Themes and subthemes relevant to the topic under investigation were identified, and presented as direct quotes from participants who partook in this study. While the focus of the research was the role of ICT'S in maintaining family relationships some other significant themes were identified related to the Zimbabwean migrant experience will also be discussed. The most notable themes identified from the study were as follows; a) The reasons why participants chose to migrate, b) Their families' reaction to the decision to move, c) The type of ICT's they adopted upon migration, d) Patterns of caregiving, e) Limitations of using ICT's, f) The role of visits, and finally g) The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on caring practices. Subthemes related to these themes will also be discussed.

4.1 Reasons for migration

This theme describes why migrants decided to leave their families and establish a new life in South Africa. All the participants migrated because they were faced with financial challenges in Zimbabwe which affected their capacity to care for their families. Hence South Africa presented opportunities that were better for them in relation to Zimbabwe. In two instances participants arrived in South Africa as refugees due to fear of persecution in Zimbabwe. More specific subthemes will be highlighted below.

4.1.1 Migration linked to economic difficulties and inability to take care of one's family

This theme encapsulates the reasons why participants decided to leave Zimbabwe. Reasons for leaving were linked to the economic challenges faced by Zimbabwe, which affected migrants' capacity to render care for their loved ones. **Nkosi** describes how it was difficult for him to take care of himself or his family because of these economic challenges:

Ja, it's mostly economical because we saw that when we were in Zim, what we were now getting paid was less than R1000 for a month, and then you have to take care of your family, you have to take care of yourself. So it was now bad that we couldn't survive. So we decided to just move, ja".

This need to improve one's financial situation in order to take of one's family, was seen as something that was practically impossible whilst living in Zimbabwe and was therefore a significant push factor. **Shamiso** describes how her decision was based on the need to take care of her daughter and help her struggling family:

The decision was mainly based on her (daughter) and how I was going to take care of her... I really did not want to leave, but then thinking of how they were struggling at that time and my dad being the only one working, so I had to help him out.

Migration was seen as the only viable option to rise above the economic difficulties of Zimbabwe and regain their ability to care of themselves and their families in an economically better place. Consequently, staying in Zimbabwe seemed to be not an option for participants and **Nkosi** describes how separating from his family was the only way that he could financially care for them:

I was thinking about my future and I can't just be thinking about my parents and say, ah, I have to take care of them. I can take care of them by sending money and that's what I was doing, ja.

Individual and family survival therefore depended on migrating to South Africa.

4.1.2 South Africa perceived as a place of opportunities

This theme reflects the fact that many participants held an idealised view of South Africa as a place of increased economic and social opportunities. In many instances, South Africa was described as a place of greener pastures due to the opportunities migrants thought South Africa presented. This was exemplified by **Thando**:

Okay, my reason for leaving Zim, obviously it was for greener pastures and due to political instability in Zimbabwe. So we had to leave because there were no jobs, no food. We had to try something to survive, yes.

For **Kwando** salaries offered in Zimbabwe were not enough to give him sufficient sustenance, coupled with difficulty securing employment in Zimbabwe:

The economy had crashed literally so yeah. Even if one could find a job okay, first of all it was hard to get a job but even if one were to find a job, the salary, the remuneration wasn't

enough to sustain somebody, so it was tough. So I just had to look for greener pastures so to say.

South Africa was perceived as offering better remuneration in comparison to Zimbabwe as **Nkosi** explains:

I was doing it there, but I had problems with the salaries. The money that I was getting was very low. So I thought I should come this side, maybe I can get paid a bit more than what I was getting.

Nomathemba also alluded to the fact that greener pastures for her were linked to bettering/increasing her career prospects:

For me it would be better opportunities in terms of my career. I'm always looking for greener pastures in terms of sports because I know South Africa is a sports nation so yes.

4.1.3 Political refuge

In two instances the reasons for migrating were due to political reasons. Two participants mentioned having to escape from Zimbabwe for political reasons to find refuge in South Africa as they feared for their lives. For these migrants, migration was not a personal choice, but they were forced. **Thando** described political forces as making her separate from their home country with no option to return:

So I'm actually a refugee [chuckles]. I'm not allowed to go back to Zim. So usually, they come visit me. I don't go home, yes. Though I miss going home, but I can't.

South Africa was viewed as a place of refuge. Going back to Zimbabwe or staying in Zimbabwe was not an option as their lives were in danger. **Bongani** alluded to the fact that he could not consider Zimbabwe as a safe place despite having a new government and the fact that he is not allowed to visit family:

No I'm not allowed, I don't visit them. I don't even try to do so because I don't feel... Even if there's a new dispensation, I don't feel safe.

4.1.4 Migration as an act of sacrifice

In some instances, migration was viewed as a sacrifice participants had to make in order for their families to be taken care of. Catering for the needs of the larger families meant that some

participants had to miss out on some important family action such as their own children's upbringing. **Shamiso** alludes to this:

I think it's a sacrifice because you get to live without them, and that's something very hard, but I think it's a form of care because you sacrifice a lot. Not being with your family. I've missed out on a lot. I never saw my daughter growing up and I've never played that mother role. So ja.

Migration was not so much for individual benefits, but rather because of the need to care for people back home. This sacrifice led to one having to be away from one's family in order to be able to care for them as **Kwando** explains:

Financial care is the one that affects most of our decisions on migrating yeah. Because if you can't provide there's no way you can stay at home, so you need to start searching for greener pastures so yeah that's the major one. Number one goal that forces us to move is financial reasons but then there are other reasons associated which might not necessarily be financial.

4.2 Family's reaction to the decision to migrate

There was evidence of mixed reactions to participants' decision to leave. In some instances, there was familial participation and support for the decision, while in other instances migration was an individual choice. Some participants felt the need to explain to their families their reasons for migration. Overall, migration seemed to be quite the norm amongst this sample of Zimbabwean families, hence some participants stated that the reaction from their decision to move was not seen as anything out of the ordinary and families experienced the decision to move as an inevitable decision given the situation in the country. **Tendai** described how he grew up in a family that was used to migration hence his decision to migrate was naturally supported:

Yeah the reaction for me from them was quite natural, something that we had been used to.

For **Sihle**, her family members were aware of the lack of opportunities in Zimbabwe and migration was welcomed and seen positively:

So for them, it was fine for me to make this decision because I'm guessing they thought it would be better for me instead of sitting that side where there's basically ... So they didn't have a problem with it, ja.

Kwando also alluded to migration being a norm in his family, with the expectation that people will grow and migrate to other countries for the benefit of the family hence that decision is fully supported:

There was no reaction from my family in leaving Zimbabwe, it was the norm, everyone was living.

In one instance, **Shamiso's** family arranged for her to migrate, expressing migration as a family supported decision because they made the decision for her:

... but my parents were very supportive. They did help me to get the documents ready and give me money for my visa. It was actually them who decided [chuckles]. So ja, it was me who reacted.

In other instances, migration was an individual decision with survival being the overriding factor despite family members not supporting the decision to move. **Nyasha** describes how migrating was met with opposition from her mother:

She tried to discourage me but as I indicated that I had made up my mind. So my mother tried by all means. She wanted to find out if this was... and you know as a woman she would be like for me as a woman she would be like so concerned like you know exploring new ground and things like that at a place where I didn't have any relatives or any you know, just friends and so she was really hesitant about it.

For some participants, this decision making process was based on them being old enough to make their own decisions and having already been living separate lives from their families right before migrating. **Nomathemba** explained:

But there comes a point in life where you have to do things for yourself so when we started taking different careers that's when we kind of understand when one of us moves permanently or decides to live permanently elsewhere.

Nkosi explained why his family was not involved:

No, I didn't consult anyone. It was just my own decision. No, there was no reaction. They treated it like an adult who's making his own decision.

4.3 The types of ICT's used in maintaining family relationships

This theme relates to ICT's adopted by migrants for communication purposes with family members in the country of origin. A variety of ICT's used were however notably WhatsApp was the most common amongst all participants. The different subthemes describe the reasons why different forms of ICT's are used in transnational families and how this benefits transnational relationships.

4.3.1 WhatsApp most commonly used form of communication

In terms of applications utilised to maintain communication with family members in Zimbabwe, WhatsApp was the application of choice. From the findings, it seems that use of WhatsApp was widespread both in Zimbabwe and in South Africa. WhatsApp was viewed as very easy to use offering convenient communication such as messaging, transfer of media, audio and video calling all in a single application. This is illustrated by **Tendai**:

...I talked to my parents on their personal WhatsApp by text if we have something you want to talk about. Then I also use WhatsApp call or video call to connect with them. Yeah, so I think that's the communication channel because WhatsApp is affordable and convenient for everyone, on the other side on the on both sides of the Limpopo.

Nkosi viewed WhatsApp as well rounded, cheaper eliminating the need for other applications like Facebook:

Ja, I think the good thing with WhatsApp is you can make calls, you can make video calls and it's cheaper. So that's the advantage. So it has already taken the other uses of Facebook and other, ja. So it's mostly well-rounded, that it does most of the things for you, like calls and video calls and it being cheaper also is an advantage".

Kwando added that WhatsApp had become his family 's main form of communication because it is easy to use:

Yeah by WhatsApp and earlier then we used to call but then WhatsApp has really provided a much easier platform. Very much easy platform to communicate yeah so that's how most of the communication is maintained... But mostly WhatsApp has taken over big time.

Thando mentioned that other ICT's besides WhatsApp are also used although not to the same extent:

Of course. We do WhatsApp. There's also Messenger calls. Like when we want a family meeting, we Zoom. So ja, it's very much easier. Although it is data, but then it's affordable, if I may say so.

4.3.2 Use of video calls

Video calls were also viewed as providing a form of intimacy between migrants and their families in the country of origin as **Tendai** described:

It also is very intimate because of the video call option, so what happens is that video call option and really helps a lot when you are missing your family members and you get to see them because of that function so that's the other advantage.

Video calls were also deemed important because they allow migrant children to feel present in their families' lives despite the distance that separates them. This allowed them not to miss their loved one's too much as **Thando** explained:

We usually communicate via WhatsApp and most of the times, it's video calling. So I don't really miss them that much.

The importance of seeing facial expressions and being able to read other family member's moods was also viewed as one of the advantages of using face to face video. For **Bongani**, being able to see a family member via video allowed him to check on his family members' well-being which he found comforting:

WhatsApp video call like recently when I want to see my grandmothers face because I could hear she was sick, she was not feeling well so I wanted to see her face, I wanted to see that she's okay, I wanted her to see my face, I wanted to assure her that it's me".

Video also created a platform where migrant participants felt connected to their families in a manner that resembled the times when they were physically present. **Thando** described this through revealing the sense of personal touch offered by videos in comparison to other forms of ICT's:

I was in the video call; I saw them having the... So it gives me a personal touch unlike any other form of communication like writing a letter or sending a message via someone travelling home.

Besides a sense of connectedness offered by video calls, they have been utilised in situations where decisions involving the whole family have to be made. For **Nomathemba**, video calls allowed her to read the emotions of family members and consider their feelings when making decisions based on their reactions, which she was able to assess via video:

Like with video calling you can even see the reaction because there are certain decisions that we will want to make but you need to see how they are reacting and you can just pick it up and tell I don't think this one is happy about this.

There were also instances family members were involved in a group project and video calls allowed participants to be updated on the progress of these projects as described by **Nkosi** who said:

"... and if maybe there is something which needs to be done, then you have to video call to see whether that thing is being done properly".

4.3.3 The importance of group chats

WhatsApp groups also played a significant role in the lives of transnational families. For some participants, family WhatsApp groups represented a continuation of normal family conversation allowing the family a sense of immediacy despite the distance. This replicated being able to have normal daily as **Sihle** described:

Just your normal (conversations), as if we're still together. We create these group chats where we, as the cousins, can just talk, joke around and all that.

Tendai agreed with this as he viewed WhatsApp groups as allowing one able to be updated on news from the country of origin as it happens:

Well the family collective group is just to sort of to keep each other, I mean to have a collective sense of conversation, so when maybe like my mom would share like news of things that are happening back home....

Extensive issues directly and indirectly affecting the family could be discussed using this platform as was described by **Nyasha**:

We've got a WhatsApp group that we communicate, a family WhatsApp group for myself, her, my mother and my brother so we constantly keep updated on any family issues.

Family WhatsApp groups were also utilised to check on family projects happening in the country of origin in addition to checking in on individual and family wellbeing as **Tendai** explained:

... it involves checking up on them, so it does really help to check up on them to sort of ask them what's happening what. What projects are they doing, how are they making money how, how is the business going.

4.3.4 Use of normal phone calls in emergency situations.

Although WhatsApp was the most used communication tool, normal phone calls were sometimes used by participants especially in the case of a family emergency, or when it was difficult to get hold of family members over WhatsApp. **Tendai** mentioned how although his family typically used WhatsApp, in emergencies they would switch to regular or normal voice call:

No, I think I'd be like to say with any other form of communication it's WhatsApp call, in worst case scenarios agent scenarios your normal voice calls.

Nomathemba alluded to this by indicating that:

...if it's a direct call then it's something urgent. I will be calling to see if that is really urgent. That's when I directly call the landline knowing that someone is going to pick it up and I can leave a message if I can't find them.

The use of regular phone calls in response to emergency situations was also linked to the fact that the end user did not need to have data. For **Bongani** regular calls were used in emergency situations such as when a family member was ill:

Yeah if there's an emergency like as recent as day before yesterday. When someone sends, like someone sends a text and say your gran is not feeling well or your nephew is not feeling well...So if it's an emergency where I need to call there and then I usually buy airtime from MTN if it's an emergency like during working hours....

4.3.5 Synchronous versus asynchronous communication

Clarification of information was seen as a benefit of using modern ICT's. Direct talking to someone via a voice call or video call allowed people to understand each other in comparison to older forms of communication. Sometimes voice calls were used to cater for older parents who are not technologically savvy. **Bongani** described that he used a call to talk to his grandmother because

he was able share information and there was an understating between him and family because it was synchronous:

...when I call with that app I normally want to put facts straight to her, talk to her so that she (grandmother) understands me.

Direct calling concerns mainly members of the family needing to be accommodated through use of communication that is synchronous as they are able to understand each other better through use of voice. This included family members who are either older or younger who usually found it difficult to communicate via text messaging as **Kwando** alluded:

Or sometimes I do speak to my grandmother so I understand the troubles she would go through with reading”.

Texting messaging via WhatsApp, which is a form of asynchronous communication, was seen as carrying a disadvantage that potentially resulted in miscommunication and arguments due to some family members taking things out of context as **Tendai** describes:

The best way to communicate then also the problem with WhatsApp is that because there's a lot of things that you talk about or you can talk about a lot of other things can get lost in translation, like you might not really catch everything that your parent is saying or your brother, they say, or you might not get the actual context because typing is different from actually talking face to face or to talking via I mean voice so I guess, those are the most of the challenges.

Kwando viewed the disadvantage of WhatsApp as not offering synchronicity as people do not get an immediate response when communication some of the times:

That's the disadvantage of WhatsApp. Sometimes you don't get as immediate a response as you could wish for.

4.4 Patterns of caregiving through ICT use

This section provides evidence of how ICT's are used in everyday lives of participants and their families to provide different forms of care. The use of ICT's seemed to be varied and extended to more than communication but to other aspects of care such as emotional, physical, and financial.

4.4.1 Sustaining familial connections

ICT's allowed participants to maintain connections with their family members left behind. **Tendai** described how ICT's had allowed him to stay connected with family and be part of their lives through sharing of everyday activities:

... the chat culture is just important it's just become an important way of staying in touch and updating your family not only day to day moves, but your minute-to-minute moves as well, you can actually tell talk to a family member about what you are doing, every step of the way.

Nyasha conveyed messages of concern for the day-to-day activities her family partook in, through checking in on issues and wellbeing of the family right throughout the day:

So every morning we say good morning, how did you sleep? And things like that and then in the afternoon or if there's anything, any issues or if there's... yeah, any issues, that's how we keep connected and communicate.

Nkosi explained how he used ICT's to check on family members and their needs:

Okay, I call just to check on them mostly, and if maybe there is something which needs to be done, ...mostly just checking on them, ja....

Checking in functions allowed participants to maintain emotional ties exemplified by listening, talking and offering comfort or reassurance. **Nomathemba** highlights how ICT's helped migrants remain emotionally connected to each other through being supportive and communicating more:

But then with the other sisters I think school is like that's how we support each other emotionally something like that. We are there for each other when we communicate more.

Kwando alluded to this by expressing how he attended to the emotional needs of family through sending them messages to make them feel happy:

Yeah you call them, check on their well-being and send them voice messages, funny messages just to cheer them up, devotionals you see. Happy... I mean birthday messages and all those things that are available over WhatsApp you see.

ICT's also allowed relationships to be still sustained in their various forms, even in situations where family members could not travel across borders. Participants described various activities in their families which have been conducted via different kinds of ICT's as described by Bongani:

... yesterday there was a party they send pictures; you also take part via like zoom meetings if there's any. You take part in video calls and then you see important gatherings. So you become like a part of them via ICT's.

Nkosi explains how he used ICT's to assess whether something was being done in the correct manner at home and offer his input:

... if maybe there is something which needs to be done, then you have to video call to see whether that thing is being done properly.

ICT's therefore created an environment where migrants communicate important matters affecting individuals and the family as a whole. ICT's also allowed participants to feel as if they still were part of their family as described by **Shamiso**:

If there's something that I'm planning on doing I run it past them, especially my younger sister. We discuss everything together. If there's anything we want to do for our parents, we have to do it together, ja.

Important decisions affecting certain individuals within the family setup still being needed to be discussed by the whole family as described by **Nomathemba**:

Its decision making if you want to make certain decisions and all of us want to be involved so that we hear what the other one is saying so then we go for a video call.

Participants were also still able to provide advice when their family members were experiencing problems. as indicated by **Thando**:

Of course. As I said, my siblings, I've got two younger brothers. They're all younger than me in which they need advice from me. So sometimes even if they don't call me, if they buzz me, then I do call back and then talk to them as a big sister.

Tendai shared a similar experience as his role has been carried over via ICT's:

Well let's say one of my siblings has a problem or challenge that needs to be addressed, we may need sort of mediation on this particular matter, say for example, if my little sister is not really like getting along well with one of my parents or they're having trouble communicating and she feels she's been treated unfairly, maybe she might ask me to mediate to sort of like just talk to my mom or my dad that she is not happy with A, B, C D E in, then that would be something that would count as urgent because you want that situation to be resolved as quickly as possible.

4.4.2 Use of ICT's to care for family members left behind

Participants were responsible for different forms of care towards their family members such as social, medical, psychological and financial. Participants mentioned finding it easier to render medical care via ICT's due to medicine being cheaper in South Africa in comparison to Zimbabwe. ICT's offered them a way to coordinate this care, from ordering medication online to buying it physically and having it delivered to the country of origin. **Nyasha** mentioned how she coordinated medicine to be delivered to their parents back home through ICT's:

There's a pharmacy that we... we also engage with them here in Cape Town via WhatsApp. I just tell them that my son is not feeling well, these are the symptoms. And then they call Zimbabwe, my mother direct to find out what is it that... what is the problem and things like that for over-the-counter medication then it can be delivered direct to them.

Nomathemba described how she took on a role of being the nurse to their parents despite being across the border through calling at certain times to remind their parents of their medical appointments:

So with my mom we always try to remind her of essential days to go for appointments.

ICT's were also used to coordinate physical care in transnational families. Participants talked about how they communicated with people in the country of origin to arrange for physical care or some sort of assistance such as physically checking up on their parents as a way of being assured of their wellbeing. **Bongani** explained how he asked people to check on the wellbeing of his grandmother through other people:

When you get home, go and see my grandmother and talk to her. You see that person is neutral, and is able to tell you that no, what I can see can improve here and there.

Some of the participants used other people for reassurance that their family members were doing well as they would have physically assessed the situation. **Kwando** explained this by saying:

... because malaicha can see them physically so sometimes someone needs to see them physically, it also helps for them to see those people physically then I can tell you this and that you see yeah.

ICT's allowed migrants to coordinate care despite the distance. They sought out people who could help their parents/family in situations of need. **Nyasha** requested the help of friends in delivering medication to her parent who could not do so herself:

And let's say she needs also assistance from other relatives or other friends, I engage with these friends and relatives via WhatsApp as well. Just so that if there's something that she cannot do by herself, she's taking care of my son. And she might not be able to be moving around so I also ask assistance from other friends or family members.

The financial aspect of care through use of ICT's is done by way of adopting new technologies such as Mukuru and World Remit for sending money or HelloPaisa.com for sending groceries or a grocery voucher. **Nkosi** described how he sent money to family members back home:

There are ways of sending like the Mukuru app and maybe FNB.

Migrants seemed to use more diverse forms of ICT's in relation to exercising financial care. **Nomathemba** also described the ICT's used in sending remittances that are more varied:

We do use a lot of Mukuru, we use Western Union, we use Malaicha.com, those are the most used yes.

Nyasha was able to send money and even order groceries online through ICT's and life has been much easier for them:

Like for groceries there's so many what can I say... like the Fresh-in-a-box where we buy food from this side or even Mukuru. For Mukuru we even like send... we just create orders via WhatsApp as well. We create the orders and then you go to Pick n Pay, you pay and then she's able to collect the money from Zimbabwe. So yes, technology has really made life easier for communication and as well as facilitating a lot of things.

Thando shared a similar experience:

Okay, so it's easier especially for sending money now. I can send money using my phone. So if they need anything, I can send money, even ordering groceries for them. I can order through my phone, and then they just collect at home. So it makes life easier.

Attending to the needs of the family through provision of groceries and other items was viewed as more important than just staying in touch as explained by **Sihle**:

To be honest, sending stuff is more beneficial. We can talk, but it's not going to really do anything for them. Me calling and talking to them is not going to change anything besides, oh, I spoke to her she's fine, ja.

Shamiso alluded to this as well as she defined care as making sure that family in the country of origin had everything they need:

To me, I think it's providing for them and just making sure they have everything they need". In some instances, there was a sense that financial need was of paramount importance to some families and became the main focus of communication.

Shamiso described how she only had conversations with her mother when in regard to money:

...my mum, she only calls when she wants money.

Migrants viewed sending money back of home especially in times of emergencies as a caring gesture as that allows for family members to gain access to quality health care and medication. Financial care becomes the only way to express care since they cannot be physically present with their family members in times of need **Nkosi** described how although not physically present, he was able to help in medical emergencies through sending money:

Ja, you can't really be there, and when someone says they are not feeling well, you don't even know what to do. All you have to do maybe is to send them money to go see a doctor, ja. Whereas if you are there, you can run and see what the problem is and maybe make a plan.

Migrants also had to take care of family members' data needs in Zimbabwe thereby being responsible for their ability to communicate as expressed by **Thando**:

Then sometimes I have to take care of their data because I'm the one taking care of them.

4.5 Limitations of ICT's

This section highlights the limitations that participants experienced with regard to ICT's. These limitations include poor network infrastructure especially in remote areas, lack of access to smartphones due to various reasons such as the high cost of devices. These challenges presented participants with difficulties in maintaining family connections.

4.5.1 Lack of infrastructure and access to ICT's

There were a number of issues which affected the use of ICT's and consequently impacted not only communication, but also how care was given and received. These issues encompassed connectivity and financial problems, or much broader problems such as poor ICT infrastructure. Poor infrastructure played a huge role in how participants communicated and took care of their family members. **Thando** described how poor network is an inconvenience in communication with her family:

The problem is they do have access, but sometimes the network is bad in Zimbabwe, you know. Even if we've got serious things to talk about, the network is not good.

Bongani, whose family lived in the rural areas of Zimbabwe complained about using WhatsApp and how poor network infrastructure affected call quality hence resorting to the use of regular calls:

WhatsApp is based on data so sometimes the network has glitches but when I call with that app I normally want to put facts straight to her, talk to her so that she understands me.

WhatsApp, as the most commonly used application, was specifically affected by issues of connectivity in Zimbabwe, often exacerbated by the fact that families lived in remote areas as **Tendai** explained:

With WhatsApp is that that issue of connectivity If they are having connection issues, then you can't, you can't really communicate with them efficiently or if they're in a remote area in WhatsApp might be might not be the best way to communicate.

Nkosi shared similar sentiments as connectivity was affected because of families living in rural areas. However, the major problem experienced was having to rely on solar energy or neighbours who are a distance away, to charge their devices which presents with a risk to these devices:

Sometimes they will say they don't have (internet) or maybe their phones are giving them problems because they use solar. So sometimes maybe they connect the phone wrongly and then the phone is burnt. So sometimes they stay without a phone or maybe their charger is not working. They have to charge next door, and you know in the rural areas, next door means somewhere far.

In such instances migrants reported that lack of communication meant that they were unaware of the well-being of other family members creating additional stress. **Nyasha** described how it was

difficult for her to maintain communication when her mother had no phone and when family in the country of origin did not have a WhatsApp device. She lamented that this barred any form of communication which negatively impacted care:

So during the time that she wasn't... she was offline, she didn't have WhatsApp I was really having difficulties in maintaining communication... I would say so, it does because if they don't have data and let's say they're in need of something and... but they can't get hold of me to tell me or to tell my brother that this is what they need, or this is what my son needs then it will affect the way that I will care for them.

Some families in Zimbabwe struggled with lack of access to smartphones which were seen as expensive., This precluded them from accessing services offered by WhatsApp. **Kwando** explained that:

Now the problem is they have to upgrade their phones. They'll be getting much more... a phone that can access WhatsApp which is slightly expensive than those other phones that don't have WhatsApp. Maybe that's the disadvantage I missed. That someone has to have a phone that is compatible with WhatsApp. And then yeah for them it could be an issue of data, unavailability of data, they don't have access to Wi-Fi maybe so yeah, they have to make sure that always they have data for communication....

4.5.2 High cost of data and other ICT's

Access to the internet seemed to be widespread for people both in Zimbabwe and South Africa. Data seemed to be available to most migrants, however family in Zimbabwe did not always have data. Consequently, the cost of accessing the internet services impeded people from maintaining constant communication. For people in Zimbabwe, internet access was mostly for using WhatsApp and they could not use other ICT's due to the high cost of data. The high cost of data also affected use of ICT's such as videos and this greatly impacts participants who are trying to build emotional connections with their family. **Nyasha** described how she used text messaging and voice recording instead of videos due to high cost of data:

Okay. It's mostly texting and voice recordings like let's say for... especially in Zimbabwe where data is a bit expensive. So video calls they are not... really, we don't use them that much.

Sihle mentioned that they had to negotiate the kind of media they sent to their family because of high cost of data by avoiding videos which were only sent if family in the country of origin allowed them to be sent. She explained:

That's why [clears throat] we've made the point of if I need to send something, be it a video or what, I first have to ask them do you guys have data, I want to send something, ja.

For family members in Zimbabwe, staying offline due to not having access to data because of the high cost was very common. For **Shamiso**, data access was a challenge in her family because being online required money which at times they did not have:

I don't think we have disadvantages there, unless for them, if they don't really have money to be online, to buy data and all those things. It's really a challenge for them, ja.

Thando corroborated this by explaining that:

No, I cannot say there are disadvantages, except to say everything needs money. Data is money, exactly. So if you don't have money, then those are the disadvantages.

In these situations, communication was impeded, and participants reported not being able to get through to their family. Being offline also meant no ways to communicate when they are in need of something, affecting how family members care for their parents and children in the country of origin. **Shamiso** concurred by saying:

It could be a disadvantage especially for them if they really need something they can't communicate with me and I can't help. That's a disadvantage for them.

4.5.3 Hiding difficult information from family members

Participants tended to hide information from family members back home. One migrant mentioned not wanting to appear as if she was “living large” through going out as this would be interpreted negatively by people back home. On account of being providers, migrant children could not afford to create an impression of extravagancy, especially in situations where they were not providing enough. **Shamiso** explained:

I cannot be posting pictures like that because they'll think I'm living large and I'm not looking after (them)... So there's things that I don't really show them or tell them that I'm doing.

She chose to maintain privacy because parents in the country of origin were quick to make comparisons between their migrant children's lives and their own. Furthermore, there was also an

indication of keeping certain information private for example as in the case of health because of not wanting to worry their parents. **Shamiso** shared how she chose not to share information related to her physical health:

They know I have a heart problem. So usually when it does affect me, I don't tell them.

Hiding difficult information was linked to avoiding family members to be in a situation where they were helpless as they were a distance away and could not render immediate assistance. **Sihle** alluded to this and provided her reasons for not sharing difficult information:

Personally, I deal with them myself. I would let them know after it has passed, just to let them know that I went through such a thing, but I dealt with it in this way just because you don't want to worry them that much because for them, then they start feeling like you are too far, maybe they could have done something if you were near. So it's better to just deal with it yourself and then let them know later when it's all done, ja.

Hiding information was often done as participants were unsure of how it might affect family members in the country of origin. **Bongani** explained how he chose not to share information to avoid stressing his grandmother who was already dealing with her own health problems:

When you tell her that she's not feeling well she gets more worried than her own condition, so I feel like I'll be exerting so much pressure on her because she'll be worried about us instead about her own health. I'll rather keep it until it becomes fine then I'll tell her to say there was a problem here... Like you know older people have BP, sometimes they won't be eating and then they want to travel this side and come and say no, I want to go and see the person myself.

On the other hand, Nyasha mentioned that family in Zimbabwe would also choose not to tell her their problems to avoid stressing her:

Well my mother is someone who worries a lot, so I try by all means to hide some of these things. Let's say if I'm not feeling too well but it's been a while since I haven't been feeling too well but then... well by God's grace. But if I am to get sick I would not quickly... it's also the same with her.

4.5.4 Intrusiveness of use of ICT's

ICT's were described as invasive by some of the participants as it meant that family members in the country of origin had access to their migrant children at any time. Participants found themselves

easily contactable because ICT's provided other people with access to them even without having their permission. An example reported is how family members could create WhatsApp groups and add people without asking for their consent. This made migrant children easily accessible despite being a distant away from family. **Tendai** talked about invasiveness and how it infringed his private space. This resulted in emotionally laden news being shared with him without his consent:

It's also invasive because you don't want to be talking about every time you feel like talking to two people, and so this general if you I mean your parents don't seek consent from you, first, before opening up a chat with you, then you just might be given sort of emotionally loaded updates that you might not really have consented to hearing at that particular moment.

4.5.5 Lack of physical presence

In some instances, migrants revealed that ICT's were not comparable to being physically presence. **Shamiso** described not being able to be there to experience her child's developmental milestones, or being able to guide her when she reached certain life stages. She felt that using ICT's could not help her in this regard. She had failed to experience parenthood in a fulfilling manner. Hence, she thought she had missed out on her child growing up, a clear reflection of the shortcoming of ICT's which could not bridge the need for physical proximity

I've missed out on a lot. I never saw my daughter growing up and I never played that mother role. "I usually go home once a year, but it's not enough. So whenever I'm on leave, that's when I get to go home, but emotionally, we talk on the phone, but it's not as really supportive as being there because there are times when they really want you to be there and you're not there.

There was also fear that a gap existed in the bond between migrants and their children in Zimbabwe because they were not in one physical space. ICT's in their various forms were inadequate in the care of children of migrants back in Zimbabwe. **Nyasha** explained that a mother's love could not be fully experienced through ICT's:

... And maybe one thing that in as much as technology is assisting but then I feel that even the bond between me and my son will be over time if things remain like this, (the gap), will keep on growing. The gap will be bigger and bigger over time.

4.6 Role of visits

The findings suggest that visits are very important for migrants and their families as there is always the need to physically see one's family. Visits were viewed as crucial as they allowed migrants to witness the living conditions of their family and assess ways of assisting them as **Nkosi** described:

Ja, like visits are always important because you get to see the conditions they are living on, and then if you've got any projects there going on there, you get to see how they are doing with the projects. But most importantly, it's how they are living and how they are surviving day to day that you get to see. Ja, and also, if they visit you, they get to see how you live, and that's okay... if you are there, you can run and see what the problem is and maybe make a plan.

Thando explained how seeing and touching people physically was more preferred than just seeing someone on a screen:

Getting a hug from someone that you love, it makes you feel at home than just seeing him or her on the screen.

Besides getting to see each other physically, visits also offer migrants the opportunity to see how family members have developed. **Nomathemba** affirmed this by saying:

Yes, definitely it's the best. Definitely it is because we get to see each other physically and we get to see each other and be like oh, you're so grown. I can't believe you're taller than me all those things. We don't see them when we're talking online but when we see each other that's when we realize how much we've missed each other and how much we've grown.

For **Nyasha** visits closed the gap presented by ICT's as they allowed people to actually "see" each other and spend quality time together:

Well I would prefer a bit of both because well for ICT it's on a daily basis like maybe throughout the term when my son can't travel when he's at school. But for holidays I'd prefer that he comes through, and they also come through and because you might do video calls, you might do voice notes but there's still that gap. You need to see them physically and spend time with them so yeah. So it's both. For ICT it's on a daily basis but for holidays I prefer that they come.

This was further corroborated by **Kwando** who viewed visits as essential and irreplaceable in maintaining family relationships:

I think physical visits like they are mandatory. We need to see... that physical... there's nothing that can replace physical visits. No matter how much technology we have we still have to be on the ground and yeah see eye to eye.

4.7 The impact of Covid-19 on family relationships

The Covid-19 pandemic affected people's movement within and across the border. For participants, this meant visits usually planned around the festive season and even impromptu visits could not be possible as movement was restricted. Another problem presented by the pandemic was that physical and financial care in the form of buying groceries for family in the country of origin was not possible as many migrants had experienced financial difficulties. **Bongani** described how difficult it was for him to send money home:

It was difficult for us to send money via the normal means where someone is going home because there were no people travelling.

For families that relied on their migrant children sending groceries every month, this was not possible due to closure of borders and family members had to adjust to buying food/necessities in Zimbabwe despite the high cost. **Tendai** shared a similar experience:

Sometimes when things are when things are expensive in Zim we would ideally send in groceries through the bus... Because of Covid the buses stopped operating them because the border was closed ...affected the exchange or the remittance of goods or physical goods.

Covid-19 affected the migrants employment to the point that they had to rely on their savings. Unemployment had a huge impact on family members in Zimbabwe as care could not be exercised, particularly financial care as some participants could not afford to send money or groceries home. **Thando** described how she lost her job due to the pandemic and this affected her family:

Ja, it's impacted in a very huge way. As I said earlier, I'm the breadwinner at home. So I'm the one who is taking care of them. So at the moment, during this pandemic, I lost my job. I'm no longer working, on which I'm living on my savings, right [chuckles]. They are almost finished. So now sharing savings with them, it is very hard. Ja, it's impacted a lot"

This also affected their access to data, frequency of communication and different kinds of ICT's used.

Migrants reported that they could not continue using Zoom as they did in the pre-pandemic period and instead resorted to WhatsApp which was more affordable. Thando explained this by saying:

It's reduced a lot because on WhatsApp, yes, I still communicate on WhatsApp, but on stuff like Zoom video calls, because it takes a lot of data, so it's reduced a lot from that. So just WhatsApp, I chat to them, but I don't see them like I used to before the pandemic, ja.

Increased concern and more care about the well-being of family members was noted by some of the participants as a result of the pandemic. **Sihle** expressed how frequency of communication improved during the pandemic:

Yes, because of Covid, I think it has made us talk more, especially during the lockdown period. Everyone was at home, there's not much happening. So we find that we spoke more on a daily basis, ja.

Information on how people could take care of themselves during a pandemic was also shared more frequently. This took into account that information on Covid-19 in Zimbabwe may not have been as detailed as what was available in South Africa. The kind of content shared involved included ways of preventing contracting the virus. **Nyasha** described this type of communication as follows:

We constantly speak to each other via WhatsApp but then obviously there's... there should be more concern, more care to find out are they okay? Are they... and also educating them on... like what I hear from this side. Because that side they might not have adequate information to say wash your hands, wear mask and things like that. So I would say that definitely communication has increased because of Covid, because of the information that I keep giving to them.

Tendai confirmed this by mentioning how information about Covid-19 remedies was transmitted using ICT's to people on either side of the border:

... someone can also post about remedies on Covid.

4.8 Conclusion

The main themes that emerged from the research study were highlighted in this chapter. The themes revealed that migration to South Africa was mostly motivated by the need to care for family members in the belief that South Africa could offer them better opportunities which in turn could help migrants exercise better care of their family members. ICT's allowed participants the opportunity to remain connected with families left behind, through easy and immediate communication which enabled them to attend to their family's diverse needs. Different forms of ICT's were used but they all held certain advantages and disadvantages in the lives of both migrants and their families. The next section will discuss the findings to be examined in relation to existing literature on ICT use, migration and families.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

There is a paucity of research on the use of ICT's in the transnational family relationships of Zimbabwean migrants living in South Africa. The study aimed to explore how Zimbabwean migrants living in South Africa maintain relationships of care with their parents and other family members back home through the use of ICT's. Furthermore, it sought to understand the role that ICT's play in the maintenance of these family relationships. The following questions were posed at the beginning of the research study:

- a) What influences the use of ICT's in Zimbabwean migrants living in South Africa given their transnational family system?
- b) How do Zimbabwean migrants understand the relationship between care and ICT's in general?
- c) Does the use of ICT's disrupt or add value to existing family processes and functioning?

5.2 Summary of key findings

Several important findings emerged from this study. These findings are discussed in relations to extant literature examining the impact of ICT's on transnational families in different contexts.

The study revealed that Zimbabwean migrants understand care as the ability to provide for their families left behind in Zimbabwe. Care is broad ranging from moral support, emotional support and financial care. ICT's are seen as an important tool in maintaining relationships and providing care at a distance guaranteeing the continued existence of relationships in a manner that reflects the relationships that they would have with their loved ones if they were in proximity. However, costs related to acquiring and managing the use of ICT's and poor infrastructure affect how care is exercised. Furthermore, the study highlighted that the motivations behind migration to South Africa were linked to economic and sometimes political problems faced by participants and their families in Zimbabwe. Lack of employment and low salaries in the instances where participants were employed resulted in diminished ability to sustain neither themselves and their families. The

economic turmoil affected participants who experienced difficulty caring for their families. as evidenced by the following excerpt:

Ja, it's mostly economical because we saw that when we were in Zim, what we were now getting paid was less than R1000 for a month, and then you have to take care of your family, you have to take care of yourself. So it was now bad that we couldn't survive. So we decided to just move, ja (Nkosi).

These findings are consistent with previous research (Crush & Tevera, 2010) who revealed that the socio-economic collapse of Zimbabwe led to the mass exodus of people around 2000 and 2008. The high inflation, collapse of manufacturing, tourism and commercial agricultural sectors, resulted in loss of employment, high unemployment rates, food insecurity and deepening poverty (Crush et al., 2017).

The nature of the migration by Zimbabweans to South Africa has been described as crisis-driven (Crush et al., 2017). Betts and Kaytaz (2009) view migration of Zimbabwean to other countries as a survival migration, branded by state failure, severe environmental distress or the widespread of livelihood collapse. The conditions in Zimbabwe are viewed as very dire, with migration being the only option possible if people are to survive. Crush et al., (2017) do not fully agree with this concept of migration as it homogenises the migratory experiences of Zimbabweans. They argue that although it fits reasons for migration for some migrants, it does not encompass all the experiences of this population.

The present study suggests that migration to South Africa is both crisis and survival driven. People leave their families, not only because of untenable economic and political factors, but also so that in the long-term they can take care of them, albeit at a distance. Migration provides them with the possibility to regain roles of care that were no longer possible if participants had remained in Zimbabwe. Migration is therefore a solution to family problems that at times are caused by broader issues such as socio-economic problems and political realities that impact individual and family life. (Bacigalupe & Camara, 2012). From a systemic perspective this can be seen as an attempt between family members trying to maintain and balance between togetherness and distance (Wylie, 1990).

The findings also reflect that participants often had very idealised views of what migration to South Africa would entail as many of them spoke of searching for “greener pastures”. Greener pastures were linked to a better life for migrants and their families through availability of employment opportunities in South Africa and a better life in comparison to Zimbabwe. The following excerpt corroborates this finding:

The economy had crashed literally so yeah. Even if one could find a job okay, first of all it was hard to get a job but even if one were to find a job, the salary, the remuneration wasn't enough to sustain somebody, so it was tough. So I just had to look for greener pastures so to say (Kwando).

This idealised view of migration destinations has been found in the literature. For example, Akuei (2005) identified phrases such as “land of opportunity” and “paved in gold” to imagine the destination area as a place filled with opportunities and an easier way of life. The participants in Marchetti-Mercer’s (2012) study, also had expectations that the country of destination would provide them with improved quality of life, freedom of movement due to perceived safety and better opportunities. Whilst demographically this was a very different sample from the one in the present study, it reflects the fact that overall migrants often nurture idealised notions of what the country of destination will hold for them. This may not always have been the case as foreign nationals living in South Africa, who often experience difficult living circumstances, which are exacerbated by prevailing xenophobic sentiments and in some cases have been worsened by the pandemic.

In some instances, the imagined benefits of migration meant that participants’ families supported the move that could potentially improve the family’s living conditions and provide migrants with better opportunities. Furthermore, migration was experienced as something inevitable given the situation in Zimbabwe. This speaks to the situation in Zimbabwe being very dire to the extent that leaving the country at a certain stage in life is actively supported by family. This finding is consistent with Marchetti-Mercer (2012a) who found that parents tend to support their children’s migration if they believe that it holds significant advantages for them. A study focusing on South African emigrants (Ferreira & Carbonatto, 2020), found that migration was accepted by parents if it improved their adult children’s financial status and lifestyle and there were opportunities for professional career related growth. Although different reasons were found with regards to

emigration of their adult children, parents were more accepting because emigration was viewed as a coping mechanism for socio-economic and political problems blamed mostly on government (Ferreira & Carbonatto, 2020). This expectation is consistent with findings of the present study as parents felt that migration of their children was in their best interests because of the economic situation in Zimbabwe.

There were also other instances where participants left without family consultation as revealed in the following excerpt: \

But there comes a point in life where you have to do things for yourself so when we started taking different careers that's when we kind of understand when one of us moves permanently or decides to live permanently elsewhere (Nomathemba).

In this case, participants lacked the so-called licence to leave identified by Baldassar (2007) which would have been expected to impact their adaptation to a new country. Baldassar (2007) suggested that lack of a “licence to leave” resulted in the migration of these participants being termed unsuccessful despite their achievements. Strained transnational family relationships were consequently reported. Although the lack of license to leave was reported by some migrants, the findings are quite different from that of Baldassar (2007) as migrants reported having family support even though their decision to migrate was an individual decision. This finding could be explained by the benefits mentioned previously, such as improvement in the quality of life for the entire transnational family. For these participants, the decision to migrate is a sole decision based on the fact that families understand why people migrate. Marchetti-Mercer ‘s (2012b) finding that although parents tend to accept the decision to leave because of the benefits it holds for their children they still experience ambivalence because of the loss in the relationship.

From a systemic perspective, it can be argued that majority of participants were well differentiated as exemplified by being able to take “I-positions” with regards to decisions that affected them such as the decision to migrate, expect for migrants whose migration was pushed by family. Some scholars (Bowen, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988) argue that highly differentiated people are able to maintain autonomy and intimacy without the feeling of being suffocated by relationships. Decisions to migrate and even adopt ICT’s to exercise different forms of care reflect how migrants

can take “I-positions”, choices that are to their individual advantage whilst using ICT’s to remain connected to their families in Zimbabwe resulting in increased intimacy.

Ultimately, if one takes a family systems lens to understand the experiences of Zimbabwean migrants it speaks of migration as an individual sacrifice for the sake of the bigger system. The findings of this study suggest that the migration of most participants was greatly influenced by family and the need to take care of them. This was often at one’s own personal cost such as having to leave one’s children behind and not being privy to their growing up. Such a decision is taken collectively as the family has a voice in the final decision reached. Apparently, caring for the family is more important than individual needs and benefits when the decision is made. This also highlighted that in order to care, one had to be away from family and exercise different forms of care remotely. Moreover, migration was viewed as a sacrifice individuals had to make mostly for the benefit of their families as they would not have been able to take care of them if they remained in Zimbabwe.

Peter (2010) has also described migration as a symbol of courage, a sacrifice for the family, expression of passage into adulthood, and an inclination to take care of one’s family. This is concordant with the views of Tyldum (2015) who argues that migration is an act of sacrifice and that it is not an individual decision as it is something that migrants necessarily do to not only to improve their own lives, but the lives of their families by providing and securing the future of the family (Tyldum, 2015). Family remains the main pillar of social obligation, even though individuals in modern Western societies continuously juggle between principles and norms of family obligations and solidarities on the one hand, and the compulsion to construct their own biographies by and for themselves on the other (de Singly, 2003; Giddens, 1991 as cited in Nedelcu & Wyss, 2016).

A recurrent theme which emerged from this study is that ICT’s play a significant role in the transnational lives of participants. ICT’s were adopted by migrants in exercising care. Smartphones and WhatsApp were the main forms of ICT’s used, as they have full benefits such as messaging, voice calling, video calling, and media share. This often eliminated the need for other applications as WhatsApp was viewed as particularly well-rounded:

Ja, I think the good thing with WhatsApp is you can make calls, you can make video calls and it's cheaper. So that's the advantage. So it has already taken the other uses of Facebook and other, ja So it's mostly well-rounded, that it does most of the things for you like calls and video calls and it being cheaper also is an advantage (Nkosi).

Importantly, WhatsApp and smartphones were perceived as convenient, affordable, and readily available. Facebook, Messenger, and Zoom were other social media applications used although to a lesser extent as they did not carry the same advantages as WhatsApp. Other applications utilised included Hello Paisa, Malaicha.com and Mukuru which were mostly used for sending remittances. The foregoing findings are in line with Ahlin's (2018) study which found that transnational families used differing forms of ICT's based on suitability. Flexibility and pragmatism in terms of convenience, rather than cost were some of the reasons why some ICT'S were preferred in comparison to others. The lack of consideration of cost of ICT's when adopting ICT's differentiated Ahlin's (20018) study from the current study (Ahlin, 2018).

It has also been argued that the mobile device converges well with flexible communication facilities and other modalities brought in by other different forms ICT's strengthening links in transnational families (Nedelcu & Wyss, 2016). Similar findings emerged from Plaza and Plaza's (2019) research study where WhatsApp was found to be an easy to use technology that offered real time and easy communication as it allowed immediacy in terms of communication. This was also evident in the findings of this study as the ability to call or text family members created a sense of convenient communication, with family being easily available or accessible through one simple to use, well-rounded application.

This study also reveals an extensive use of WhatsApp family groups. These groups replicated a sense of family being in one space and created a "sense of collective conversation" in participants' lives. They also reflected a type of transformation of family life into the digital era consistent with previous research findings such as those of Kedra (2021) who revealed that WhatsApp groups are highly effective in building kinships relationships and indicate what it means to be family existing in a digital habitat. Kedra (2021) also suggests that virtual proximity is achieved through these groups and this helps in fulfilling the desires to remain family considering the physical distance

that exists. In the midst of physical separation and virtual connectedness, regular communication plays a role in maintaining family ties and eases the experience of separation (Demirsu, 2022).

Video communication was also highlighted as an important aspect of transnational family communication. This feature provided participants with a sense of intimate contact with their families, especially when they missed their physical presence. These videos offered participants with a sense of “real” presence as they created that illusion that they were in one space with their families:

We usually communicate via WhatsApp and most of the times, it's video calling. So I don't really miss them that much (Thando).

This is in line with Baldassar's (2008, p.260) view of ‘virtual co-presence’ that visual forms of communication allow people to “see” each other, with their “own eyes” which is important in confirming the wellbeing of family members. Wyss and Nedelcu (2016) also found that visual ICT's were preferred over non-visual ICT's based on convenience which in this case created the possibility of seeing each other ‘live’ and exchanging chats. Baldassar (2008) suggests that seeing and hearing family members, even virtually, is of importance in transnational family communication and care as what is being said can be matched with how it is being said. These findings are consistent with Wilding's (2006) suggestion that ICT's blur lines of imagined proximity and families as different types of ICT's are used in the provision of care to meet the cultural, social expectations, and health needs for family members in a creative manner. Conversations have been found to be more lively, interactive and offer transfer of aspects of embodiment such as body language and facial expressions (Eklund & Sadowski, 2021).

Moreover, the visual aspect of video calling also allowed participants to be part of discussions related to family and business-related matters.

Like with video calling you can even see the reaction because there are certain decisions that we will want to make but you need to see how they are reacting and you can just pick it up and tell I don't think this one is happy about this (Nomathemba).

Video calling also allowed participants to virtually attend family events such as birthdays or be kept up to date with the day-to-day activities of each other. This reflects the findings of Longhurst (2017), who found that the visual aspect of communication permits families to simultaneously see

each other's lives, such as sharing real events, domestic and family context and so forth. King-O'Rian (2015) refers to this as "emotional streaming" which allows migrants to remain emotionally connected throughout the day, alleviating a sense of isolation. Visual communication has been suggested to offer transnational families a sense that relationships continue to exist even in their physical or virtual absence (Demirsu, 2022).

The current study found that regular phone calls were mainly used in emergency situations despite being expensive because they do not rely on available data and proper internet connection. The need to get hold of family members in times of emergencies therefore often made this necessary. This was often the case, especially when family members in Zimbabwe did not need to have a data connection for an important message to be relayed to them as they only needed to just have a working device. At times participants also used phone calls when elderly family members in Zimbabwe struggled to deal with the technology of smart phones and they needed to communicate with them directly. This is an important finding which speaks to the fact that there are instances when the urgency of communication overrides the affordability.

This study also found that ICT's enabled emotional care which is an important feature of transnational practices. Participants identified communicating based on wanting to "check in" on what is happening in other family members' lives or "staying in touch" with them. ICT's facilitated the assessment of the family members' physical, as well as their mental health allowing migrants to know whether their family was doing well or not and attend to presenting problems. ICT's in their different forms then allowed migrants to be reassured that their family was well taken care of through addressing the various emotional, physical and financial needs of the family members within the family system. These findings resonate with other research (Baldassar, 2008; Baldassar et al., 2016) which revealed that expressions such as "keeping in touch" and staying in touch signified the importance of calling in order for family relationships to continue across distance. and calling represents emotional care work across distance, allowing family members to connect and maintain care relations across distance through sharing broad feelings from love, trust to worry, fear and loneliness (Ahlin, 2018). Despite the content of their conversations not being always really meaningful, the act was quite symbolic of how "checking in" has been transformed into a ritual practice. Different kinds of expressions have been used to indicate how the gesture of

calling helps continue family relationships across continents (Baldassar, 2008; Baldassar et al., 2016). These findings are in line with how participants in the current study used “checking in” as a gesture to express their care for family, with importance being put on the act rather than content facilitating the possibility of an emotional transfer. Wyss and Nedelcu (2016) also came to the same conclusion, arguing that an exchange of significant content is not a requirement of keeping ties, however the act of communication is of relational and emotional importance.

The findings of the current study reveal the many ways in which ICT’s are used to provide different forms of care between migrants and their family members in Zimbabwe. Whilst some of the literature has often focused on financial remittances (Peter, 2010; De Silva, 2017), the findings point to the use of various platforms, as well as different forms of care. The results indicated that each participant had at least one platform that they used in order to send money to their family. Migrants used applications such as Mukuru, Malaicha.com, Hellopaisa. Besides sending money, other items of importance like groceries and medicine could be ordered and delivered to family back home through use of a smartphone and a particular application. Moreover, financial remittances sent to families in Zimbabwe have been used actually buy data and devices such as smartphones for their communication needs. This indicated the role of migrants play in making sure that their families stay connected or online. Taking into account that participants migrate to improve the lives of their families, provision of material goods and money represents a very tangible way in which they show care for their families.

A study investigating Congolese migrants in South Africa (Peter, 2010), found that before migrants moved, an act of visiting a family member in hospital would be an accepted expression of care or good familial belonging. However, after migration remittances are arguably the main medium of expression of care (Peter, 2010). This phenomenon is consistent with the current study’s findings which revealed that migrants equated financial care or remittances to their presence in the family even though they are far away. Sending remittances addressed the financial needs of the family. It was also an expectation migrants had from their parents or families in the country of origin. Remittances have been suggested to function as a marker of an active care ethic involving caring about others through vigilant observation of situations and relations warranting maintenance or

repair (Cebotari, Mazzucato & Sigel, 2017; Tronto, 1993). McCallum's (2021) study contradicts other studies which found that migration results in commoditization of love and provision of care, with migrants replacing emotional intimacy with materialistic stuff and financial remittances as a way of compensating for their absence. McCallum (2021) reveals that there is an inseparable and close association between intimate and economic relations in the consciousness's of Filipino transnational families. This is viewed as an alternative way of how love and care are practically and symbolically expressed. Furthermore, remitting money and other tangible goods is an act of care or being involved in the care of children in the country of origin by their migrant parents which symbolises acts of emotional exchanges such as love, appreciation and solidarity. Such acts are an expression of commitment to the family and the fact that those in the country of origin have not been forgotten (McCallum, 2021). On the other hand, Peter (2010) argues that in transnational families, remittances, such as monetary entities, are the most emotionally meaningful objects in these types of setups. Krueger (1986, as cited in Peter, 2010) argues that remittances carry strong and diverse feelings, significances and strivings, and do not have any form of close competition as they represent changing transnational human values and social relations. Significantly, financial care played a huge role in the lives of participants in the current study and was one of the main forms of care.

Closely linked to financial care were other types of care provided through the use of ICT's. Participants appeared to offer support for their families in times of emergency. For example, providing family with money to seek medical attention became a way of ensuring that their presence was being felt even though they were away. Participants were also able to express how ICT's are used to coordinate medical care by finding friends in Zimbabwe to deliver medicine or check on their parents. This also included providing money that was important in seeking medical attention in these crucial times. Moreover, calling as a reminder for parents to take their medication is an example of how migrants were able to fully utilise ICT's in their care roles at a distance. Linked to this was the adoption of ICT's to remind parents in Zimbabwe about seeking medical attention and even managing their appointments through sending of reminders. This revealed that technology was adopted beyond being just for communication purposes, but for more practical concerns within the family.

Whilst ICT's appeared to have a number of advantages for migrants in terms of maintaining relationships of care with their families, there were also a number of challenges. Participants complained about the reliability of communication that is reliant on the internet, specifically WhatsApp. Poor network infrastructure in Zimbabwe meant that communication was affected, with participants with families staying in rural areas being the most affected:

The problem is they do have access, but sometimes the network is bad in Zimbabwe, you know. Even if we've got serious things to talk about, the network is not good (Thando).

Consequently, care was affected because at times there would be no communication. This meant that at times there was no way of knowing about the wellbeing of family nor about their different needs. This affected the mental health of everyone involved within the transnational family as there was completely no communication with regards to the wellbeing of individuals within the family. These findings resonate with Baldassar and Wilding (2019) who suggest that the loss of the ability to communicate with family members, can leave migrants at the risk of isolation, depressed and impacts on their health and wellbeing. Cuban (2015) also came to the same conclusions that logistical factors, such as lack of access to a reliable internet connected may break the nurturing link that has been found in transnational families. The current findings also suggest how lack of access might have a negative impact on family relationships of care. This finds credence in a study (Brandhorst, 2017) which revealed that lack of access to ICT's may result in withdrawal of care and legitimize distancing from family in the country of origin.

High costs related to the use of ICT's were also a challenge. South Africa and Zimbabwe have expensive data costs and it involves money for transnational families to stay online. In situations where this is not possible there is no communication at all. Cost affects access to technology as ICT's are very expensive and due to this high-cost communication and care is impeded in circumstances where families lack access. Furthermore, the current study evidences that adoption of ICT's by Zimbabwean migrants has been limited to only using WhatsApp based on its affordability. Generally, migrants avoid other types of computer mediated ICT's because of the perceived high cost. These findings are at variance with some previous research findings in Australia and Italy (Baldassar et al., 2007) which found that ICT's offer relatively cost-free transnational communication. This finding reflected that first world countries had access to a wide

range of unlimited resources and services in comparison to this study where participants had limited access to resources.

Another relevant finding was that life events and unpleasant news such as sickness, and stress were not shared by participants with their family members. Participants revealed that they did not want to be a burden to family. They engaged in the secrecy that was afforded by ICT's by carefully choosing information they wanted to share. These findings resonate with other studies in migrant populations. For example, Marchetti-Mercer (2017) study focusing on left behind family members revealed that communication in transnational families via ICT's did not allow for transparency and openness, as would be the case in more proximate relationships. These findings amplify a similar study which concluded that hiding information is a form of care because caring is about not worrying parents making migrants engage in the process of non-articulation, sieving and curating information to be shared with people across borders (Sampaio, 2020). A pervasive argument presented by this study was that over-sharing bears an emotional cost to aging parents in the country of origin. Furthermore, silence on certain matters or not communicating some things was important as caring for others was about not sharing information, especially considering how vulnerable they were and the need to protect them from such information. Extant research by Hsu (2019) also suggests that withholding information offers migrant children their independence from family. This is consistent with the finding of the current study where some participants withheld information because it was private and they needed to exercise independence over their issues. Not wanting to stress and cause parents to feel anxious was a culturally mandated principle of not causing worry to parents. From a family systems perspective, it can be argued that boundaries are created in order to keep certain information from family for varied reasons such as protecting the mental health of family members in Zimbabwe. This creates a balance of access and privacy highlighted by Schwartz (1995) that is important in maintaining healthy, functioning families.

The participants in the current study censored their lifestyles from their parents and families back in Zimbabwe on account that that they did not want to create a false impression that they lived lavishly in South Africa. This was mainly because families in the country of origin were not familiar with the struggles and adversities they encountered as migrants. They therefore opted for strategic use of ICT's by hiding things they did not want to share and chose audio instead of video.,

Not wanting to show off can be argued to stem from the burden of care placed on migrants whereby migrants do not have the privilege to live comfortable as they have to take into consideration the lives of kin in Zimbabwe. Cabalquinto (2020) suggests that ICT's fail to offer transparency of these burdens of care that exist in sustaining family from a distance, hence migrants constantly have unsettled feelings. Significantly, ICT's can become a tool of conflict and tension in transnational families where care is seen as rather burdensome to migrant family members (Bacigalupe & Camara, 2012; Baldassar, 2007). The findings of the current study suggest that autonomy is a difficult phenomenon to achieve for some migrants as their families in the country of origin still has control over them. Families still have expectations how migrants should spend their money with the burden of care being solely placed on some migrants within their family system. Lack of autonomy may be experienced in terms of how they can be easily accessed via ICT's despite being far away from their family. Easier accessibility provided by ICT's may preclude migrants to individuate from their family in the country of origin and impact on issues of control, autonomy, privacy and boundaries (Marchetti & Swartz, 2020; Bacigalupe & Cámara, 2012).

A challenge faced by migrants is the inability to care for their family in situations where physical care is needed. This is where ICT's fall short. Participants explained that there were times when they wished to experience their children growing up and going through certain life stages, guiding them in those phases but their role was very much limited. Furthermore, they intimated how aging parents could not be relieved from their roles as proximate carers due to the distance barriers which kept families apart. The inability to enjoy emotional exchanges, such as hugging someone, was expressed as a disadvantage of ICT's as migrants could not do this over the screen as they would typically do when in one space. Marchetti-Mercer and Swartz (2020) found that the inability to physically touch loved ones was distressing and was exacerbated in times of crisis when distance is felt more deeply. This finding is consistent with this study as participants were concerned about their inability to touch family members or hug them. This was also linked to the concern that in times of crisis, one would wish to comfort their family members and make them feel better. Invariably, this was difficult if it was via a screen instead of being locally embodied.

One way in which these needs for physical presence could be addressed was through the use of visits which appeared to be an important part of participants' transnational experiences. Visits address the need for embodied contact (Marchetti-Mercer & Swartz, 2020) and is also linked to views that often migrants the need to see other family members "with their own eyes" as a confirmation of whether they are in good health or not (Baldassar, 2008). This need is not sufficiently addressed through the use of ICT'S which necessitates physical visits. Baldassar (2008) argues that visits are encouraged more by the need to be co-present because migrants experience the emotion of missing and longing for their loved ones, hence this becomes a primary reason for visiting. Periodic and regular visits are important and necessary to broaden the material and socio-emotional dimensions of care and belonging (Leifsen & Tymczuk, 2012). Marchetti-Mercer, et al., (2021) came to the same conclusion with regard to visits as they found that visits were important because they allowed migrants and their families to be physically visible to each thereby addressing the embodied need for human connections. Visits allowed migrants to exchange personal and practical care, with migrant children in particular returning home to take care of their parents (Marchetti-Mercer et al., 2021). Tangible human connections are embedded in the need to see one's family in comparison to just imagining their space or being in virtual contact via ICT's (Marchetti-Mercer, et al., 2021). The current study was consistent with other findings which revealed that visits allowed participants to share emotions, spend time together and even get to see how family members have grown. Visits created an emotional space that permitted different generations of people spend time together and get to know each other (Marchetti-Mercer, et al 2021). Visits in the lives of Zimbabwean migrants are fairly common and usually occur bi-directionally (Maphosa, 2005). However, these were negatively impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic which affected the participants of this study.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic restricted migrants from travelling, Country borders were closed making access to family members across the border physically impossible. From the findings, remittances in the form of groceries which constitute physical care remained the only care option available. For some migrants, the Covid-19 pandemic also affected their financial situation through loss of employment. This made them unable to afford sending remittances thereby affecting related care needs. Brandhorst, Baldassar and Wilding (2020) suggest that hands on physical care is impossible in situations where immobility is enforced by way of law, such as

Covid-19 restrictions and lockdowns. Hence in crisis situations such as sickness, care at a distance becomes insufficient, and a disadvantage. Consistent with Brandhorst et al., (2020), Popyk and Pustulka (2021) found that lack of visits during the pandemic resulted in “care being put on hold” due to the threatened nature of personal meetings which were symbolic of successful communication before the pandemic.

Popyk and Pustulka (2021) found that emotional and intergenerational communication remained similar to before the pandemic and greatly reliant on ICT’s. The current study found that there were increased levels of communication in transnational families during the Covid-19 pandemic which were mainly pushed by the need to share information about the Covid-19, ranging for the disease itself and how families can take care of themselves. Increased concern for family members was also noted based on the anxiety created by the pandemic and the constant need to check on their health. A study which focused on experiences of international student of the Covid-19 pandemic (Hari, Nardon & Zhang, 2020) found that frequency and intensity of communication increased, which in turn resulted in increased levels of intimacy as ICT’s allowed their participants to spend more time with their family virtually in comparison to pre-pandemic times.

5.3 Conclusion.

This chapter focused on the discussion of the findings describing the role of ICT’s in Zimbabwean migrant’s experiences of maintaining care. The discussion highlighted how migrants use ICT’s to exercise different forms of care, especially foregrounding the use of WhatsApp. The benefits and limitations of using ICT’s were highlighted to show how they impact on care relationships. The last chapter will look at the broader implications of the findings.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Closing remarks

The study attempted to contribute to the body of research on transnational care through the use of ICT's as reflected in the lived experiences of Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa. The use of ICT's in maintaining care in their transnational family setups was investigated in this research study drawing attention to the different forms of ICT's used by Zimbabwean migrants who had decided to move to South Africa. The study highlighted that in order for one to be able to care for family members they had to migrate and exercise care at a distance. Migration was viewed as an act of individual sacrifice as one migrated to improve the lives of family members remaining at home

Socioeconomic factors were the main reasons why people migrated. The findings reveal that for some migrants, migration was supported by family, while for others migration was an individual decision which resulted in family members raising concerns about migration. However, based on the benefits brought by migration, such as improved quality of life and improved care and financial care, the decision to emigrate was supported post migration. The study found that the use of ICT's was prevalent amongst Zimbabwean migrants and their families. The adoption of ICT's revealed an interest by migrants to remain family and practice family life despite distance, a need to ease the negative impact of separation, and to facilitate different forms of care in the transnational family setting. The study reveals that technologies which were adopted were influenced by factors of affordability, availability and convenience. Furthermore, expensive ICT's were avoided. The cruciality of ICT's has been highlighted in this study through showing how without ICT's care for family members across distance is close to being impossible. The finding also reveals a link to mental health as not knowing the wellbeing of loved ones was indicated as a cause for concern. Whilst ICT's have been helpful for migrants to remain connected to their families, emotional closeness has been described as lacking because of the need to see each other, indicating the need for physical proximity. Without these opportunities to stay in touch, a sense of intimacy has been absent (Marchetti-Mercer, 2017). Finally, the embodied nature of human relationships is highlighted as expressed by the need to physically see each other, hence the more emotional and

physical aspects of care can be exercised when people are physically together in one space overcoming the shortcomings of ICT's where these aspects of care are concerned.

6.2 Limitations

It is important to highlight some of the limitations of this study so as to also to highlight avenues for improvement in future research.

The first limitation involved the number of participants being relatively small. Therefore, data which was collected was quite limited taking into consideration the number of Zimbabwean migrants living in South Africa. Even though the level of saturation was reached in the data collection process, having more participants would possibly have provided additional information providing further insight and variety into the experiences of Zimbabwean migrants. An example would be how more participants from a different socio-economic backgrounds would have brought new perspectives as to their reasons for migrating, the types of ICT's they adopted and their experience of caring in a transnational family setup.

The second limitation of this study involved the use of snowball sampling in identifying potential research participants as it meant that I was removed from the centre of the sampling process for some participants. Control over the sampling process was limited as I had to rely mainly on referrals for already identified participants. Snowball sampling has the potential to increase the margin of error of my findings resulting in variations in sample results and the population of interest.

The third limitation of this study involved limited access to data mainly based on the fact that participants had reservations for partaking in the study as migration is a sensitive topic for them. This needed the participants to be informed of what the study entailed and how it would not cause harm to them or affect their stay in South Africa. This highlighted an asymmetrical power imbalance that may have negatively affected the data gathered. Participants were not comfortable with how the information gathered would be used and for what purpose, even after explaining how their data and identification would be protected. There may have a sense of discomfort and mistrust thereby limiting the full sharing of personal experiences and knowledge.

6.3 Recommendations

In light of the limitations, the study has paved the way for addressing existing gaps in the research of African transnational families in the African setting and in the psychological field. Relationships of care have been explored between Zimbabwean migrants and their kin back home, with ICT's playing a huge role in how they are maintained whilst revealing challenges and benefits of migration. Further research is however needed to expand the topic to include Zimbabwean working-class migrant families that have been under researched. The study has found that indeed ICT's are being used in Zimbabwean transnational families in caring for each other just as in previous research. However, there are unique factors that have been established in terms of negotiation of ICT's to be used and for what purpose. Financial care emerged as the main form of care from the findings. Linked to this is migrating in order to take care of family. Hence, more research is needed on the varied roles of financial care in transnational families and how ICT's are important in facilitating this form of care as has emerged from this study.

The use of technology was affected because costs to access ICT's are still high for migrants and their families resulting in families in Zimbabwe not always staying online. This impacted on the wellbeing of migrants as they worried about the health status and wellbeing of their families more if they were offline. Affordable ICT's that range beyond the use of WhatsApp so that care opportunities for migrants and their families could be expanded as affordable ICT's would mean ease of access. The Zimbabwe Government should explore introducing policy aimed reduced cost of data and development of ICT infrastructure as doing away with prohibitive costs impacts positively leading to healthier family relationships.

6.4 Suggestions for future research

Future research could explore care of migrant children from the lens of those left behind using ICT's as more often than not the care burden lies with people who have migrated. Future studies could also explore whether migrant's expectations of a host country are congruent with the "greener pastures" they once imagined before migrating, extending this study to explore how this impacts care patterns.

Although there have been studies investigating internal migrants and how they care for each other using ICT's, future studies could also explore how immigrants care for their siblings who are also in South Africa, as most of the participants in this current study had their siblings in South Africa rather than in Zimbabwe as the study had anticipated. Future research may also focus on how ICT use and transnational family care has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. This may facilitate a detailed understanding of how patterns of care have changed as a result of the pandemic and how transnational families have adjusted to living in times where traveling restrictions are implemented now and again, and traveling is more expensive based on requirements such as Covid-19 tests and permits. This can help bring into perspective how more types of ICT's may be used to improve communication among transnational families where visits have been constricted.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participant information sheet



Participant Information Sheet - “The Role of Information Communication Technology (ICT’s) in Zimbabwean migrants’ experiences of maintaining care in transnational families”.

Dear Sir/Madam

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by myself, Siko Martin Moyo. I am a current MACC student (Masters in Community-based Counselling Psychology) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my degree, I am required to conduct a research project and it is supervised by Professor Maria Marchetti-Mercer. The research investigates “The Role of Information Communication Technology (ICT’s) in Zimbabwean migrants’ experiences of maintaining care in transnational families”. The study hopes to bring out themes of how family relationships are now maintained at a distance following migration and the use of technology in facilitating this.

Participation will be completely voluntary, and there’s no penalty in refusing to participate. You are allowed to withdraw at anytime and if so your data will not be used for the study. You should read the information below and ask for clarity if there is anything you do not understand before deciding on whether you want to participate or not. If you wish to participate, the client confidentiality form, and the audio recording consent form must be signed before the interview takes place.

For the purposes of this study, the interview will take the form of a semi-structured interview. This means that the questions will require you to respond based on feeling, understanding or complete knowledge, with the possibility of addition of more questions as the interview progresses. The interview will take approximately one hour and will be audio recorded and later transcribed with no details with regards to your name included so that your identity will not be known to anyone beside myself and my supervisor.

All the information you share will be stored in a password protected computer and the interview transcript will be stored away under lock and key in a filing cabinet. After transcription the audio recordings will be destroyed.

The research is not designed to help you personally and therefore you will not have any direct benefit. However, the research will help in the understanding of how Zimbabwean migrants are



able to maintain care despite being physically separated from their families through use of ICTs. You will not receive any form of payment with regards to your participation in this study. Should you experience any distress during or after the interview, you may approach the ~~Emthonjeni~~ Community Centre, 1 Jan Smuts Avenue, Johannesburg, 2000 or call 011 717-4513 to make an appointment for counselling services.

The study is part of a larger research project conducted by Professor Maria Marchetti-Mercer from the Psychology Department at the University of the Witwatersrand and your permission for the use of this information is requested in this regard as well. The same ethical criteria relating to confidentiality will be adhered to.

Should you have further questions regarding this study please contact:

Supervisor:

Prof. Maria Marchetti-Mercer
School of Human and Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Johannesburg
0117174518
Maria.Marchetti-Mercer@wits.ac.za.

OR The non-medical Ethics Research Committee

Telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrec-medical.researchoffice@wits.ac.za

Or The Researcher:

Siko Martin Moyo, 1432425@students.wits.ac.za, 078 255 0854



Consent form: Participation - “The Role of Information Communication Technology (ICT’s) in Zimbabwean migrants’ experiences of maintaining care in transnational families”.

I, _____, give consent to be a participant as part of Siko Martin Moyo’s research project on “The Role of Information Communication Technology (ICT’s) in Zimbabwean migrants’ experiences of maintaining care in transnational families”. It is my understanding that:

- Participation is voluntary.
- If I do not want to answer a specific question, I do not have to answer.
- Participation can be withdrawn at any time of the interview and there will be no penalty for doing so.
- Confidentiality will be guaranteed, and no identifying information will be included in final report.
- Personal numbers or pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of the participants.
- The results of this study will be presented in the form of a thesis and may be presented at academic conferences or in the form of journal articles or books.

I have read and understood the participation information sheet. I agree to be part of the study. I understand the information provided to me and have the opportunity to ask questions if I have any at any given time. It is my understanding that a copy of the final document may be available for my perusal should I wish to see it. I understand that this study has no direct benefit to me, it is only for a degree purpose and the study is part of a larger research project and the information provided will be used to this purpose, with relevant ethical guidelines having been adhered to.

Participant’s signature

Date



Consent Form: Audio recording - “The Role of Information Communication Technology (ICT’s) in Zimbabwean migrants’ experiences of maintaining care in transnational families”.

I, _____, give consent for audio-recording of the interview as part of Siko Martin Moyo’s research of “The Role of Information Communication Technology (ICT’s) in Zimbabwean migrants’ experiences of maintaining care in transnational families”.

It is my understanding that:

- Only the supervisor and the researcher will be allowed to listen to the interview.
- The recordings and transcripts will be stored in a password protected computer.
- After transcription, the audio recordings will be deleted or destroyed.
- No identifying information will be part of the transcription.

Participant’s signature

Date

Appendix D: Semi-structured interview schedule

Interview Schedule for Zimbabwean migrants living in South Africa - “The Role of Information Communication Technology (ICT’s) in Zimbabwean migrants’ experiences of maintaining care in transnational families”.

1. Please give me a bit of background on your family. Who lives in South Africa and who lives in Zimbabwe?
2. Please describe the reason for migrating and how did the process of migration take place?
3. Was your left behind family involved in the decision making?
4. How did they react to your decision to leave Zimbabwe?
5. How do you maintain contact with your family back home?
6. Do you use any specific forms of technology to maintain this contact?
7. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using these technologies?
8. Do you usually have access to the internet/data? Does your left behind family members also have access to internet/data?
9. How do you use these technologies to take care of your parents or other family members within the family setup?
10. Are there any other ways you keep in contact with left behind family?
11. Do you ever visit your family back home? Do they come and visit you?
12. Do you provide financial care for left behind family members? What does care mean to you?

Appendix E: Ethics certificate



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

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE:

PROTOCOL NUMBER: MACC/20/09

PROJECT TITLE:

The Role of Information Communication Technology (ICT's) in
Zimbabwean migrants' experiences of maintaining care of
transnational family.

INVESTIGATOR

Moyo Siko (1432425)

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR

SHCD/Psychology

DATE CONSIDERED

15 May 2020

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

Approved unconditionally

RISK LEVEL

Low Risk

EXPIRY DATE

31 December 2022

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE

21 May 2020

CHAIRPERSON

(Dr Viniitha Jithoo)

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 fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature

Date

16 / 05 / 2020

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

