

This qualitative study conducted in South Africa, explores the socio-economic integration of Congolese migrants living in Johannesburg. Drawing on respondents own subjective experiences, this study investigates the way Congolese perceive and explain socio-economic integration and the role that gender-roles play in this understanding. Participants were identified using purposive sampling as well as snowballing techniques and narratives of ten Congolese women and men were employed in data collection using semi structured interview guide. Data for this study was analysed using a combination of content, narrative and discourse analysis. Analysis of the data revealed that loss of status played a major role on Congolese men's and women's feelings and perceptions of socio-economic integration. Loss of status was increased by migration through intersections of unequal power relations, access to services, and broader related migration issues. Findings also reveal that participants drew on specific migration related discourses including poverty, access to services (institutional), legal status, socio-economic status, socio-cultural status and xenophobia to explain their perceptions and feelings regarding socio-economic integration in South Africa. Further analysis indicates that being socially and economically integrated is not simply defined by having jobs, the right to access services, associating with South Africans but having the lifestyle that one had in the country of origin prior to migration. This includes feeling respected and finally having the same economic and social power as the locals. Among discourses drawn on, participants also used the discourse on traditional practices to justify their unwillingness to integrate into the South African community. The unwillingness to integrate also arises from what respondents described as the reversal of gender roles, and culture showing how these can be a barrier to socio-economic integration.