Migrations and Patriarchy: A Historical Focus on Gender Relations in Southern Africa

Dudziro Nhengu

College of Business, Peace, Leadership and Governance, Africa University

ABSTRACT: Migrations have both negative and positive ramifications for the reconfiguration of gender relations. This paper focuses on how the changing status of African women migrants impacts on gender relations, and how patriarchy impacts on migration. Primary and secondary data from a qualitative analysis established that in all types of migrations, patriarchal relations are both strengthened and challenged, whilst in the main, gender relations are strengthened. Inferences drawn from regions other than Africa are also applied to the analysis to enrich the arguments in a manner that makes the paper relevant to academic analysis in other regions globally.

KEY WORDS: Migrations, patriarchy, gender relations, women.

INTRODUCTION

How do the patriarchal notions of power impact on the migration of women? How does the migration of women in turn impact on patriarchal relations - on family roles as well as the autonomy and emancipation of women due to mobility? To answer these questions, this paper situates the discourse of migration and patriarchal relations in three historical contexts of pre-colonial Africa, colonial Africa and post-colonial Africa. The paper explores the changing nature of connections between African women and men in families, communities and societies as a result of migration. Rendering a double pronged analysis, the paper on one hand explores how patriarchy influences the migration experiences of women, and on the other hand explores how migration impacts on the patriarchal norms and belief systems in African society. In other words, the paper explores the concept of feminised migrations.

While the practice of migration is as old as antiquity in Africa, the concept and practice of feminised migrations is a growing phenomenon globally. For a long time in research men were perceived as the central characters of international migrations, while women were seen as either left in the back or inertly accompanying their husbands for conjugal and reproductive roles (Bastia & Busse, 2011). Currently, research evidence shows that there are regions globally where the female migrations rate is progressively exceeding that of men. Since 1947, the ratio of women in migratory flows has risen between 47 percent and 49 percent, nearly one female international migrant in every two international migrants (Petit & Charbit, 2018). In East Asia and Africa for example, women's presence in cross-border migration reached 53.2% of overall regional migration in 2017 (Andall, 2018; UN, 2017).

Tseng (2010), writing about migration in Asia, established that one cause for the rise in feminised migration is the search for inter-marriage relationships. In the Asian region, marriage relationships are still largely influenced by the patriarchal logics of patrilineality, patrilocality and hypergamy. In most cases in Asian region, traditional marriages would normally be arranged locally, for instance by matching men and women from neighboring villages or between friendly families. To defy this patriarchal arrangement, Asian women are engaging in marriages across borders (Tseng, 2010). Migrations influenced by the search for inter-marriage opportunities are not peculiar to Asia alone. This inference is also applicable to Africa, and research evidence has already established that owing to challenged economies in some countries, poverty and lack of employment opportunities, among other reasons, trigger increased migrations in general and feminised migrations in particular (Murrugarra etal, 2011). In such cases, women from poorer countries move through the spatial hierarchy in search of access to new employment opportunities and improved livelihoods by marrying men from a wealthier or permitting economic zone (Tseng, 2010).

Since the 1980s, the andro-centric vision of migration as both demographically and scientifically male has been subjected to deconstruction and called into question because as noted, the face of migratory flows is slowly becoming feminised (King & Zontini, 2000). Research focus has shifted away from the perception of women as passive and trailing wives of male migrants to female subjectivities who are autonomous and empowered, and willing to work in the domestic and care sectors abroad (King & Zontini, 2000). Consequently, the fluctuation in female migratory flows bears huge impact on societal gender relations, a development that is worth of feminist academic analysis, on a continent where the nexus between patriarchy and migration has been insufficiently

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studied. In Africa, claims of an increasing participation of women in international migration flows have not really been backed by data (King & Zontini, 2000). This paper addresses this gender epistemic gap by undertaking a comparative analysis of the migration and its impact on gender relations in the three historical epochs in Africa; migration in pre-colonial Africa, migration during colonialism and post-colonial migration. New knowledge on the nexus between migration and gender relations, especially how different gender norms in Africa shape women's propensity and ability to migrate (Toma & Vause, 2013) adds value to the field of gender and migration policy development. Research that provides insights and knowledge on how the inter-section of gender and migration policies complicates the migratory experiences of female migrants when compared to those of their male counterparts helps advocates for gender sensitive policy formulation aimed at subverting patriarchy in order to equalize gender relations. In the analysis, examples are drawn from the three most significant historical epochs in Southern Africa, to show how each historical context shapes the linkages between migration and patriarchy. Tracing the development of human relations from antiquity through the colonial period to the current period of massive globalisation brings into context two partly intertwined paradigms, gender and social development, which are in turn closely related to the subject under discussion, patriarchy and migration.

Inferences for the analysis are drawn from primary and secondary data largely gathered through a desk review of gender and migration literature on the three stated historical epochs: pre-colonial Africa, colonial Africa and post-colonial Africa. The starting point is an analysis of the relationship between gender relations and human mobilities before colonialism, further tracing how colonial patriarchal notions of power impact on mobilities during colonialism, and how mobilities likewise impact on existing notions of patriarchy since antiquity to date.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretically, migration is determined by social transformation dynamics of development such as the search for better opportunities, conflict, professional enhancement, technological advancement and policy advancement to mention a few. In pre-industrial African societies, environmental factors such as the quest for resources, especially farming land due to overpopulation, and the search for greener pastures among pastoralists were often the causes of migration. As such, the paper acknowledges the various forms of migration, and uses the terms migration and migrations inter-changeably, where the latter refers to an acknowledgment of the various forms of migration. Embedded within the narrative of migrations is the notion of globalised migration. The central idea of globalised migration is that the growing social, economic and cultural interconnectedness facilitated by the process of development have influenced the rise of migratory flows over a diverse and geographically distant array of departure and destination countries (Arango, 2018). Vertovec's (2010) concept of super-diversity in turn indicates the unprecedented degree of immigrant diversity in Britain and other immigrant receiving countries, which in turn insinuates the migratory flow direction from the Global South to the West.

Patriarchy in this paper refers to the social construction of power that is institutionalised to deliberately allow men to dominate women, based on societal norms that view men and boys as a more legitimate gender with power to control women and girls both productively and reproductively. In the bigger picture, patriarchy can extend beyond the sex divide to refer to situations where those with social privilege and authority cause exploitation or oppression through dominance of moral authority and control of property to those with less power and privilege society. For instance, this refers to situations where senior men of authority have control and grip over women, girls and younger men in positions of lesser authority and over boys.

The practice of patriarchy yields notions of masculinities and power relations that make the more powerful pity the less powerful through making decisions that affect the lives of the less powerful without consulting them and without assessing their needs. These masculinity notions of power to some extent account for the hegemonic power patterns that exist at every level of society, from the macro down to the macro levels, further exerting huge implication in the manner policy decisions that affect global populations are made in the bigger picture socially, economically and politically. As such, patriarchy can be defined as a type of conformist social organisation that exploits a certain number of institutions and practices based on law, custom, religion, politics and other variables aimed at ensuring its perpetuation (Petit & Charbit, 2018). For example, patriarchal notions of power based on the divide between the West and the Global South, account for discrimination of all forms as one of the social determinants of health[1] with huge implicitons on the welfare of female migrants from Africa. This being said, the interrelations between migrations and patriarchy are indeed complex, and human mobilities have real impact on social organisations, thus on patriarchy, just as patriarchy has real impacts on migration (Petit & Charbit, 2018).

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[1] Social determinants of health are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning and quality-of-life outcomes and risks. See US Department of Health and Human Services. https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health.

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"Feminization" of migration has been assigned multiple interpretations by a number of scholars. Boyd (2006) and Alexander *et al* (2012) refer to feminised migration as a gradual increase in the percentage of migrants that are female. Piper (2010) and Verschuur (2013) refer to feminised migration as an increase in women's economic mobility in particular, and Alexander and Steidl (2012) also argue that the "feminization" of migration is a natural and gradual process where international migrant streams previously dominated by men gradually becomes either gender-balanced or dominated by women. Yet Le Jeune (2005) argues that a relative increase in the numbers of women who cross the borders is not necessarily matched by an absolute increase in their economic capabilities and success. Le Jeuine (2005) further argues that migrations only qualify as feminised when women migrate solely for the reasons of satisfying the economic needs of their husbands, and not when they accompany their husbands only as wives. To the contrary, Tseng and Wand (2013) proved a case that some women from poorer countries became economically empowered after moving through the spatial hierarchy, accessing new opportunities for employment and further improving their livelihoods by migrating under the auspices of marrying a man from a wealthier country. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) and Mcllwaine (2010) have also argued that the boundary between tied movers and autonomous economic agents is not so clear-cut, that women may find lucrative jobs after following their spouses in the host countries and that other kin networks other than marriages may play an important role in the migration of single women, in a manner that strengthens the autonomous character of the migration of these single women, respectively.

The other g.roup of scholars refers to "feminized" migration as the situation where non-migrating women expand their roles and responsibilities as a consequence of their husbands' absence (David, 1995; Gisbert etal, 1994), which brings about changes in their status and relationships. These scholars further contend that when women are left alone after the migration of their husbands, they get empowered by the new decisions they have to make. To the contrary, the expansion of women's roles without substantive change in women's status and relationships has been seen as reinforcing gender inequality, as elderly men and even younger boys assume the role of patriarchs in the absence of the heads of house-holds, owing to societal beliefs, tradition and religion, and women have no choice but to conform to these strict gender roles assigned by patriarchal demands (Menjívar & Agadjanian, 2007). For Pessar (1999), McIlwaine (2010) and Morokvasic (2007), women's presence as migrant workers in foreign countries empowers them economically, provides them with greater avenues for autonomy and independent decision-making while also exposing them to different gender norms till they start questioning gender inequality and all notions of patriarchal relations.

George (George, 2005) and Menjívar (Menjivar, 1999) argue on the other hand that women's employment does not necessarily lead to independence, and does not automatically undermine patriarchal gender relations in the countries of origin. This is so because the type of labor market incorporation, contexts of reception, and assimilation patterns in host countries may in turn exert patriarchal norms on women migrants, further negatively affecting gender relations in their households (Menjivar, 1999). Based on the above findings, this literature review section thus concludes that feminised migration is not always positive and beneficial. Rather, migration, whether that of women or that of men, has potential to promote gender egalitarianism in some cases, while reinforcing the notions of patriarchy and doubling the women's burden in others.

DISCUSSIONS

Findings established that mobility has long defined human communities in Africa, further impacting on patriarchal and gender relations since antiquity to date. Three distinct migration dynamics are evident in the African set-up, all linked to and shaped by the historical evolution of national political economies. In primordial Africa, most indigenous people were nomads, migrating from place to place in search for greener pastures and arable land. In all cases families migrated as a whole unit, and gender roles were clearly defined by patriarchal standards and norms, with men performing mostly the productive roles such as in-transit nomads and hunters, while women were restricted to the productive roles as in-transit child bearers and fruit gatherers. As such, decisions to migrate were made by men, while women were followers of their husbands and caretakers of families in the in-transit domestic realm. Patriarchy thus ruled the day, and conformity to the set patriarchal standards was the only way through which women survived. As such, migration did not have any effects on gender relations, and the only way in which patriarchy affected the manner of women's migration was that as per norm, women wholly conformed to the dictates of their husbands and male heads of households.

Naumann and Greiner (2016) do not even refer to the mobility of people in search of land and greener pastures in pre-colonial Africa as migration, they rather write of 'immobile' and 'non-migrating' rural populations (Bakker etal, 2020; Bank, 2015) on the other hand does not refute the migratory nature of pre-colonial Africans, but refers to the patriarchal nature of their migratory culture when he refers to the cultural uniformity of rural areas, at least until the rapid intrusion of urban styles and practices after apartheid. Yet in reality, rural African people of pre-colonial Africa were characterized by long histories of movement and connection that shatter notions of immobility an stagnation. Such mobility – ill captured by the technocratic term 'circular migration' – continues today, and helps to maintain the dignity (emotional and cultural wellbeing) and physical wellbeing of millions of Africans who migrate from country to country within the continent, and beyond. Perhaps migration has become more pronounced now than before

because where the absence of borders allowed a free flow of mobilities, current borders have made the practice of migration more pronounced.

Thus, the advent of colonialism and the rise of capitalism introduced new modes of migration patterns. In Southern Africa, between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, following the influx of the settlers from the West, the British colonial extractive frontier defined a specific labour migration system that witnessed the massive forced movement of indigenous people, especially men, from the rural areas to the sprouting mining sites and the budding colonial administrative cities (Onselen, 1976). The exodus of men to provide forced labor in the newly established cities and mines in addition to impacting on existing social hierarchies and roles, pitied women as domestic caretakers and subsistence farmers (Onselen, 1976).

This social and political visibility of single-sex male labor migration tended to obscure the historical migration of female migrants whose labor often fell outside what was conventionally considered work. Yet in reality, a few women migrated to the upcoming cities to perform the unconventional labor roles such as beer brewing, laundry and sex work (Dodson & Crush, 2004). This nascent dynamic distinctively shaped the political economy of Southern Africa from the late nineteenth century to date, further sharpening and widening the rift between men as recognised wage earners and women as a class of unrecognized but useful laborers who took care of the children, the elderly and the homes in the rural areas, in the absence of men and also provided the cited unconventional labor riles in the urban areas and the mining sites (Ginsburg etal; Beinart, 2014). The mining sites mostly attracted male labourers owing to the prevailing gender norms that perceived men as muscular and more able bodied than women to work in the mining environment. A few women joined other men to render administrative support to the colonial masters, mostly as domestic workers, while most women, children, and elders remained in rural areas. The complex reality was that the men in the mining sector lived in the single quarter accommodation designed specifically to keep the women and children out of the mushrooming mining community, while the few women who worked in the cities crammed on the fringes of the urban centres together with the men, also in housing that did not permit the cohabitation of families and children. A new mode of gender relations was thus influenced, which saw to the rise of prostitution as commercial sex work in the urban and mining sites, as well as the rise in cases of sexually transmitted diseases (Onselen, 1976). A new kind of female migrant who engaged in prostitution to provide for the extended family back in the village arose as a new phenomenon in the African society.

Naumann and Greiner (2016) writing about South Africa, note how miners (in the Northern Cape) who lived in peri-urban settlements and townships near the mines remained intimately connected to their rural homes. Despite all these promises, the conditions of colonial migration did not bring total freedom and satisfaction to the African family, especially to the women. First and foremost, both women and men who migrated to the cities had no autonomy, and remained under the grip and control of the colonial masters. This had serious implications on both the well-being of families and of individual workers in the urban set-up, as well as on the well-being of their families back home, further showing how gender relations became interwoven with the rising political and economic strife in society. In this set-up, the situation of women either as migrants or as those who remained in the rural areas continued to deteriorate under the double burden of both patriarchy and colonialism. However, in general, society more readily restricts women's emigration for moral and other protective reasons and women's migration tends to require greater social legitimacy (Oishi, 2005). In most cases, the decision for women to migrate had to be cleared by men, depending on the women's social positioning, and in many cases, it is the single women who managed to migrate to the cities to work in areas often perceived as 'not formal work', such as brewing illicit beer to sell to the male laborers in secret as well as engaging in sex work with the male laborers in exchange for money. These differences in capability to migrate between women and men, in favor of men, account for the social, political and economic disparities between the genders, further leading to a gender gap since the nineteenth century to date as already noted.

The new capitalist political economy introduced a new mode of dominant patriarchal norms that undercut women's behavior, actions and headship-related roles, especially within the private domains, as the city became a preserve for mostly the African men. The African rural homeland slowly figured as a place of backwardness, deprivation, and oppressive traditional ways of living when compared to some kind of social and economic independence that the urban areas offered to the men and the few women who managed to migrate. While the roles of women who remained in the villages were restricted to child-bearing, caring for the elderly and then children, men, and the few women who migrated to the cities got enough money to invest in livestock – which became an African way of contributing to future financial security and retirement (Naumann & Greiner, 2016).

As Kamal (2022) argues, during colonialism, male labor migration both empowered and dis-empowered the non-migrating populations, especially the wives – reliant on existing and different variables such as the differences between the rural–urban divide, nuclear-extended households, class, religion and educational background. Existence of such differences helps to entrench patriarchal norms by constructing and reinforcing the identity of a docile housewife who takes care of children and the elderly, but who also assumes certain levels of power and authority in the absence of the husband, as long as she adheres to the codes of enhanced classic

patriarchy. These patriarchal norms and practices dampen women's agency through patriarchal codes – constituting the power relations between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, restrictions on the physical autonomy of women and women's dependency on their male kin. In-laws, and the assistance of natal kin, curtail women's decision-making power. This curtailment serves, ultimately, to sustain the power the in-laws and natal kin exercise over the women (Kamal, 2022).

POST-COLONIAL MIGRATION

In post-colonial Africa, evidence suggests that increasing numbers of women are engaging in both international and intra-African migration, and that women are increasingly migrating alone and as heads of households too (Fall, 2007). African women are involved in various typologies of migration, including cross-border trade, temporary and circular migration and longer term settlement migration. These women migrate out of their own accord to look seek greener pastures, while others do so to join husbands who have migrated and settled in foreign lands.

Post-colonial migration studies project two types of migration patterns - one where intra-African migration intensities have slumped owing to state formation and the subsequent imposition of barriers towards free movement in the wake of decolonization following the independence of most African states from colonial rule, and another characterised by an acceleration and spatial diversification of movement out of Africa to the Diaspora (Özden & Neagu), either driven by violence, poverty and underdevelopment, or by processes of development and social transformation which have enhanced the capabilities and chances of Africans to migrate (Flahaux & Haas, 2016). Of major note are the changes in gender representations. While inter-state colonial capitalist driven migration pre-dominantly facilitated the movement of men and boys to the cities and mining development sites, migration from Africa to the Diaspora is characterised by the movement of both women and men. Although men still dominate the figures of international migration, ever-increasing numbers of women are engaging in international migration, with women also increasingly migrating alone to seek for greener pastures abroad (Fall, 2007). African women who feature significantly in cross-border trade (Fall, 2007; etal, 2013) are also involved in other types of migration such as temporary, circular and longer term settlement migration (Andall, 2013). This aspect of female migration has challenged the notions of patriarchy by as seen in the constantly changing patterns of gender hierarchies within an African household. Modern migration theory thus presents new ways of understanding intra-household gender dynamics within the African context, through a redefinition of power relationships between African men and women both within the household domain and in the public sphere (Otu, 2017).

Findings also pointed to the fact that migration has weakened patriarchy, and collapsed the lines of power and authority between women and men, the young and the old in most societies, as families are drawn closer together by the power and attraction of remittances from abroad. Levitt's (Levitt, 2001) study of migrants from the Dominican Republic to Boston gives flesh to this schematic. Although living abroad, the Dominican migrants with whom Levitt worked retained vital linkages with their home village – to the point that migrants and non-migrants created what she calls a 'transnational village.' These linkages included the obvious monetary remittances from migrants' work in the US, but also a range of 'social remittances' that circulated among those who left and those who stayed. These encompassed carefully tended social relationships as well as ideas, cultural products, and social capital flowing from the Caribbean community to the north.

In an article about similar processes among migrant workers within South Africa, policy support for enhancing the development potential of female labor migration requires that women have similar opportunities for migration to men (Bachan, 2018). However, in general, states more readily restrict women's emigration for moral and other protective reasons and women's migration tends to require greater social legitimacy (Oishi, 2005). These differences in capability to migrate between women and men, in favour of men, account for the social, political and economic inequalities between men and women have led to a gender gap since the nineteenth century to date, which in turn reinforces patriarchy, as a feminized dependency syndrome which is detrimental to the well-being of women is perpetuated. Research evidence shows that many women remain in abusive relationships because of lack of financial independence. Existing evidence on African women's international migration include the Ethiopian and Ghanaian governments' ban on the migration of domestic workers to Saudi Arabia in 2013 and 2017 respectively. While such protective bans are intended to prevent exploitation, the gender case arises from the fact that they are typically tailor made primarily for women. Legally, such bans violate the requirements of international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of discrimination against Women (CEDAW) General recommendation 26 on Women Migrant Workers (GR26; para 24) and the Committee for Migrant Workers (CMW) General comment on migrant domestic workers (para 61) which cautions against the use of sex-specific bans and discriminatory restrictions on women's migration (UNGA, 1979).

Policy-wise, the gender order in destination countries affects the working conditions and experiences of female migrants. This is both in terms of the labor force participation of female nationals, which can lead to employment for female migrants as domestic workers for example, and in terms of how prevailing national laws pertaining to women in the field of labor, maternity provision and other social protection mechanisms affect women's labor market participation.

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CONCLUSION

This paper fundamentally paid attention to the linkages between migration and patriarchy, analysing how migration and patriarchy reinforce each other to impact on gender relations of nationals of Southern Africa. The paper concludes that the advent of colonial capitalism impacted on patriarchal and gender relations in Africa, owing to the shifting roles between women and men in response to the historical evolution of national political economies. Ironic transformations in gender roles are noted over time as migration leads women to become heads of households with limited autonomy in the rural areas in the absence of their husbands who are forcibly moved to the urban areas to support the rise of industrialisation and mining. The noted limited autonomy of women in the absence of their husbands emanates from the fact that the elderly men and teenage boys who remain in the villages with the women still wield more power over women as dictated by patriarchal social and gender norms. As Plaume (1940) argues, in a socially "normal" situation, the head of household was obligatorily the eldest male of the individuals present in the family. The gender relation prevailing over the age relation, a woman was statutorily a junior, outside any consideration of age. In the current dispensation, post-colonial, migration transforms female migrants into autonomous heads of households when they decide to migrate to other countries in search of greener pastures.

While migration reinforced patriarchal power dynamics by facilitating the formal employment of mostly men while women remained care takers with limited power nd autonomy in the rural areas, post colonialism, migration has challenged the patriarchal standards and norms of the African family, with women now also able to make personal decisions to migrate on their own. Policy restrictions that migration policies exert on women willing to migrate are noted in some African countries, yet in the main, the numbers of women migrating inter-regionally and internationally is on the rise, and migration is retaining a feminine face over time. Migration has also opened up opportunities for inter-marriages across regions, further challenging patriarchal notions of restrictive marriage laws. Migration policies in the main retain a patriarchal face. The inter-section of gender and migration policies complicates the migratory experiences of female migrants when compared to those of their male counterparts, hence the need for gender sensitive policy formulation aimed at equalizing the relation. As such, gender blind migration policies impact negatively on women and girls' opportunities to access good health, as gender discrimination remains one of the glaring social determinants if health. The paper recommends inter-sectoral actions[2] as a solution to the positive transformation of existing gender relations, as well as the enabler to the attainment of health related sustainable development goals, especially Goal 3 on health for all by the year 2030 (WHO, 2017).

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[2]All actions aimed at aligning the strategies and resources between actors from two or more policy sectors to achieve complementary objectives,[1] are central to the health-related sustainable development goals (SDGs).

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