

Gender and the Nature of Migration: Absence of One or Both Parents

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Abstract

The chapter begins with an overview of international cross-border migration to problematize underlying causes of cross-border migration by men and women in Zimbabwe. The gendered nature of migration elsewhere contextualises gender and the nature of migration in Zimbabwe. Bargaining and socialist–feminist theories guide the discussion. The extent of the impact of migration on families depends on the gender that migrate, the gender of the child cared for and the gender of the caregiver as well as the bargaining results. Traditionally, men dominated labour migration but women have since joined. Initially, migrants were uneducated or less educated, but it has broadened to include the highly educated, skilled and experienced professionals of both genders. However, more men than women migrate. Children remain in the hands of single parents, grandparents, and foster guardians. Preference for female caregivers has given rise to feminisation of care. Caregiving is not viewed as male role unless if there are females to assist otherwise; children suffer in the hands of males giving care without assistant of females. In Zimbabwe, there is still reliance on caregiving by relatives especially those from the mothers' side because of cultural beliefs. Modes of transport, length of stay, communication, decision-making related to migration all depend on gender.

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