

Migrants' self-perception of technical skills and occupational realities: A case of Zimbabwean School- Leaver Migrants in Botswana

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Abstract

The level of technical skills affects the integration of migrants into the host country's labour market. This study investigated the relationship between Zimbabwean school-leaver migrants' self-perception of technical skills and occupational realities. A mixed method research design was used in this study and systematic sampling was used to select respondents for the study. Questionnaires were administered on 60 respondents to collect quantitative data whilst 19 respondents provided qualitative data using semi-structured interviews. Findings suggested that most low-skilled migrants from Zimbabwe faced several challenges including failure to secure formal employment, obtain work and residence permits because of their low-level technical skills and qualifications. This challenge further affects migrants' social integration and economic status in the host country. Findings also revealed that there are no strategies to provide skills to migrant labour to assist them to join the mainstream labour market and reduce their life challenges in Botswana.

Keywords: Challenges, competencies, informal sector, low-skilled migrant, school-leaver, technical skills



Introduction

The level of migrants' technical skills and migration are intertwined as they affect migrants' integration into the host country's labour market and their economic prosperity (Sanz, 2018). Several scholars which include Bahl and Dietzen (2019), Geresu (2017), Mupinga, Burnett and Redmann (2005) refer to technical skills as those specialised hands-on skills and competencies needed to perform specific tasks, produce goods and solve existing problems. To equip learners with these technical skills, Zimbabwe included Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) curricula in general education at school level. The technical skills are meant to equip learners with elementary technical skills for self-employment after school, further training and to improve their employability (Mambo, 2010; Maunganidze, Faimau & Tapera, 2016). Despite the Zimbabwean government's efforts to invest in human capital to spur economic growth, school-leavers tend to migrate from the country on completion of high school (Mlambo, 2017). School-leavers migrate from Zimbabwe in search of employment and hope for better economic opportunities in the destination country. The question is whether technical skills acquired at school alone can sustain the livelihood of a school-leaver migrant in a host country? Although several studies reviewed labour migration in general, this study investigated the relationship between migrants' self-perception of their technical skills and occupational realities in Botswana.

Zimbabwean school-leavers have been migrating in large numbers into neighbouring Botswana starting from early 2000 (Kiwanuka & Monson, 2009). By 2009, an estimate of more than 40, 000 Zimbabwean migrants were staying in Botswana (Mlambo, 2017, p.14). Due to the nature of migration, many Zimbabwean migrants illegally enter, live and work in Botswana making it difficult to have a clear estimate of their numbers. An estimate of 26 000 unregistered Zimbabwean migrants are assumed to be living in Botswana currently. However, as of March 2021, Statistics Botswana (2021) reported that the majority foreign nationals with work permits in Botswana were from Zimbabwe at 1550 persons (45.1%) of total work permit holders in the country, and this figure mainly included skilled and professional Zimbabweans.

The 2012 population census in Zimbabwe revealed that, 36% of youths aged between 15-24 years formed 84% of the unemployed population (ZIMSTAT, 2012). The exact percentage of unemployed youths of the same cohort in Zimbabwe to date has not been ascertained but is believed to be beyond 70% of the total age group. This suggests that this cohort of youths were likely to migrate in search of employment and economic opportunities in other countries.

Gukurume (2018) argues that the informal sector remains the only alternative economic option for school leavers to engage with the unemployment crisis in Zimbabwe. Therefore, it can be noted that the major drivers of the young labour migration from Zimbabwe include, poor economy and protracted political problems that have resulted in reduced post-school employment and training opportunities, coupled with limited labour market options (International Organisation for Migration [IOM], 2016). On the other hand, Mlambo (2017, p. 14) and Crush et al. (2017) argue that school-leavers from Zimbabwe increasingly migrate into neighbouring Botswana probably due to proximity, social and family networks. The relative peace, value and stability of the Pula (P), the Botswana currency further attract the young labour migrants (Crush et al., 2017) despite reception and everyday challenges.

Although Mlambo (2017) states that low-skilled migrants face several challenging occupational realities in neighbouring South Africa which has a bigger economy, this does not deter several low-skilled labour migrants from crossing into Botswana in search

of employment opportunities, which they find in the low employment ranks. This study investigated the relationship between migrants' self-perception of technical skills and occupational realities in Botswana. The results can be used comparatively in other parts of the world. Although this cohort of migrants did not receive specialised training after school, they however do engage in various forms of economic activities related to hands-on jobs for survival in Botswana (IOM, 2016).

Studies on migrant labour found that, the level and type of technical skills affect the degree of migrant's social integration, level and type of jobs they take up, their economic mobility, quality of livelihood, opportunities for further development of knowledge and skills (Sanz, 2018, p.21; Yian and Parker, 2017). Despite the anticipation for economic opportunities and better quality of life in a host country, Chiswick and Miller (2011) found that low-skilled migrants face numerous occupational challenges and may not realise the anticipated benefits of migration due to their low-level skills. To understand the low-skilled migrant's occupational challenges, this study investigated the relationship between migrants' self-perception of technical skills and occupational realities in Botswana.

According to Chiswick and Miller (2011), school-leavers who migrate with no specialised training in any trade are regarded as low-skilled migrants because of their limited technical skills, and are more likely to find work in low-wage jobs. The question is, what type of occupational challenges do low-skilled migrants face in a destination country? Studies in Europe by Constant (2014) and in the United States of America by Dadush (2014) found that, the relevance of migrants' low technical skills is determined by their ability to adapt to existing production technologies and their motivation to learn new skills on the job. Therefore, the relevance of migrants' low technical skills in a host country becomes relative especially where migrants take up jobs even in situations where there is unemployment amongst citizens. For instance, Dadush (2014), Bahl et al. (2019) and Crush et al. (2017) found that low-skilled migrants settle for jobs in the informal sector where jobs are precarious and do not have social security as compared to jobs in the formal sector. The European Commission [EC] (2018) notes that in Europe, school leavers of migrant background without relevant technical skills and competencies, have a higher risk of unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion. Sanz (2018, p.23) echoes that low-skilled migrants end up taking jobs in the insecure informal sector to sustain themselves and are more likely to face social integration challenges. The migrants' challenges can be due to the transferability challenges of technical skills acquired from one country with different norms and practices, to a different cultural setting of the host country's labour market. It is against this background that this study investigated the relationship between migrants' self-perception of technical skills and occupational realities in a host country.

It is, however, necessary to understand the Zimbabwean school TVET in terms of its content, structure and aims to appreciate the nature of the technical skills that migrants possess.

Zimbabwean School TVET System

Zimbabwe school TVET follows a Competency Based Education and Training Approach (Munetsi, 1996). The main thrust of school TVET in the country is to inculcate the right work attitude in learners towards trade related work, equip them with the knowledge and related practice technical skills of the trade (Coltart, 2012, p. 8; Mandebvu, 1996). The key aim is for school leavers to apply the acquired technical skills and knowledge to solve

problems they encounter in everyday life. School TVET in Zimbabwe is available from the last two grades in primary school through to university level and the TVET subjects are embedded in the general school curricula. However, not all schools offer the full array of TVET subjects due to a limitation of resources (Mupinga et al., 2005, p. 12). School TVET subjects include, Building Studies, Woodwork, Metalwork, Technical Graphics, Home economics and Agriculture, Music Art and Agriculture, Computer Studies, amongst others. These are examined at Ordinary (O) or Advanced (A) level, which are the two secondary school exit levels in Zimbabwe. Some schools offer National Foundation Certificates (NFC) from Form 3 to 4 (Coltart, 2012, p. 23). The NFCs are single subject courses which are more specialised than the related practical subjects offered at secondary school level. The argument about the NFCs at school level is that school level practical subjects are not doing enough to equip students with skills for employment and a more serious thrust in skills training is necessary (Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training [CIET], 1999). The NFCs are also meant to make secondary school curricula more occupationally oriented to enhance the employability of school graduates in most sectors of the economy and make further training easier.

The methodology section explains the mixed method research design used in this study by combining elements of qualitative and quantitative approaches in data collection and analysis. The discussion section interprets the findings and their implications. The results and conclusions bring to the fore, the occupational challenges faced by low-skilled Zimbabwean school-leavers who migrated to Botswana. The results helped to suggest recommendations that can help to reduce occupational challenges faced by low-skilled Zimbabwean school-leaver in general, and how the government of Botswana could benefit from migrant labour, in particular. A theoretical framework that guides the research is presented, as well as the review of literature on challenges faced by low-skilled migrants. The study was guided by the following questions:

- i) What are the educational levels of low-skilled Zimbabwe migrants who are working in Botswana?
- ii) Which type of technical skills do Zimbabwe school-leaver migrants possess for the labour market in Botswana?
- iii) How relevant are the technical skills possessed by the school-leaver migrants for the job market in Botswana?
- iv) What are the occupational challenges faced by Zimbabwean school-leaver migrants in Botswana?

Theoretical framework

The study is grounded in the relevance theory by Sperber and Wilson (1981). The theory asserts that relevance is interpreted from a social context, abstract cognitive and reflective thinking processes which are enhanced by educational intervention. Relevance theory was used in this study because it explains the extent to which inferences affect intentions. It was used as a guide to evaluate the relevance of migrant school leavers' technical skills to the job market in a destination country, and the challenges they face as low-skilled migrants. The challenges faced by the low-skilled migrants mirror the relevance of their technical skills to the host country's labour market. Technical skills which are task oriented and learnt at school can be perceived to be relevant if they are aligned to the realities of adult skills needs after school. The theory is often used in linguistics to explain pragmatic inferences and that communication which is psychologically realistic, and

empirically plausible (ibid). The relevance theory in this study, helps to explain the relevance of what is taught based on stated goals and objectives from school syllabi, and those skills needed for work.

Relevance theory acknowledges that humans have prospective intuitions and strive to find that meaning which fits their expectations of relevance in the mind. The theory suggests that in education, relevance is subjective to the expectations of the end user after a teaching and learning intervention and these expectations can be personal or functional. From one viewpoint, personal relevance at school level is when learning is connected to an individual student's interests, aspirations, and life experiences. Murinda (2014) argues that migrants perceive technical skills to be relevant if the skills enable them to get employment and increased income. From the other view point, curriculum relevance can be functional when migrants have the relevant skills to successfully execute the jobs they get to the satisfaction of employers (UNESCO, 2017). Relevance theory is therefore concerned with cost-benefit trade-offs; effort put in should yield relevance (Sperber & Wilson, 1981). The elements in the cost-benefit trade-off are resources put in, cost of processing effort and the gains assumed at the end of the process. School leavers expect acquired technical skills to enable them to find economic opportunities for survival.

Literature review

Challenges faced by Migrants- a Literature Review

It appears that low-skilled migrants face several challenges despite the call by United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) goal number 10.7 which calls for "safe, regular and responsible migration through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies to reduce inequality within and among countries" (United Nations, [UN], 2017). Despite the anticipation for better economic opportunities after migration, Crush et al. (2017, p. 13) posit that low technical skills hinder migrants' opportunities for decent jobs in the host country's labour market. As a result, low-skilled migrants' challenges emanate from their failure to secure decent jobs and residence permits in a host country since their skills may not be regarded as "scarce", specialised and functionally relevant to benefit the host country. Other common challenges include poor social networks, language problems and, poor social integration in the societies they live in (UN, 2017). It is also further observed by Fejes, Schreiber-Barsch and Wildemeersch (2020) that it is not only the inability to converse in local languages but also not understanding the cultural values of the receiving country that can pose greater challenges to labour migrants.

Lack of recognition of low educational qualifications and skills

Lucci et al. (2016) found that in Europe, for example, migrants with low skills and qualifications are more likely to find jobs in the informal sectors where the general rewards are generally low which in turn, will affect the quality of migrants' lives. In Africa, studies by IOM (2016, p.3) have shown that in Kenya about Somali low-skilled migrants, and those from Eritrea to Saudi Arabia, young migrants and refugees with low educational qualifications live in crowded camps and cannot access decent jobs. Study findings by IOM (2016); Mlambo (2017); and Pellizzari (2010) suggest that low-skilled migrants tend to take up those jobs which are not taken up by citizens to sustain themselves, especially those jobs which are menial and of low-level wages. In such

circumstances, migrants face further challenges of social integration, poor personal economic status and development.

Challenges to find jobs

Anatol et al. (2013, p. 25) found that migrants often rely on personal networks and family ties for the first jobs, and survival in the initial days in a receiving country. Thebe (2017) argues that personal networks help with information about job opportunities through referrals. For example, Pellizzari (2010) found that more than one third of low-skilled workers in Europe reported that they found their jobs through friends and relatives. In Italy, about 42% of low-skilled migrant workers indicated that they found their first jobs through personal contacts as compared to 31% of citizens (ibid). In another study, Konle-Seidl (2018, p. 23) notes that labour migrants who enter in a country without a job offer find it difficult to get jobs due to legal restrictions on the labour market, and rely on social networks to get their initial jobs. It is, therefore, more likely that people migrate to those countries where they have friends and relatives for better arrival reception.

In another study by Colussi (2015), findings suggest that migrants of the same nationality, religious background and speakers of the same language frequently refer each other to their employers leading to increased rate of arrival job offers to migrants. For instance, the same study accounted for 26% of non-Western migrants who got their first jobs in Denmark through social and personal contacts. In a similar study in South Africa by Mlambo (2017, p.14) findings suggest that, to a greater extent, Somali migrants are more likely to find jobs in companies aligned to people of the same religion or they would work alongside each other in the informal sector. However, both studies note that social networks build working cohorts which have negative effects on social integration of migrants, slow acquisition of local languages and new skills, reduced job search efforts to some migrants in so far that they may stay for a long duration without jobs, bound in the cohorts (ibid). On the same note, Heimo et al. (2020) found that amongst peers, the level of skills transfer depends on “mutual learning, a sense of peerness, and a low hierarchy in the group” (ibid). This suggests that low-skilled migrants can learn from each other in non-formal situations in the workplace.

Language challenges

The ability to speak local languages in a destination country has proved to be an important skill for migrants to overcome challenges of social integration, economic development, development of other new skills and, a major factor in placing a migrant into the labour market (Sanz, 2018, p. 23; Chiswick & Paul, 2014, p. 5). For example, Lochmann et al. (2018) established that there is a positive correlation between ability to speak local languages and probability of getting jobs in France. Similar results were noted in Germany by Chiswick and Miller (2011) and in the United Kingdom by (Dustmann et al., 2010). Therefore, the aforementioned studies suggest that migrants gainfully learn the local languages through social interactions in the communities they stay and at work. For instance, a study in France by Lochmann et al. (2018) revealed that in 2013 alone, 65% of migrants with very good French speaking and writing skills had jobs compared to 56% who had limited skills of the language. In the other years, statistics were at 59% to 43% in 2011, and 48% to 32% in 2010 on employability rate after language lessons (Colussi, 2015). This implies that, ability to speak a local language yields positive results on employability of migrants. In the UK Dustmann et al. (2010) found that ability to speak

English influences the migrant's market value in the labour market; in terms of productivity and level of income and, this could apply to migrants in other countries.

The importance of language proficiency in migration between Zimbabwe and Botswana was determined in this study. There are common ethnic languages between some tribes in the two countries, and English is the official language used for communication and doing business. However, Botswana has several native languages which migrants must cope up with in their job searches (Chebane, 2016). The challenges of not being conversant in Botswana native languages for school-leaver migrants were explored in this study.

Level of technical skills and migrants' jobs

Andersson et al. (2019) argue that the increasing number of low-skilled refugees' in Europe contributed to the growth of low paid jobs. The low-skilled migrants often take up those jobs which are mostly menial, temporary, and short term contracts in nature that are often shunned by citizens (Dadush, 2014; Campbell and Crush, 2012). In another study, Benach et al. (2011) found that low-skilled migrants find jobs more easily in the agriculture, food processing and construction sectors. These sectors require abundant manual labour but often, migrants with low skills have challenges of securing work permits because of their low human capital. Therefore, it can be argued that the level of technical skills impact on migrants' placement in the labour market in a host country with debatable effects on their economic prosperity. A survey on employment of low-skilled labour in Europe by Dengler and Matthes (2018) revealed that, on one hand, regulations of labour markets generally push people with low human capital to low-wage jobs. As a result, migrants in the low-skills category tend to have limited job mobility. However, Sanz (2018, p. 21) and UNESCO (2017b, p. 23) observed that, to a lesser extent, improved personal, job and informal social networks overtime make low-skilled migrants to learn new skills and occupy better jobs resulting in other reduced social challenges.

Several other studies by Segatti (2017, p. 18); Mlambo (2017, p. 14), Dadush (2014) and OECD (2017) indicate that low-skilled migrants take up even those jobs shunned by citizens and at times they work where their safety is compromised. For instance, the African Centre for Migration and Society [ACMS] (2017) revealed that foreign born migrants in South Africa are more likely to be employed in precarious jobs in the informal sector, on short contract and low-paying jobs where they are likely to be exposed to several challenges. Hence, this study investigated challenges faced by low-skilled migrants in Botswana.

Research methodology

The study was conducted in the South East district of Botswana which included Gaborone, the capital city of the country. This region was chosen because it covers the main economic hub in the country and several migrant workers would be found working in this region in various sectors. Other regions of the country have limited economic activities because of the dry weather conditions affecting the greater of Botswana. The study was conducted between February and September of 2020.

The researcher used a mixed method research design combining elements of qualitative and quantitative approaches in data collection and analysis in one research (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 124). The elements included viewpoints, data collection and

presentation methods, inference techniques for the broad purposes of breadth of understanding, and corroboration. Tieddlie and Tashakkori (2013, p. 11) argue that mixed method research design provides for triangulation of data collection and analysis methods. A systematic sampling design which is a mixed sampling design with characteristics of both probability and non-probability sampling methods (Kumar, 2011) was used to select participants from a target population of migrant Zimbabweans working in different job sectors including construction, farming, and domestic jobs. Probability sampling was used to select areas where the participants were to be drawn from within the region, and random sampling was done to get the exact participants for the research. Probability sampling was chosen as it afforded an equal and independent chance for all Zimbabwean migrant school-leavers in the chosen clusters to be picked for the study (Kothari, 2014; Kumar, 2011). Questionnaires were administered on 60 school leaver migrants and 19 responded to the interviews during data collection.

Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data, whilst interviews collected qualitative data to allow narrative accounts to be heard and probing for further clarifications (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 5). The questionnaires were in English comprising definite and predetermined items derived from the research questions and literature review. Some items of the questionnaire were close-ended whilst others were open-ended to invite the respondent to clarify experiences. The questionnaire had three (3) sections and thirty items (30). Section A had items asking for biographical data about the migrants. Section B asked for TVET subject(s) done at school, dates of migration, and economic activities migrants were engaging in Botswana. The last section C solicited for the occupational realities and challenges faced by Zimbabwean school-leaver migrants in Botswana.

The researcher hand-delivered the questionnaires with an introductory letter requesting respondents to answer and return the questionnaires. Where respondents requested time to answer the questionnaire, the researcher personally followed up to ensure maximum return of completed questionnaires. The questionnaire was tested for stability and homogeneity to ensure its reliability. To achieve this, the questionnaire was adjusted and re-administered with the same participants on whom piloting was done with the instrument as they were accessible to the researcher. To ensure validity of instruments, each research question was treated separately and the type of data the research question solicited for, whether qualitative or quantitative was first established (Cohen et al., 2007, p.133).

Interview guides were used to collect qualitative data for methodological and respondent triangulation. The guide had predetermined qualitative open-ended questions to get valid and reliable comparable primary data especially when participants were to give clear explanations of their experiences (Cohen et al., 2007). The guide helped the interviewer to have a smooth flow of questioning and recording during the interview, even after digressing when probing some questions for clarification. This helped in getting specific responses which were not likely to come out of a questionnaire, especially views and opinions (Creswell, 2007). The guide was given to the research participants ahead of the scheduled interview time to prepare responses, in some cases. Some of the interview were conducted in Shona, the native Zimbabwean language and later encoded to English. The purpose of the interview was explained first to seek consent and rapport with the interviewee and to get accurate data. For ethical reasons, permission was first sought to record the interview so that the researcher did not need to take notes during the interview. Interviewees were coded M1-M19 (M standing for Migrant) and the same codes were used to present the interview data results. Coding was done for ethical reasons as a way of protecting interviewees' anonymity and confidentiality.

Data analysis techniques for both quantitative and qualitative data were used concurrently since the mixed method design allowed this from data gathering (Creswell, 2007). Questionnaire quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics with the aid of SPSS. Narratives were used to analyse qualitative data.

Results

Since the study used a mixed method research design, data was analysed using both statistical and qualitative techniques concurrently. This was done to explain the inferences from the statistical data and relationships between responses to the research questions.

Migrants' bio data

The participants who responded to the questionnaire were 60, and the total number was dominated by males who were n=49 (81.7%) and n=11(18.3%) females. The findings suggested that there were more male than female Zimbabwean low-skilled migrants in Botswana. Statistics suggest that the low-skilled migrants were around 18 years by the time they migrated. This implies that they migrated after completing high school at 16 years which is the exit age at Ordinary level and 18 years at Advanced level according to the Zimbabwean school education cycle (Coltart, 2012). However, it can be stated that the study did not achieve statistical representation of the low-skilled migrants in Botswana since there is no accurate number of this cohort of migrants. Several low - skilled migrants entered into Botswana are living and working in the country illegally and cannot be tracked (Mlambo, 2017).

Migrants' qualifications and their relevance

A question was asked to establish the high school qualifications of the migrants by the time they migrated to Botswana. An analysis was also done to check the relevance of the qualifications and technical skills migrants learnt as shown in the cross tabulation below in Table 1.

Table 1. Rating on relevance of migrants' qualifications with the job market

Qualifications	How do you rate the relevance of your qualifications with the job-market?			
	Relevant	Not Relevant	Not Sure	Total
Zimbabwe Junior Certificate	11	2	0	13
Ordinary Level	30	4	4	38
Ordinary level with NFC	3	1	0	4
Advanced level	4	0	1	5
Total	48	7	5	60

Findings in Table 1 indicated that most of the respondents completed “O” Level which is the lower high school exit point in Zimbabwe. Amongst those migrants with “O” level qualification, a few of them have an additional NFC qualification in different practical subject areas and, they indicated that their qualifications and skills were relevant to the job market in the host country. However, those respondents who had ‘A’ level high school qualifications and were fewer than those who did “O” level maybe because with ‘A’ level some school leavers enroll into universities, technical colleges or other professional courses other than to migrate (Munetsi, 1996). With only high school elementary technical skills, such migrants are regarded to be low-skilled (Chiswick & Miller, 2011).

It was necessary to find out how migrants perceived the relevance of the technical subjects they did to the type of jobs migrants engaged in to sustain their livelihoods in Botswana, and the results are in Table 2.

Table 2. Rating on relevance of subject technical skills with job market

Subject	Rating on relevance of subject technical skills to the job market			
	Relevant	Not Relevant	Not sure	Total
Woodwork	6	0	0	6
Building Studies	20	5	2	27
Technical Graphics	1	0	0	1
Agriculture	15	1	0	16
Food & Nutrition	1	0	0	1
Fashion & Fabrics	3	1	2	6
Computer Studies	0	0	1	1
Metal Work	1	0	0	1
None	1	0	0	1
Total	48	7	5	60

Table 2 shows that most respondents had done a TVET practical subject at school. Building Studies was done by most respondents, followed by Agriculture, Woodwork and Fashion and Fabrics alike. Interview results revealed that most schools were offering Building Studies and Agriculture maybe because the subjects did not require expensive training consumables and electricity, as such the subjects could be institutionalised even in remote rural settings (Misozi et al., 2013). Findings revealed that most migrants found the technical skills they acquired in the subjects to be relevant in the job market of the host country.

Sectors where low-skilled migrants worked in Botswana

Data in Table 3 below shows the subjects done by migrants with sectors where migrants were working, and the information helped to establish if the TVET subjects and technical skills learnt by migrants (see Table 2) were related to the job sectors they worked in Botswana.

Table 3. Subjects done by migrants with sectors where low- skilled migrants worked

Subject	Job sectors where migrants worked					Total
	Construction	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Domestic	Landscaping	
Woodwork	5	0	0	0	1	6
Building	26	0	0	1	0	27
Studies						
Technical	1	0	0	0	0	1
Graphics						
Agriculture	13	1	1	1	0	16
Food & Nutrition	1	0	0	0	0	1
Fashion & Fabrics	0	0	1	5	0	6
Computer	1	0	0	0	0	1
Studies						
Metal Work	1	0	0	0	0	1
None	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total	48	1	2	8	1	60

Table 3 shows that most of the low-skilled migrants were working in those sectors related to the subjects they had done at school that is, in the construction sector, followed by those working in domestic jobs, manufacturing sector and in agriculture related jobs, respectively. Therefore, results suggest that the low-skilled migrants were working in the construction sector where most people with skills from Building Studies and Woodwork worked.

Although the results revealed a lower number of migrants in domestic jobs, this does not suggest that the sector needs high skills. The low numbers can be because jobs in the domestic realm are difficult for migrants to obtain, however not because the jobs need high skills. Often job seekers and researchers lack access to enter the relatively private areas (Ibnu et al., 2021). However, findings by Ibnu et al. (2021) were that women migrant workers who work as domestic workers do not get good treatment from their employers as compared to native employees of the same skills level, which is a notable challenge in this sector. Further studies could be done to find out specifically why there could be fewer low-skilled migrants working as domestic workers in Botswana.

It was also necessary to find out the nature of contracts low-skilled migrants had by each job sector. Results are indicated in the cross tabulation shown in Table 4.

Nature of contracts for low-skilled migrants

The nature of contracts low-skilled migrants had, whether long or short term contracts and the sector where they worked are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Nature of contracts for low-skilled migrants with job sectors

Nature of Work	Job Sector					Total
	Construction	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Domestic	Landscaping	
Fixed long term	2	0	0	1	0	3
Short term work	39	1	2	7	1	50
Project based	7	0	0	0	0	7
Total	48	1	2	8	1	60

Table 4 shows that most school leaver migrants were engaged on short term contract casual jobs yet a few had fixed long-term contracts. This larger number of migrants on short contract jobs worked in the construction sector which, by its nature, is a sector characterised by short duration and once-off jobs. Low-skilled migrants possibly and easily get jobs in the construction and agriculture sectors because the sectors generally require abundant manual labour on short durations. These jobs may be shunned by even those citizens with low job-skills. The agricultural sector in Botswana opens up for seasonal jobs of short durations in the vast cattle and food production farms, and tends to employ several migrant workers. The government of Botswana issues work permits for low-skilled farmworker jobs such as herd boys for as long as the applications are supported by the employers. The few migrants who are employed on fixed long-term contracts may have gained some recognised local work experience because of their long stay in the country. However, it was necessary to find out how the low-skilled migrants perceived the relevance of their technical skills to the jobs they were doing, their perceptions are shown in Table 5.

Perceptions on the relevance of technical skills acquired in the learning of TVET subjects at school in enhancing employment chances

This question was asked to obtain the views and perceptions of low-skilled migrants domiciled in Botswana on the relationship between TVET technical skills learnt in school (see Table 2) and the skills needed in the workplaces based on their experiences (RQ iii). Although respondents were asked to provide a rating from “Relevant”, “Not relevant” and “Not sure”, they were also given chance to elaborate on their perceptions on the questionnaire and through interviews. Ratings by the respondents are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5. Rating on relevance of technical skills to available jobs

Rating	Frequency	Percentage
Relevant	48	80.0
Not Relevant	7	11.7
Not sure	5	8.3
Total	60	100.0

In Table 5, data shows most of the respondents perceived the technical skills they acquired from school to be “*Relevant*” as they were able to be effective and accomplish their tasks. Murinda (2014) argues that migrants would perceive technical skills to be relevant if the skills enable them to get employment and increased income. According to Sperber and Wilson (1981), the relevance theory, indicates that humans acknowledge prospective intuition of relevance once there is meaning in what fits the expectation of practical relevance. From a functional relevance perspective, most of the school leaver migrants concurred that they could adapt and adopt learnt skills to take up economic opportunities to sustain their livelihoods in Botswana (Jeon, 2019). If respondents' views can be considered as a measure of TVET curriculum relevance, Lauglo (2006) posits that curriculum relevance is seen through external effectiveness if migrants can get and perform their work effectively. On the other hand, some respondents indicated that the skills were ‘*Not relevant*’ whilst others were ‘*Not Sure*’ if the technical skills from TVET subjects were relevant or not to the type of jobs they were doing. These responses can be linked to some low skilled migrants who may have learnt new skills altogether from their peers overtime when they had worked alongside each other but had not done a related TVET subject in school (UNESCO, 2017, p. 23).

Challenges faced by low-skilled Zimbabwean migrants in Botswana

The study sought to establish challenges (RQ iii) faced by low-skilled school leaver migrants who were in Botswana. The questionnaire had a provision for respondents to state at least five (5) challenges they faced. Some respondents wrote less, but some wrote more than the requested number of challenges on the questionnaire, but all responses were captured hence the varying frequencies. These challenges are summarised in Table 6.

Table 6. Challenges faced by low-skilled migrants

Problem	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of work/residence permit and arrest by police	45	75
Cannot work on big jobs	2	3.3
No payment after work	12	20
Limited power to negotiate high charges for jobs	7	11.6
Failure to register companies	2	3.3
Limited technical skills for complex jobs	7	11.6
Prolonged time with no jobs	26	39
Lack of money for food and accommodation	21	35
Language problem	3	5
Not being accepted by locals in communities	10	16.6
No access to hospital services	2	3.3
Unaffordable cell phone & internet bundles	45	75

Amongst several challenges shown in Table 6, most of respondents indicated that they had a major challenge of acquiring work and residence permits. For instance, some respondents said:

M2: *I don't have a passport and any specialised training so it is zero chance to get a permit.*

M7: *No employer offered to help me acquire a permit because of my low qualifications.*

A cross tabulation was done to check on the relationship of challenges with availability of work or residency permit. Table 7 shows these results.

Table 7. Migrant challenges and availability of residency and work permits

Challenges	Do you have a work or residency permit?	
	Yes	No
Lack of work and residence permit	0	13
Arrest by police for working without permit	0	13
No payment after work	0	5
Limited power to negotiate high charges for jobs	0	1
Limited technical skills for complex jobs	0	4
Prolonged time with no jobs	0	6
Lack of money for food and accommodation	1	12
Language problem	1	0
Unaffordable cell phone & internet bundles	1	45

Table 7 shows that most of the migrants in this cohort cannot secure work or residency permits and this challenge in turn results in a myriad of their occupational challenges. This challenge of failing to get work or a residence permit is compounded by the nature of migration, whereby several young migrants from Zimbabwe cross the borders into Botswana illegally through ungazetted points and are not registered (Mlambo, 2017). Often, these young migrants stay illegally in Botswana as they cannot afford to obtain passports at home due to challenging economic conditions and red tape. The lack of a valid passport to obtain a permit is yet another source of other migrants' social, economic, and operational challenges in the host country. Furthermore, several low-skilled migrants only have embodied skills with no paper qualifications to show as a requirement when applying for permits (IOM, 2018). Nevertheless, several low-skilled migrants without working permits get arrested and are deported when they are caught working illegally.

Interviews revealed that often, to avoid arrests by police, migrants depended on establishing good rapport with employers for protection and not disclosing their legal status as well as taking risks when working without permits. Some migrants preferred to work in areas not frequented by police, and relied on communication with peers through phone calls, WhatsApp, and Facebook about police movement. The following was said by some migrants:

M1 (construction): *For the past 10 years, all people I worked for recommend me for other jobs. Employers protect us by locking us behind security walls and gates, bribing security officers, working at night and we work alongside locals as cover on some jobs.*

M18 (domestic worker): *We rely on communication through social media to alert each other on police movements, if there are police raids, we don't go out for work.*

Some respondents indicated that they had limited negotiating powers when charging and doing quotations for jobs, whilst others were forced to charge less than what citizens could charge for the same jobs. Therefore, this implied that low- skills limited migrants in this cohort, were restricted to low paying small jobs as a compromise to support their livelihoods. The following was said by some of the respondents:

M8 (construction worker): *People with projects just offer less money for a job, we end up taking the jobs because if I refuse my next brother will take it.*

M19 (domestic worker): *In domestic jobs there are common unofficial rates that we negotiate around and some employers can offer if they have extra jobs and are happy with the way you work overtime.*

Despite migrants successfully completing their jobs, some employers reneged on paying for work done. Such employers would take advantage that the unregistered migrants cannot report such cases to the labour courts for protection since they do not have the right to render their services in the country without valid work or residency permit. At times they were arrested before they finished or got paid for work done.

Migrants also faced the challenge of prolonged non-working periods and they struggled to raise money for accommodation and food. Migrants ended up taking up any form of employment even the menial jobs not related to their experiences for payment. At times migrants depended on each other during the prolonged periods of unemployment. For instance, some respondents said:

M1 (Construction worker): *We get small jobs for short durations, but at times we go for days and weeks with no work, it's difficult.*

M11 (Domestic worker): *I have my clients where I rotate for cleaning the house and washing on agreed rates. These employers trust and pay me well on time.*

Since migrants often rely on personal networks and referrals by peers and previous employers, these may hinge on availability of such gadgets as cell phones, the ability to buy internet bundles to facilitate communication on social networks, and freedom to move around in search of jobs. At times migrants do not have the gadgets nor are able to afford to buy bundles to communicate. When asked how they got their jobs, the following were some of the responses:

M3 (construction worker): *Employers always refer us to their friends for the next jobs.*

M10 (domestic worker): *When I came to Botswana, my friend got me the first job and I also refer my brothers to possible which jobs I cannot do, especially the construction and other heavy jobs.*

Some respondents indicated that they had challenges of speaking local languages and this affected their job-search hence, prolonged durations without work and negotiation skills. Some communities in Botswana speak other different native languages other than the dominant Setswana, whilst Kalanga and Ndebele are dominant in the Northern region of Botswana which borders Zimbabwe (Chebane, 2016). Kalanga and Ndebele are also some of the native languages spoken in Zimbabwe, and Shona being the dominant language. Therefore, some migrants can be conversant with the Ndebele and Kalanga. Since this study was conducted in the Southern region of Botswana, in and around Gaborone the capital city of the country, Setswana is dominant and of course, with people who speak other native languages. Although English can be the common business language, not all migrants and citizens maybe so fluent. Languages spoken by migrants are in Table 8 and the perceived advantages of speaking local languages are summarised in Table 9.

Challenges of speaking local languages

The challenges of speaking local languages were explored and how this impacted on the livelihoods of low-skilled migrants. Local languages spoken by migrants other than English are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Local languages spoken by school leaver migrants in Botswana

Local Languages	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Setswana	37	61.7	61.7
Kalanga	10	16.7	16.7
Kalanga & Setswana	11	18.3	18.3
Ndebele	1	1.7	1.7
None	1	1.7	1.7
Total	60	100.0	100.0

As shown in Table 8, except for one, all other respondents could speak at least one local language in Botswana, and most respondents were conversant with Setswana followed by Kalanga, and yet some migrants could speak both languages. Ndebele, a common language spoken in both countries Zimbabwe and Botswana was spoken by the least number of migrants. The results suggest that migrants make an effort to learn local languages to facilitate ease of doing business. Migrants indicated that it was important to be able to speak local languages in a host country as shown in Table 9.

Respondents were asked to state if there were advantages from their ability to speak local languages. They were to choose either “YES” or “NO” and were asked to elaborate on their responses, results are in Table 9.

Table 9. Advantages of speaking local languages by migrants

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	6	10.0	10.0
Yes- For Negotiating jobs	28	46.7	46.7
Yes- For Socialising	8	13.3	13.3
Yes- For communication	13	21.7	21.7
No	5	8.3	8.3
Total	60	100.0	100.0

Most of the respondents indicated that the ability to speak at least one of the local languages gave them advantages when communicating with locals during job search, negotiating payments, and social integration in the communities they were staying. The few respondents who did not see an advantage of speaking the local languages could be those who either migrated already speaking Botswana native languages or those who are now fluent in the languages and take it as normal. Therefore, responses suggest that the ability to speak native languages can expand the low-skilled migrants' socio-economic opportunities since they interact with native peers of low-skills who may only converse in local languages and not English. However, it is important for migrants to be able to communicate in English as they also meet clients/employers who speak English only, and it is the language they can use when purchasing materials in shops.

The study revealed that most low-skilled migrants were earning low wages, a little above the minimum wage in Botswana, and could not meet their basic needs. Although earnings for low-skilled migrants were low, Luckanachai and Rieger (2010, p. 5) found that overtime, migrants may get more jobs which can boost their overall earnings with increased stay in a host country due to improved social contacts and referrals. However, low earnings continued to further keep low-skilled migrants on the lower continuum of economic status despite the envisaged benefits of migration.

Conclusions

The study concluded that Zimbabwean school-leaver migrants possessed low-technical skills and the level of skills restricted these migrants to those jobs that are not complex. Findings revealed differences between Zimbabwean school-leaver migrants' self-perception of their technical skills and occupational realities they meet Botswana's labour market.

However, the low-skilled migrants perceived the technical skills they acquired from school to be relevant for the type and level of jobs they were doing. The study findings further suggested that most of the Zimbabwe low-skilled migrants' were reliant on less complex jobs in the construction, agriculture and domestic job sectors of Botswana on short term contract casual jobs where social security and wages were low. Therefore, findings suggest that low-skilled migrants tend to find work in the precarious non-formal sector.

On the occupational challenges faced by low-skilled Zimbabwean migrants, the study found that this cohort of migrants cannot secure work or residency permits because

of the low status of their skills which have no scarcity premium in the destination country. This challenge resulted to more of the low-skilled migrants' occupational challenges in Botswana. Some of the subsequent occupational challenges as a result of not having work or residency permits included persistent arrests by police, non-payment after doing jobs, limited power to negotiate competitive rates for jobs, not being conversant with local languages, prolonged time with no jobs and poor earnings.

To a limited extent, some of the occupational challenges were due to the ability to speak some the native languages where migrants sought jobs, although most migrants could speak at least one of the popular local language in Botswana that is Setswana or Kalanga. Most of the migrants agreed that the ability to speak a local language affected their social integration into the communities they lived in, finding jobs and other socio-economic opportunities. Low-skilled migrants were accused of bringing unnecessary competition to low skilled jobs which could be taken up by citizens with low-level skills. As such, the study concluded that the level and type of technical skills have a bearing on the occupational challenges encountered by migrants in a destination country. Low-skilled migrants face occupational challenges of regularising their stay, finding jobs, low socio-economic status, and poor quality of life in the destination country.

Whilst the research has valuable practical and social implications, it has some limitations. The research was done in one region of Botswana, which is characterised by fast growth of infrastructure and industries in construction and manufacturing. The geographic expansiveness of Botswana could not allow the researcher to cover other regions. The findings could not be generalised to other regions in the country because they have limited economic activities and lower numbers of migrants competing for jobs. However, there could be some other migrants working in those regions not covered by the research who could give valuable data for the research results to be generalisable.

For further studies, similar studies could be conducted in other regions of the country to establish the relationship between migrants' self-perceptions of their technical skills and occupational realities in the areas they stay. The research can also be extended to other countries like South Africa, which hosts many Zimbabwean school-leaver migrants and, for comparability of findings with other parts of the world experiencing the same phenomenon of low-skilled labour migration. For policy, the recommendations are that identified occupational challenges faced by Zimbabwean school-leavers can be used to realign school TVET curriculum competencies to the skills needed for work. The government of Botswana in particular, can benefit from migrant labour if they can come up with policies that can regularise the stay and working of some migrants.

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