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Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the second issue of the Journal of History and Development. This issue explores ranging issues pertaining to development in Africa.

The Editor in Chief would like to thank editors and manuscript reviewers for taking their time to work towards the publication of this issue.

For your comments do not hesitate to contact us.

Enjoy your reading

Percyslage Chigora

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Africa's Development in the Market Sphere: The problematic of Transcending the Affective**Economy****by****John Gasu****Abstract**

The theoretical discourse on Africa's development process has since the introduction of neoliberal programs in the 1980s, converged around the market logic. The efficacy of the market in addressing issues of underdevelopment has been touted; as Africa is expected to benefit from the global neoliberal triumphalism. The paper, however, interrogates the underlying assumptions for the universal adoption of the market order in Africa. While not debating the efficacy of the market order, it is argued that the persistence of affective economy in its pristine and hybridized forms, undercuts the effectiveness of the market in Africa. It is argued that the discourse on Africa's development should move away from grand assumptions that overlook the particularities of African socioeconomic formations. In this respect, it is posited that in pushing through the market order, one needs to recognize the traditional-modern binary character of Africa's social formations and factor into consideration, as had been done by the modernists.

Key words: Affective economy, Market sphere, Africa's development

Introduction

There is an emerging conceptual line that marks off the neoliberal market order from the social and economic notions that preceded it. The employment of concepts to analyze the African situation has largely moved away from the traditional-modern dichotomies of the past. The teleological view, in which the African development process was previously captured, conceived of the African situation as a transformation from its emblematic traditional socioeconomic formations to destinations that were modern¹ and Western (Thompson 2001). This line of thought normally contrasted Western socioeconomic formations with the significant others; and then produced dichotomies that largely reflected theorist-specific continua. Accounts on Africa are abundant about its communal close-knitted kinship social arrangements that deny it of the establishment of effective individualistic capitalist institutions that would facilitate the development of market systems (Owusu 1992; Gyekye 1997). With the transfusion of neoliberal order onto the African scene via the structural adjustment programs (SAPs), there has been a general mute on the state of preparedness of African social formations for the capitalist order.

This paper makes it a core issue to interrogate the underlying assumptions for the universal adoption of the market order in Africa. It is argued that the persistence of affective economy in its pristine and hybridized forms, are the negating forces on the market order. To undertake this task, the rest of the work is sectionalized to address the following sub-themes: (a) conceptual clarifications; (b) traditional social order and affective economy; (3) problematic of transcending the affective economy; and (4) conclusion.

Conceptual Clarifications

The existence of relative prices in a competitive environment among individuals and organizations, encapsulate the tenets of the *market*. The principal agents in the market are, therefore, rational private individuals acting in that capacity; or as rational collective producers and consumers. In this

¹ This conception of development is typically adopted by the modernists that visualize development as a diffusionist transformation along a unilinear route.

regard, 'capitalism' becomes the most approximate expressive form of the market system; hence in this paper both terms are used interchangeably. The underlying logic and rationality of the market (capitalist) systems are thus illustrated by the following: individualism, acquisitiveness, self-aggrandizement, investment and profit-maximizing calculus.

In this sense, there is a fundamental contradiction in the cultural context in which the market system operates and the socioeconomic arrangements that engender the 'affective' economy in Africa. An *affective economy*, on the other hand, can be described as a system of production, distribution and consumption that is principally determined by emotional attachments that bind familial or community members together, and in which the maintenance of social cohesion and harmony takes a central position in the scheme of social affairs. The affective economy, therefore, reflects a collective-driven solidarity generated by a close-knitted society which by its nature fosters an economic arrangement based on communal appropriation and consumption. It is these considerations for collective security, along consanguine lines, that an affective economy frowns on individuality and self-aggrandizement. In this regard, the affective economy is a fundamental negation of the market economic order.

The recognition of the basic difference between traditional African social and economic order and the Western-formatted market system had been the focus of modernization theorists.² The roots of these theories are deep in the genealogy of the evolutionists. With the incursion of Western culture, African societies have been undergoing cultural osmosis that has culminated in their binary nature: the 'traditional' and the 'modern' systems (Lewis 1954). The effort to categorize, so as to define, what constitutes the 'traditional' and the 'modern' has led to varying polar opposite taxonomic descriptions that attempt to depict the realities of the two socioeconomic formations.

² See Lewis, A. (1954) 'Economic development and unlimited supply of labor' *The Manchester School of Economics and Social Studies* XXII (2) May

The neoliberal optimism that all socio-cultural particularities can without difficulty adopt the market system has led to the current mute on the possible impediments for the adoption of the market economy in Africa. Similar to the thoughts expressed by Karl Marx (1968) about the prospects of the implantation and the flourishing of capitalism in backward societies; neoliberals, notwithstanding them being ideological counterpoints to Marx, also think that African societies can easily slough off their cultural particularities and embrace the only 'game in town' – capitalism. The corollary of this new line of thought is to discard the dualist phenomena and become monistic. With the cloak of liberalization and globalization, the argument now seems to run like this - all socio-cultural formations will respond with the same vigor to the capitalist stimulus. The collapse, and the subsequent discredit, of the communist systems have accentuated the legitimacy of the neoliberal drive toward global homogenization. It is in conformity with the assumed globalizing neoliberal trend that the prior notions of *un-preparedness* of traditional societies for a vibrant market economy had to be abandoned.

However, in the three decades that the market system has been touted and institutionalized as the orthodoxy for Africa's development, underdevelopment and poverty continues to be stubborn integral part of the African experience.³ In other words, the expected turnaround that was to be triggered by the market has not really worked out on the continent; due primarily to the gross assumptions that ignored the specificities associated with traditional African cultural and social reality. The socioeconomic arrangement of traditional Africa confirms the view that economic systems generally mirror the culture and the epistemology of a people. The paper argues that the existence of an affective economy, in its pristine or hybridized form, contradicts and enervates the viability of the market system. What this means, in effect, is that the Weberian ascetic, frugal and

³ See various UNDP *Human Development Index Report* on Africa since 1990

profit-driven 'protestant ethic' (Weber 1958) is yet to *fully* permeate and congeal in traditional Africa.

Traditional Social Order and the Affective Economy

The concept 'traditional' as applied to society is often lodged in contentions and ambiguities, since what defines it do not unanimously converge (Gyekye 1997; Smith 1996). It is for this reason that we need to set the parameters right so as to distinguish it from its natural converse the 'modern'. In his inaugural address, Lord Acton (1960) espoused what was becoming a commonplace description of the 'traditional' society in terms of its profound unchanging nature due to it being anchored in the past. This sentiment about traditional societies was amplified by Anthony Giddens. And in his words, the traditional society by definition

...continually looks back into the past, and the past is its present...the continuity of yesterday and today minimizes the clarity with which distinctions are drawn between what 'was' and what 'is'.
(Giddens 1996: xi)

Thus, the defining feature of a traditional society is its adherence to the past. As the sanctity of the past is provided a privilege position, the traditional society as Acton conceives it, confirms Marx's notion about such societies are being historically stuck (Marx 1968). For Marx the stagnation of backward societies is due to their inherent deficiency in internal dialectical dynamics, which objectifies the past as a burden that requires dislodgement through dialectical contradiction. The Marxian view also reflects the *philosophes* position that sees progress as an inevitable and continuous process for evolution; and hence would from this standpoint dismiss *perceived* stagnation as being 'traditional.' Max Weber (1968) further expressed similar sentiments in his discussion of the basis for legitimacy in different social formations. The commonality streak that

binds these authors is obviously their characterization of a 'traditional' society as that which is in a sort of stasis because it is caged in antiquity.

Obviously, the faith in what is believed to have worked for a given society could be the determining factor for keeping with the known working formula over the period. But therein lays the risk of traditional societies for not interrogating their past and, thus being glued to those cherished notions over the millennia. The overpowering sense for collective security in small traditional societies is assured by communal appropriation and distribution of resources. It is in this context that Emile Durkheim (1963) identifies a traditional society as one in which the individual consciousness is enveloped by the *conscience collective*. He indicates further that the interaction among such community members is dense; and is driven by the instinct of mechanical solidarity. This, he contrasted with a modern society that is characterized by division of labor and instrumental relationships, which he labeled organic solidarity. The dichotomization exercise in terms of the features of traditional and modern societies was carried forward by Frederick Tonnies' (1951) *Gemeinschaft* and *Gessellschaft* categorization that associates with the (traditional) 'community' and (modern) 'society' respectively. Whereas the *Gemeinschaft* refers to a community that is closely linked, through kinship ties and characterized by strong emotional familial bonds among its members; the *Gessellschaft* points to an atomized individualized society where relations are largely determined by utilitarian considerations. However, the most crystallized criteria of what constitutes the 'traditional' and the 'modern' is associated with Talcott Parsons' (1960) *pattern variables*. To contradistinguish between the 'traditional' and the 'modern' social spheres, Parsons drew four discrete criteria that were distilled from his evolutionist forebears; the variables that establish his dichotomies are the following: affective versus neutral; particularistic versus universal; ascription versus achievement, diffusiveness versus specific. The continua provided by Parsons in many ways are the thumbnail sketch that links the evolutionist and modernization theorists.

In the immediate postcolonial period, there was profusion of literature that depicted Africa, and the underdeveloped world, as a vast arena of traditional-defined societies.⁴ In fact, the argument about the non-readiness of Africa for any meaningful development in the modern era was that because Africa was not culturally transformed, capitalism and its concomitant institutions would find the continent an infertile terrain.

Many a first generation leader on the continent, therefore, bought into the idea which postulated that the proper line of development was the adoption of socialism with African characteristics.⁵ It was believed that socialism was more akin to the communal character of African traditional societies and this line of thinking became the principal argument adduced to reject capitalism. Julius Nyerere spent much energy in anatomizing the traditional African society which he described as being equalitarian in nature, in the pre-colonial era. In reference to this pre-colonial African social formation, Nyerere sounded as follows:

The equality of all members is fundamental to any social groupings to which an individual freely belongs- the ideal society is based on human equality and the combination of the freedom and the unity of all its members (Nyerere 1967:10).

This is an obvious recount of the Rousseauist 'state of nature' which Nyerere apparently thought had existed in Africa. Similar sentiments were expressed by Kwesi Wiredu (1998) on the consensual, and the homogeneous, character of the traditional African society.

⁴ See for instance Rostow, W.W. (1960) *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

⁵ Examples of first generation African leaders that professed socialism were Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana); Sekou Toure of Guinea (Conakry); Julius Nyerere (Tanzania) and Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia).

The adherents, oftentimes, overdraw on their descriptions of the pre-colonial African societies as being blissful by their romanticized paintings. Without doubt, colonialism penetrated the African personality and society through such varied cultural elements as religion, economy, politics and education (Onimode 1988). The extent of this penetration, however, depended on the level of monopolization of the economic, social and political space by the colonial imports (Ake 1981). In other words, the level of penetration of the indigenous people of the colonial cultural value systems depended on the extent of inclusion in the colonial project, and the placement of an individual in the socioeconomic matrix.

Largely the colonial economy flourished on the backs of the indigenous people by subduing them economically. The policies during the colonial period were, therefore, not meant to produce African bourgeoisie, as was evidenced by the discriminatory policies that limited their vertical mobility (Ake 1981). The enterprising elements in the African community, as a consequence, suffered stunted growth as their aspirations were stifled by being kept under the heavy colonial lid. The African, therefore, remained mainly on the fringes of the colonial capitalist order, with its accompanying marginal socioeconomic subculture.

This is not to say that the African was unconnected to the existing exchange relations. The monetization of the colony and the very structure of that economy meant an inevitable connectivity of the many, to the cash nexus. This connectivity to the cash exchange relations did not necessarily translate into the adoption of the capitalist spirit as enshrined in the Weberian 'protestant ethic' especially as it was espoused in the 17th century Calvinist order, which saw work as a 'calling'. Calvinism demanded of its adherents to see devotion to work as a calling for the glory of God; and at the same time denied its members any hedonistic tendencies (Giddens 1996).

In West Africa, the cash crop peasants were particularly in advantageous position in the cash

exchange relations by their strategic location in relation to the global economy.⁶ In reference to cocoa farming in Ghana, Poly Hill (1963) argued that there emerged rural capitalism in this sector due to the application of what was perceived as a business attitude in land acquisition, investment and reinvestment in the cocoa sector. Whereas, such out-shell may present some semblance of the capitalist spirit, the real situation needs further interrogation, so that we avoid mistaking the apparent for the real.

The cocoa sector had been, and continues to be, the strongest link of the Ghanaian peasant to the cash economy and with a considerable state support. The production of cocoa primarily for export to sustain the colonial, and the postcolonial, economy with the accruals from the peasant social surplus invoked considerable state support in terms of extension services and the provisioning of markets through the Cocoa Marketing Board. Consequently, the cocoa peasants, relative to their food crop counterparts, were in better liquidity situation (Beckman 1981). But the better placement of the cocoa peasant in the cash-based exchange relations did not necessarily transform their fundamental defining features, their epistemic view and the cultural attributes associated with the peasantry (Williams 1981). In the specific case, the Ghanaian cocoa peasants controlled the means of production and employed family labor to produce for their own consumption and by exchanging the surplus on the market. It is important to emphasize that like all peasantry situations the Ghanaian peasant is only partially linked to the market for the sale of surplus. It also needs reiteration that the partial engagement with the market by the peasant does not necessarily transform him/her into a capitalist producer (Williams 1981). It is important to recognize, as Max Weber did, that the capitalism is a calculative enterprise; as inputs and outputs are linked with an accounting process that is based on the calculus of profit maximization. This accounting process is not easily

⁶ Peasants are rural producers who produce for their own consumption and for sale, using their own and family labor; though hiring and selling labor is quite possible, and compatible with peasant society. Thus peasants generate surplus that are transferred to dominant socioeconomic formations that do not farm but provide goods and services.

reckoned with, by the peasant, as he/she does not really calculate his/her production process and output, so as to calculate the extent of profitability. What is usually deemed as 'profit' is actually a gross income for the sale of a commodity; as very little allowance is made for input cost. Such casual accounting approach to production cannot aptly be described as an emergence of capitalism.

What really saves the cocoa peasant from economic collapse in Ghana is the nature of the cocoa tree itself. It has at least two cropping seasons in a year. The benevolent support of the purchasing agencies is always available to provide credits to hard-pressed farmers; so as to redeem them. The farmers are often drawn into opulence of funeral celebrations of deceased family members; expansion of their conjugal connections that concomitantly set into motion of child-bearing machines; profuse land, and chieftaincy litigations, among other things.

In the settlerdoms of Eastern and Southern Africa, the situation for the indigenes was, however, a bit different. Compulsion, through the imposition of taxes, pushed the indigenes to proletarianize on the settler farm estates. The requirement was such that the taxes could only be paid with cash through the sale of labor power (Freund 1984). Similarly, the sale of labor power in the mines, and in commerce, provided other means of linkage to the emerging cash economy. Since their involvement in the cash economy was made possible through proletarianization rather than otherwise, the indigenes' capacity to accumulate was constrained by their marginal class subculture of distribution and consumption. What this meant in effect was that even those directly linked to the cash economy had to conform to the larger societal affective dictates, and hence blunting the individualistic accumulative drive.

The emerging social and economic circumstances have brought in the 'bread-winner' concept; which symbolizes a symbiotic existence between a patron, and an aggregate of familial clientele. In

practical terms it translates into a case where one or two individuals who by virtue of their superior levels of accumulation is/are expected to 'spread' such resources to meet the needs of the extended family. What is obvious about the changing socioeconomic circumstances is the grafting of the emerging accumulation drives on to the traditional affective culture. The result is a *hybridized affective economy*. This, in many respects, entails the movement from communal appropriation of agricultural produce to a new destination and reality in which industry, commerce and other non-farm sectors become alternative sources of livelihood. Yet the subculture of affective economy remains in place as the resources that are derived from these new sources are destined to meeting the primordial collective security needs of several familial members.

In fact the rationality of the hybridized affective order confounds the capitalist logic, much the same way as the pristine one. The hybridized form while acknowledging that the individual is entitled to generating his/her own income tends to abhor the idea that that individual uses such resources for personal gains only. In this regard, the individual's success is measured mainly by the extent to which his/her resources become a kind of common good. The underlying logic of this type of affectivity seems to be 'the individual lives and works to meet the needs of the many in the family.' This postulate and mode of success measurement is weird to the capitalist order, yet that is what motivates the bread winner and unites him/her to the mosaic of free riders that constitutes his/her consumer public.

The workings of the affective economy are such that the distributionist activities of the bread winner are not considered as dissipation of resources, but rather as an ego-boosting exercise. Hence the successful person is motivated to carry on, by the utility derived from deference of family members, and the community. Being simultaneously the locus of attention and the bearer of titles and prestige, the motivation for becoming a resource-dispensing patron is always a strong one for

individuals to aspire for.

Obviously, frugality and accumulation for investment have very little merit in the scheme of things. Thus the capitalist values tend to be obvious anathema to the principles on which an affective economy is established. The beneficiaries of this kind of munificence do not see themselves as being parasitic; but rather conceive themselves as being *bona fide* beneficiaries of the entitlements which their birth right bestows. The perpetuation of this socioeconomic arrangement, it cannot be gainsaid, dampens the need of the clientele corps to achieve on their own, so long as the crumbs satisfy their immediate needs. This sort of low achievement drive, emanating from a horde of free riding consumer public, according to psychoanalytic examination of underdevelopment is the root cause of economic backwardness (McClelland 1961).

The Problematic of Transcending the Affective Economy

Appearances to the contrary, the socioeconomic structure of the African postcolonial state presents continuity, rather than discontinuity, with the colonial order. The hybridization of the affective economic system has been assured by the maintenance of the system that feeds on the peasant surplus. The character of the peasantry has attracted massive study in Africa, especially as theorization on why the peasant remains a 'traditional man' in spite of the modernization onslaught (Bratton 1966; Goodman et al 1981). The peasant *qua* 'traditional man' is deemed plain lazy, lack ambitions for material acquisitiveness and is hence satisfied with the meager (Williams 1981). This view, however, sidesteps the socio-cultural context of the peasant and all that operates in that milieu. As already indicated, the epistemic view of the traditional society is expressed through communal appropriation and distribution for social support. The postcolonial state much as its colonial antecedent has not succeeded in institutionalizing a universalistic welfare system that is adequate in anchoring public confidence, in a way that can replace the extended family guarantees,

for instance (Mkandawire 2006; Adesina 2007). It is not an attempt to deny the impact of modernization in undercutting aspects of the familial or communal bonds. But the case is that the essence of the communal affectivity remains largely in place.

The collapse of African economies by the beginning of the 1980s had greatly undermined state provisioning of welfare and as such the affective bond was extensively relied upon for coping purposes (Gasu 2009). The commonplace existence of primordial welfare associations among migrants, in urban Africa, is an evident perpetuation of the benefits that consanguinity confers (Bangura 1992). The migrant is also expected to continually remit those at home as part of the sharing culture with kin. As should be expected this is seen as an obligation on the benefactor; while the beneficiaries see it as their entitlement.

It was believed right from the genesis of colonial rule that capitalist penetration was going to wreck the traditional order through value transfer associated with the cultural osmosis over time; and would thus push the society into the embrace of capitalism. As the liberal economic calculations were the main preoccupation of the modernizers the idea was that once people were made to understand the benefits of the market, the traditionalists would strip off their defining characteristics and then move towards the new reality that the market offers. Walt Whitman Rostow (1960) saw underdeveloped world in bifurcated terms where the modern coexists with the traditional; but the market is destined to undercut the old order with time. In other words, the trajectory of progressive movement of economies is only seen to take-off when the traditional is discarded. In this way, development in Africa and other underdeveloped societies was considered in futuristic terms as it was not expected to happen until the defining traditional features were discarded; and replaced with the market culture. It should be added that not even the communists believed that Africa was ripe for that kind of economic system due to the paucity of the two contending classes, bourgeoisie and

the proletariat, relevant for the dialectical motion for the actualization of communism, which would be midwifed by capitalism development.

The futuristic view about the development of the market in Africa was abandoned in the 1980s with the touchdown of the neoliberal ideology through the introduction of the SAPs. The theoretic currents associated with neoliberalism suddenly render the views of modernization theorists increasingly anachronistic. The disappearance of any viable contending ideology has guaranteed the hegemony of the market. The period also converged with a much enhanced global communication networking that has been facilitated by the internet. The globalized culture, in this regard, must be liberalism since that is the only surviving criterion for guidance and measurement. In Africa, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) championed the laying of the neoliberal premise through their well-known conditionalities. Development came to be associated with the adoption of the market order, especially with the preoccupation of the removal of distortions that negated the transformation of the peasant into an 'economic man'. Once the market principle was absorbed by the relevant segments of society then poverty reduction would be realized.

A plethora of efforts were put into this task especially through the new trusted allies in development - non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Mabogunje 2008). This has been accompanied by the introduction of micro-credit schemes that target certain groups for roping into the capitalist order, especially those in the informal sector (Luke 1995). Such efforts have been supplemented by specialized governmental, quasi-governmental agencies and departments so as to draw the informal sector into the mainstream of capitalism. The efforts have not really produced the expected results as leakages through chronic administrative corruption and the recipients' wont for meeting immediate affective obligations have largely defeated the purpose. The imperative to create capitalists out of a people that are lodged in a socio-cultural context which is antithetical to the very

object of capitalism can be daunting, and this is the problem that Africa currently faces.

Conclusion

In a world where social interactions have been going on over the millennia it is difficult to suggest a cultural *sui generis* situation for Africa. In fact, Africa shares with the rest of humanity certain universal cultural attributes that define them as the *species being*, to borrow Marx's words. It is, however, noticed that social collectivities are also associated with peculiarities that reflect their worldview. It is in this context that the African affective economy situation was examined; as one that emanates from the traditional communal and emotion-laden societies.

Since the psycho-cultural undertones of the affective socioeconomic formation conflicts with that of the capitalist system, the continuous coexistence of the two systems in Africa only ends up vitiating the viability of the capitalist systems. Development, since Africa's contact with the West, has always been conceived as the adoption of the Western values and rationality. The neoliberal advocates have been silent on African psycho-cultural dispositions that the modernization theorists had pointed out as the negating factors for development along the capitalist line. Policies that have been adopted on the continent since the introduction of SAPs in the 1980s have been carved in the mould of global cultural homogeneity that is pushed by globalization. In Africa such policies produce suboptimal outcomes as the sway of affective economy persists; especially as the hybridized form has taken deep roots. The umpiring role that had been assigned the state, in the early years of the SAPs, has rendered the state largely absent in the social support system for many an African (Mkandawire 2006; Gasu 2010). It is this very absence of the state that has accentuated the hybridized affective form. It is important for policy makers as well as students of Africa to continue to address the African situation from the perspective of the modernization theorists and to explore what underlies that socioeconomic system. Pretending that the traditional attributes of Africa do not exist any longer only ends up perpetuating a profusely hemorrhaging system that

dissipates the public purse for meeting extended familial obligations. What is needed is to embark on social diagnostic exercise in ways that will lead to social reengineering system that would reduce reliance on extended familial network.

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Failing to Transgress Traditional Boundaries; An Analysis of Women's Participation in Development at Sub-National Levels, The Case of Jerera Growth Point in Zimbabwe.

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Abstract

The nature of development in most developing countries is characterized by marginalisation of women. Governments had been trying address this by introducing programmes that try to mainstream women in development. The gains of such intervention have largely been accrued in urban areas at the expense of rural areas. Women in rural areas and other outlying areas are yet to enjoy the benefits of such interventions. The research seeks to investigate the uptake by women at sub-national level of the interventions that were meant to improve their conditions. The research utilized both the qualitative and quantitative methodologies in the collection of data. Questionnaires were the main quantitative tools used and semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions formed the qualitative group of research methods. Questionnaires were administered to randomly selected people at Jerera growth. The results showed that women in rural areas are failing to move out of their traditional areas despite national and international efforts to improve their conditions. They remain in the periphery of the development process. The research suggest that special efforts should be made to focus on rural women because it seems all effort are concentrated in urban centres at the expense of those at sub-national level.

Background of the Study

Gender mainstreaming had for long been considered to be the panacea for sustainable development. Women had been marginalized in development and this was seen as major cause of failure to eliminate poverty especially in developing countries. The idea to mainstream gender in development was pioneered by the United Nations at the Mexico conference in 1975, which was followed by the Decade for women, (1975-1985). The thrust had the theme Equity, Development and Peace. Emphasis was on improvement of women issues such as education, employment

opportunities, equity in political and social participation. This development was followed by a series of other conferences, which included the Copenhagen in 1980, and the Nairobi conference of 1985. All this culminated in the grand conference in 1995, Beijing conference. This conference provided a conducive forum to talk about women issues. They made a declaration that women issues were human rights issues. Governments world over ratified the many United Nations led Convention on women issues such as the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), of 1980 and the Declaration on elimination of violence against women of 1993. All these were done in an endeavour to prohibit any restrictions that infringe women's' human rights in economic, political, education, work health and access to information. Since then the role of women in development was taken to be an integral facet of the development process. This whole process to mainstream women in development was supported by approaches such as women in Development (WID). It was latter changed to women and development(WAD). The need to integrate women in development became an international cause of concern to the extent that all government, none-governmental and even private development initiatives had to be gender sensitive in terms of showing the need to involve women. The Southern Africa Development Community Region (SADC), ratified the Beijing conference declaration and went on to set up monitoring body that will over see the implementation of the Beijing Conference. The Zimbabwean government was also not left out. It tried to put in place measures and institutions that will uplift the conditions of women. They put in place a ministry called the Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development. They also came up with a policy document that was supposed to direct all operations that would lead to integration of women in all development initiatives. In the education sector a lot had been done to help the girl child acquire education. There was an affirmative action for female students to enter tertiary institutions and special efforts were directed to help female students to entre previously male dominated areas such as areas of sciences. Despite the ratification and promulgation of pieces of legislations aimed to uplift the conditions of women, they remain invisible in economic development.

Aims and Objectives

The major aim of the study is to investigate the level of participation of women at sub-national level in development activities.

Specific Objectives

To assess the level of women participation in economic activities at Jerera growth point

To investigate the involvement of women in issues of governance at Jerera growth point

To evaluate the participation of women in politics at Jerera growth point

To find out the problems that continue to sideline women in development issued.

Statement of the Problem

Gender issues of development have continued to dominate development debates for a long time now. Most governments have put in place interventions to try and mainstream gender issues in development. Some governments have come up with legislations and policy statement to try and address gender issues in development. While there are some strides made towards mainstreaming gender issues in development the gains seem to be concentrate in urban centred with very little trickling to rural areas. Rural areas are always lagging behind in terms of development. This research seeks to find out strides made so far in terms of improving the conditions of women at sub-national level.

Significances of the Study

The study seeks to establish the level of women participation in development at sub national level. Government, non-governmental organization and quasi-governmental organization will find this information handy in their endeavors to improve their interventions aimed to uplift and mainstreaming women in development.

The Theoretical Framework

The concept of Growth Points

The growth pole can be traced as far back as mid-20th Century through the works of scholars such as Perroux. He observed that economic activities seldomly take the place evenly across the geographical space. There are rather specific points that are favoured by development in a region and it is in these specific areas where economic activities start. Once they start they will set in motion certain forces that act to spread development into the surrounding hinterland, (Perroux 1955, Hirtshman 1972). Once development in these favoured locations starts, they will attract inflows of labour, capital and raw materials from the surrounding periphery. If these inflows continue unchecked they will perpetuate growth in the core areas and sometimes retard development in the hinterland, (Myrdal 1959). These established poles of development manifest themselves with variable intensity and spread into the periphery through different channels with variable terminal effects on the whole economy, (Perroux 1955). Those centres with more and bigger economic activities will have wide spread trickle-down effects into the hinterlands and those with smaller and fewer activities will have minimal of these.

The centres of growth are characterized by three distinct features, which are dynamism (power to influence the surrounding regions), innovation (the ability of the growth pole to initiate

technological change), and propulsiveness (power to send pulses of development into the hinterland. The propulsive forces will cause the growth pole to set off centrifugal forces to the surrounding regions transmitting development. On the other hand there are centripetal forces that act to attract resources from the hinterland thereby setting in negative feedback on the region as it will be attracting resources from them, (Perroux 1955). There is clear divide between the North and South on how they used the growth pole strategy. In the North, growth pole had been used to address problems of economic depression eg. in Britain, France and Italy but in the South it was mainly to address the skewed development priorities (Glasson 1979).

In Zimbabwe, the growth pole strategy was used for two opposite purposes. First, the colonial government wanted to create a racial divide between the whites and blacks. Growth points were used to create African Townships mainly for blacks whose major objective was to curb the rural-urban migration. The post-colonial government adopted the same concept to redress the skewed development that characterized the national economic landscape. They wanted to develop the rural areas that had for long been sidelined in development (Wekwete 1991). Through the Prime Minister's Directive of 1984, the government established growth points one in each district and development programmes in these designated growth points was funded by a government through a fund called Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP).

Women and Development

The history of development has for long been characterised by male domination and women marginalisation there by creating gendered development. Women have for long been at the tail-end of development and this is sustainable. They continue to be sidelined in decision-making and resources allocation and this is the major reason why they continued to be peripheral actors in development. They are the primary providers of food for the family yet they are limited in terms of resource access. (Nyati and Hikwa 1997). This marginalisation had resulted in women constituting 70%, of worlds' poor, (ILO 2003). There is however a growing realization on the important role these women can play in development. Their roles can never be ignored or underplayed if the objectives sustainable development and Millennium development goals are to be realised, (Zimbabwe Women Resource Center and Network 1994). Development is never complete if the conditions of women is not addressed specially in decision making processes and more importantly, they should be involved in formulation of policies.

Gender issues of development were clearly spelt out at the 1992 Rio Summit, where issues of local participation and the environment were discussed. There was emphasis on the special roles women can play. Special calls were made for women to free themselves from the shackles of bondage and subserviency so as to enable themselves to be equal partners in development. Women therefore need to be empowered so that they can participate in all key areas of development. There is also great need to ensure participation of women from disadvantaged areas such as rural areas. These are the most disadvantaged and poverty stricken groups and therefore need help most (UNDP 2003). In most countries of the South, women participation in politics and legislative issues has been very marginal eg. South Africa and Mozambique (Cutrufelli 1983). Their attempts should be complimented by supporting legislations.

Need for Women to Participate in Development

According ILO (2003), women constitute the largest percentage of the world's poor and of the 1.3 billion world's poor, 70% were women. They continue to be eluded by development initiatives and the situation is more serious in developing countries where they frequently suffer severe socio-economic dislocation. Regionally Southern Africa shows a terribly skewed distribution of workforce heavily against women both in government, para-government organisations and the private sector is no better. Table 1 below shows the distribution of workforce in selected Southern African countries. **Table 1: The distribution of workforce on gender basis in selected countries (Southern Africa)**

COUNTRY	PUBLIC SECTOR		PARASTATALS		PRIVATE SECTOR	
	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
Botswana	39	61	24	76	35	65
Swaziland	34	66	-	-	27	63
Zambia	11	89	11	89	18	82

Adopted from Gaidzanwa 2001

An important fact revealed by Gaidzanwa (2001), was that women were heading a significant number of households, (49%) and this figure is significantly big which makes it mandatory for women to participate in development. Women have suffered a long history of marginalisation even in sectors where participants are mainly women such as agriculture. Their participation in decision making and policymaking had remained limited. In Zimbabwe and Congo women in agriculture constituted 63% but their policies rarely reflected the needs and aspirations of women, (Gaidzanwa, 2001)

Factors Hindering Women Participation in Development

Attempts to mainstream women in development had been hindering by factors, which can be

broadly categorized as economic, social, political and environmental. Women are locked up in 'Cinderella complex' where they lack self-development, have a desire to remain child-like, and are passive. These factors help to keep them on the periphery of development. Also religious practices have played an important role in reinforcing traditional women roles and socializing them out of development process. Women are modeled to take subservient roles in the community and this often influences their roles in development. This had been reinforced by some cultural practices, which do not allow women to mingle with men thereby restricting them to roles that are mainly home-based such as child-care. Cultural practices such as paying of Lobola had effectively reduced women to mere commodities that can be bought and used at the owner's interest. This had made them subservient to men, (Rowan 1999). In some cases technocrats in the Ivory Towers of decision-making tend to look down upon people at grassroots and often there is reluctance to view them as normal and rational human being. This tendency often kills the motivation to participate in policy issues and these people are often left out in development process, (Abraham 1999, Masika R. 2002).

Women Participation and Sustainable Development

Central to the concept of sustainable development is the promotion of human well-being, human dignity, empowerment and equity. Therefore participation of women enhances sustainable development in that they are inextricably linked to the environment and they can be the managers of environment. Their economy and total survival is largely based on the environment, (Malokom 1997).

Sustainable use of natural resources can be ensured if women participate in design and implementation of development issues, (UNDP 2003, Ghai and Vivian 1992). They are said to be custodians of vital information that is relevant in the management of natural resources and other information such as local food production and the availability and use of resources such as water, firewood, fruits and other natural products. Owing to gender specific divisions of labour, local landuse is usually under the management of women who have the responsibility for care and selection of seeds, soil conservation, production of natural fertilizers and crop rotation. All these roles and knowledge system that is pregnant in women is very important for development. What just need to be done is to tap from this wealth resource.

Research Findings

Demographic Profiles

Age-Sex Profiles of Respondents

The respondents were drawn from all sexes and varying age groups. Their ages ranged from slightly below 20 to 60. The females were slightly more than their male counter-parts as they constituted 52% as compared to 48%. Those who were below the age of 20 were aging 18 and 19 years and they have all attained the age of majority. They constituted only 16% of the sample and of this, 9% were females. All the respondents that participated in the research were of the economically active group as they ranged from the age of 20-60 and none was in the retirement age or a minor. Table 2 below shows the age-sex composition of the sample.

Table 2: Age-Sex Composition of Respondents

AGE GROUP	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
Below 20 years	7	9	16
20-30 yrs	24	24	48
31-40 yrs	8	10	18
41-50 yrs	4	6	10
51-60 yrs	5	3	8
Total	48	52	100

Source: survey 2009

Educational Qualification of Respondents

The respondents had attained varied educational levels, which ranged from illiterate through semi-literate to holders of tertiary education. The sample showed that there were very few people who were in the illiterate group, as they were only 4% and all of these were women. There is also glaring evidence that women were of relatively lower educational qualifications compared to their male counter-parts. The majority of them, (43%) were of inferior educational qualifications as they had only attained Ordinary level and below. Very few, (9%) had managed to attain tertiary education. On the other hand their male counter-parts, were the majority in the higher levels of education as 43% had attained at least Ordinary level education and of this, 22% had a tertiary education. Generally females are still found at the lower levels of the educational ladder and males dominate on the other part. However the majority, (96%) of the sample was literate and could participate in any development process. Table 3 below shows the educational levels of respondents at Jerera Growth Point.

Table 3: Educational Levels of Respondents at Jerera Growth Point.

Educational Level	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
Illiterate	-	4	4
Primary and ZJC	15	17	22
Ordinary level	21	22	43
Tertiary level	22	9	31
Total	48	52	100

Source: Survey 2009

Marital Status of Respondents

The group was composed of people of all marital status as both single, married, widowed and divorcees were included in the sample. The majority of them were single and they constituted 48% and of this, 32% were females. The married also constituted a significant figure as they constituted 40% of almost equal males and females, (20% and 19% respectively). The widowed and divorcees were the minority as they constituted a combined 12% equally divided between the two groups. Table 4 below shows the marital status of respondents at Jerera Growth Point.

Table 3: Marital Status of Respondents

MARITAL STATUS	Males	Females	TOTAL
Single	16	32	48
Married	21	19	40
Widowed	1	5	6
Divorced	-	6	6
Total	48	52	100

Source: Survey 2009

Gender Distribution in various Economic Activities

The study was done in various economic activities, which ranged from the informal sector through service industry to construction. It also included some sectors of government and parastatals. There was clear division of labour along the traditional lines. Males were dominating in fields of construction, managerial positions, politics and ownership of property and business premises while women were in their traditional occupations such as shop assistants, catering and vending. For

instances of the 15% of participants in construction all were males and for the 7% respondents in politics, only 2% were females. However they were holding inferior offices such as office orderly or clerks.

In traditional women professions such as catering, vending and shop assistants, there was clear domination of females both in numbers and positions held. They were occupying very senior positions such as managerial and in some cases though few, owning some business enterprises. They continue to dominate in their traditional fields. This can be traced to their educational qualification. They hold inferior educational qualifications, which cannot allow them to venture into some challenging professions such as various economic activities.

Table 5: Gender distribution in Various Economic Activities

ACTIVITY	MALES %	FEMALES %	TOTAL
Construction	15	0	15
Vending	5	30	35
Politics	5	2	7
Managerial Posts	12	5	17
Owning property	6	1	7
Shop Assistants	5	14	19
Total	48	52	100

Source: Survey 2009

This can also be seen as mirror of the effectiveness of interventions of both government and non-governmental organizations on the improvement of conditions of girl child. Most of the interventions never find their way to the rural areas, as they will be confined in the urban areas. There should be special programmes focused to the rural girl-child, specially tailored to improve their conditions.

Factors Hindering Women Participation Development

Gendered development is still a characteristic feature of development at Jerera Growth Point where women seem to be regarded as second-class citizens. They are mainly found in menial jobs with

very few occupying key positions in development and decision-making. The cultural practices seem to be rife where girls seem to be clouded by a host of hostile factors that militate against their advancement. They continue to hold modest educational qualification, which prevent them to hold influential position in development. This situation is obtaining against the backdrop various interventions that are done by both the government and non-governmental organizations to improve the conditions of women in the country. The government of Zimbabwe had put in place several structures and institutions mandated to improve the conditions of women. There is a ministry of Gender, Women Affairs and Community Development. There is also a policy document that clearly spells out the government standpoint on modalities of improving women position. For example the policy says there should be a 50% representation of women in the parliament (Government of Zimbabwe undated). It is also a national policy that there should be equitable resource distribution between males and females at all levels of education. However societies, especially rural ones continue to value boys more than girls. According to this research, women argued that they could not get better qualifications or produce results that match their male counter parts because they were sent to rural schools, which had poor educational facilities while their brothers were sent to better schools with better educational facilities. While there is no longer that primitive discrimination against girls where they blatantly denied chance to go to school there is still preferential treatment offered to boys when it comes to competition on scarce resources. Parents are said to prefer to send a boy-child to a boarding than a girl-child. This disadvantage is now manifesting itself in development where women are failing to take key tools in development issues. They find themselves concentrated in activities that are on the periphery of development such as vending and the informal sector.

Most women at the growth point said that they are eager to participate in development but are failing to get sponsorship in their entrepreneurships. They do not have the access to finances, especially cheap finances to start-up their business. Women said that the only available finances are from banking institution but they do not have the required collateral security to borrow funds from them. They argued that cheap funds from the government rarely reach them; if they reach them they rarely access them because in most cases those with influential political positions were alleged to grab them first. They argued that there are no specific facilities that are earmarked for women and their conditions and because of the patriarchal nature of our society women find it difficulty to compete with males and in most cases they are out competed. For example the government through SEDCO provided funds for the informal sector but women said none of their members had access

to such facilities because very little the country side such as growth points and the situation is even worse in the out-lying areas. Most women in rural areas are finding it difficult to access government funds mainly because they cannot draft sound project proposals, which are pre-requisites for accessing these funds. They do not have that skills and are hiring consultants who are charging exorbitant prices for such services. The end result is that they are disabled to access these facilities due to these multiple factors. Most women therefore resort to their meager resources to fund their business. However these funds are too little to give them a meaningful business project. Their projects therefore fold immediately after their take off and for those that stand the heat they rarely expand or allow them to diversify into other activities.

Conclusion

Mainstreaming gender issues in development still remain a big challenge at sub-national level mainly because women are still found in the periphery of development. Their integration had remained development rhetoric. They continue to be marginalized in most development activities and they continue to involve themselves into traditional activities. In situation where they are involved, they are only included as supporting staff while the real business of development is done by their counter part. For example in politics they were only engaged as assistants and none was in a key political office. They continue to participate in professions that are not major drive economy such as service industry (catering, vending and hair dressing). On the other hand their male counter-parts were involved in the major sectors that drive the economy such as construction and politics and most of them were holding managerial posts. These are the professions and positions that were more paying and empowering. There is need to come up with programmes that help women to participate such fields if ever we will achieve women empowerment. Central to this is to see to it that women as a human resource had improved their quality so that they can participate in more rewarding activities. The quality of human resource still comparatively plays second fiddle to that of their male counter parts. They continue to hold modest education and they do not have skills or are semi-skilled. There is also need from the women themselves to take initiatives to participate in such activities because there is nothing impossible. If other ladies in urban areas are doing it nothing can stop them from like wise. Critical issues that emerged from this study is that the situation obtaining at the growth point is not very pleasing, these centres are supposed to be centres that transmit development to the out lying areas but they do have anything to transmit as far as women issues are concerned.

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The Causes and Effects of Stress on Working Women in Masvingo, Zimbabwe.

**By
Lilian Manwa**

Abstract

This interpretive inquiry involved a case study that examined the causes and effects of stress on working women at a Higher Education Institution in Masvingo, Zimbabwe. Open-ended interviews and observations were used to collect data. Twenty women were purposefully sampled from a population of sixty women at the institution. The sample constituted both academic and support staff. The research findings indicate that all the working women were affected by stress although the levels at which they were affected varied from low to very high and dangerous levels that may lead to terminal illnesses. The workplace proved to be the cauldron of pressure, followed by family demands and then financial distress while children and religion were the least stressors. The study recommends that special and urgent attention be given to working women by the government and all stake holders since they are going through untold suffering due to stress. The nation should pursue gender neutrality so as to reduce the burdens on women since some of the stressors are gender stereotype such as gender roles. The government and other stake holders may also seriously support women associations so that their voices may be heard.

Introduction

Women in both developing and developed countries are being assaulted by stress. It is not exaggeration to say that most people are being assaulted by stress, hence the need to study the causes and effects of stress. The study focused on working women since their gender roles and work demands are more as compared to those of their male counterparts. Stress can be defined as the inability of the body to cope with pressure of life to an extent that they are physically and emotionally exhausted. Larson and Simonis (2005) define stress as any physical, chemical or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension. Willis (1994) describes stress as the non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it. This indicates that stress has apparatus to use such as the brain, heart, lungs, vessels and muscles which are chronically over or under activated. This may produce physical and psychological damage over time.

Larson and Simonis (2005) and Burk and Speed (1995) say that, women are the most vulnerable group and stress is exacting its toll on them. Zimbabwean women are not exceptional as they are

also being assaulted by stress because of their gendered roles. Gender role socialisation in the Zimbabwean context stipulates that women are born care-givers and are responsible for running the home. This gender stereotype has overburdened women to the extent that some are morbidly stressed (Beck, 2005). Gender role is how a person is supposed to dress, act, think, and feel, based on whether they are a man or woman (Arndt, 2002). In Zimbabwe, women are the most burdened by gender roles which are instilled from birth which are related to home making and conjugal roles. Lamanna and Riedmann (1994) and Arndt (2002) assert that gender roles result in stress. Thus, traditional gender expectations can be seen as hazardous and as health risks to both men and women. When the society puts sanctions against what it labels as unacceptable behaviour to both men and women, people are bound to follow and adhere to the expectations which cause stress. Thus, gender role socialization theory forms the basis of this study.

The events which prompted this research were quite heartbreaking since the events took place at an institution where the researcher was a witness. Two women workers in the institution, one from the professional staff and another one from the ancillary staff were victims of stress and lost their lives. Stress is a killer because the events which followed the deaths were short and no one expected that things would end in such a tragic way. The events contributed towards the need to find out the causes and effects of stress on working women in Zimbabwe.

The research objectives are;

- a) to establish the causes of stress on working women in Masvingo;
- b) to find out the effects of stress on working women; and
- c) to discover how stress can be managed by the working women.

Literature review

Causes of stress on working women

According to Faber and Reinhardt (1982), understanding of the nature and causes of stress and its physiology is complex. This indicates that the stressor may be the same for a number of individuals, the basic physiology may be the same, but the body manifests its response in a variety of ways. It is known that stress is inevitable as the stressors are always there and their demands vary from time to time.

Hergarty (1992) suggest that one of the major causes of stress is the struggle for food and survival.

People in developing countries including working women in Zimbabwe are struggling to secure two decent meals a day. Their salaries are below the poverty datum line that managing financial resources and financial problems can also be a potent source of family stress. Poor salaries are just one of the major stressors of working class people. Women who are bread winners are finding it difficult to cope with pressures which result from lack of food and other basic needs. Many families are facing financial distress. Economic hardships are a good ground for quarrels and misunderstandings within the family. Schaufel (2004) suggests that lack of financial resources is the root cause of most quarrels in the home. Scrambling for the little resources causes most fights in the family. When one does not have enough money to cover all the expenses in the home, one's mood is affected.

The causes of stress are many and there are some which are exclusive to women. A pregnant woman who is deserted by the man responsible for the pregnancy suffers the effects of stress which are unique to women. Larson and Simonis (2005) and Thornham (2000) point out that, women are overburdened by their stereotyped traditional roles, demands from the workplace and their own needs. When demands become enormous, the person becomes physically and emotionally exhausted. The struggle by women to balance work, family and outside commitments has intensified in recent years. Women in some cases have taken over the role of being bread winners. During the Victorian and Bustle periods women were confined to the home. Zimbabwean traditional women were also home makers but now most of them are either formally or informally employed. Coping with strains of the workplace may leave the working mother with little energy to deal with the demands of their families and those demands can be enormous. While at home, the cycle of stress is set in motion as one hurries to go and collect the children from school, fix dinner and care for all household chores after work.

According to Kasselmann et al (2003) the picture of working women is decided by pay, work or family balance and welfare. Work versus family issues have become an issue which causes women to experience hell as far as pressures that cause stress are concerned. The workplace has become a pressure cooker to most workers. Favouritism at the workplace which may lead to corrupt promotions, rumour mongering between the two factions of those favoured and those which are not, inconsiderate workmates and bad relationships are common stressors at a workplace. Zindi and Munetsi (2008) suggest that favouritism at an institution can cause serious divisions between workers. Tension at work may arise due to unpleasant relationships and favouritism by leaders in

trying to solve problems between workers may also result in mistrust and suspicion.

Zimbabwe is going through a social, political and economic crisis which has caused the education system to have standards that are far below acceptable levels. The conditions do not make it easy for workers to commit themselves fully as persons to the established practices of educational institutions. Hergarty (1992) states that stress is a factor associated with occupation. This indicates that some stressors in the work environment affect or influence the quality, quantity and speed at which work is done or food is taken. Lack of social support at the workplace especially to the helpless widows has become a source of stress to most working women (Baron and Byrne, 1997).

Effects of stress on working women

The commercialization of stress relief drugs, for example stress tubs, is an indication that stress has taken its toll on mankind. Hegarty (1992) suggests that stress causes excessive nervous activity which in turn causes the gastro internal activity which causes ulcers and other gut disorders. Hegarty (1992) and Mcilveen and Gross (2004) further state that job related stress can impair the physiological functioning of the body including digestion and metabolism. Thus, stress can interfere with physical activities and relaxation of the body and is a factor in ill health for instance heart disease, hypertension and headache. Larson and Simons (2005) claim that the biggest threat to health today is neither cancer nor AIDS but stress has become the major threat to health and it has been estimated that seventy five to ninety percent (75-90%) of all visits to primary care physicians are for stress related problems. A British survey in 2002 estimated that over half a million individuals in Britain believed that they were experiencing work-related stress, depression or anxiety in 2001/2.

Stress has become a fact of modern living which has unique characteristics of affecting all the three domains at once, namely the affective, physical and emotional. They are part of the complex human body which reacts to pressures of life. When one is assaulted by stress, the affective domain is the first one to be greatly affected since one quickly shows anger, irritability, anxiety, depression and restlessness. This is a true reflection of how deep the emotions are hurt. According to Willis (1994) and Berns (2007) this may be a sign of emotional abuse or distress. The cognitive domain will also reflect the impact of stress on the emotional domain by lack of concentration and making incorrect judgements. While these two domains are showing the signs of the effects of stress, the physical body will be experiencing pain in the muscles, head and fatigue. Insomnia (lack of sleep) will be a clear indication that all the three domains are failing to withstand the heat or pressure. It is

at this stage that stress is taking its toll and when not properly handled can worsen and become fatal. Thus the effects of stress go far beyond the increased risk of mental illness.

The price of stress has become a cause for concern among the young and the old men and women. Whether one is young or old or the stress in one's life comes from work or school, chronic stress can take a heavy toll on one's health. Larson and Simonis (2005) state that if stress is persistent, the heart beat and blood pressure soars. The levels of sugar also rise and hormones are released. This may be the cause of some physical or psychological damage over time. Most mental and physical ailments are associated with stress. The list of illnesses in which stress may play a role is alarmingly long; heart diseases, stroke, immune disorders, cancer, musculoskeletal disorders and diabetes, to name just a few.

Signs and symptoms of stress range from increased heartbeat, dryness of mouth and throat, sweating, excessive twinkling, slumped posture, urinary frequency, tightness of chest and increase or lack of appetite (Larson and Simonis (2005). Symptoms which affect the sensitive parts of the body such as the heart should be given attention because these may lead to illnesses which may be terminal. In view of the causes and effects of stress cited in the literature above, it is necessary to find out how women in Zimbabwe are affected and the possible ways of managing stress.

Thus, the study was intended to benefit working women and women who are informally employed. Men can also benefit from the study since some of them are also stressors and may help to reduce stress among women. The study will also shade light to the government and non-governmental organizations on the issues of stress and will also be aware of what working women are going through with regard to stress. Information generation is pivotal in planning for the future and also to correct mistakes of the past which may be hounding the nation

Methodology

The research used a qualitative paradigm which involved a case study to find out the causes and effects of stress on working women in Masvingo, Zimbabwe. The case study was considered the best design because it allowed the researcher to be involved and establish the issues which needed a close study, for instance how women reacted to stressors. According to Bell (1987), the great strength of the case study is that it allows the researcher to concentrate on a specific instance or situation and to identify, or attempt to identify the various interactive processes at work. Marshall and Rossman (2008) also assert that case studies are appropriate when studying an organization or a

subculture. Working women at the institution of higher learning in Masvingo were a group of individuals who were in a setting and had peculiar attributes.

Park (2007) views a college or a school as a social organization in its own right. The study of human behaviour is complex in nature and requires a careful analysis of events and incidents which help the researcher to understand why people react and behave the way they do. Thus, the case study was best since the researcher was also part and parcel of the research process and was able to take note of the behaviour of the stressed women which reflected the levels at which they were assaulted by stress. Changes in behaviour could also be taken note of in order to check on the levels of stress.

The institution in Masvingo where the study was conducted had a population of sixty working women. Twenty women were professionals who were part of the academic or lecturing staff while forty were the non-professional or support staff. A sample of ten professionals and ten non-professional staff was randomly selected. All women were asked to pick pieces of paper written yes or no and all those who picked those papers with a yes formed the sample. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992) this technique gave all the women a chance of being selected. Thus all women had the chances of being a participant.

In-depth interviews and observations were the tools used to collect data in this case study. The in-depth interviews were conducted in a discursive way in order to find out the women's emotional experiences at work. Zindi and Munetsi (2008) propound that investigations using interviews and observations in a familiar environment are best done in an informal way. Polytechnic women were colleagues and most of the investigations were done in a casual manner except where confidential data was needed from each individual, for example, family life issues. Nyawaranda (2000) suggest that when human behaviour is observed it can be inferred based on patterns of interaction. Observations were necessary to check on facts which could not be measured. An observation schedule was designed in order to incorporate the details of each participant. Major causes of stress were recorded and dates were also shown in order to check on the most frequent stressors.

All the data were presented in descriptive forms and qualitatively analysed. The findings were summarised around the three objectives.

Findings and Discussion

The demographic details of the twenty respondents were as follows; all the twenty women were between the age twenty-five and fifty, ten women were professionals who were holders of diplomas and degrees in various fields, while the other ten were non-professional staff that had Grade Seven as the minimum qualification and Form Four as the highest qualification. Ten of the women were in their marriages while the other ten were either widows or single mothers.

The causes of stress on working women

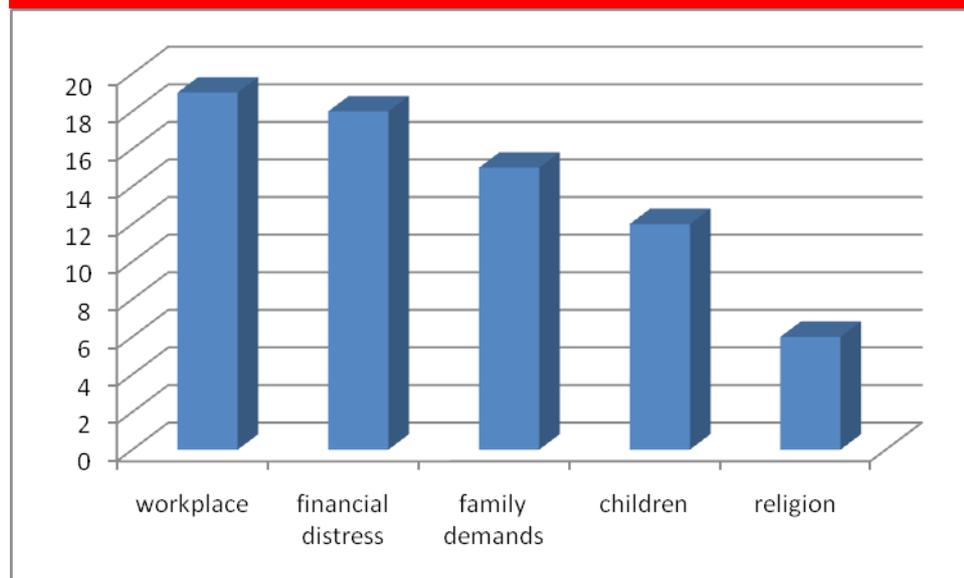


Figure 1

No=20

Figure 1 indicates that the major stressor is the workplace, followed by financial distress. Family demands and children are also stressors respectively. Religion was cited as the least stressing agent. The results above indicate that nineteen out of twenty women admitted that the workplace was the major stressor. Spencer (2005) suggests that stress may be due to lessened social support. Women at the institution lamented that the administration did not socially support them. Support staff in particular cited lack of cleaning agents and protective clothing, which meant that their lives were in danger of contracting diseases when cleaning ablution blocks. Academic staff highlighted shortage of equipment and poor facilities as their major problem. Participants indicated that economic hardships in Zimbabwe seemed to have worsened the situation.

Working women were not getting the necessary support while they were expected to work and produce results as if they had all the support they needed to produce good results. Zindi and Munetsi (2008) consider life and personal factors as well as work-related factors as the three broad categories of stress. Most participants in this study mentioned that working conditions such as poor

communication and failure by the management to give workers a say in decisions that affected them caused tension among workers. Some of the workers were not happy at all about the way they were treated, to the extent that they felt that they were not considered as human beings with emotions or feelings. Working women stated that there was no support from the institution's management with regards to stressful events such as burying a loved one.

Corrupt promotions due to favouratism, rumour mongering which caused divisions among workers, inconsiderate workmates who were in most cases favoured by the leaders and bad relationships were also cited by most participants as major stressors. Most women stated that tension at work may arise due to unpleasant relationships. One of the participants conveyed her disappointment by saying that; *their leaders are corrupt as they show favouratism and take sides in matters where they are supposed to show justice. That stresses me a lot.* Favouratism in trying to solve problems may also result in mistrust and suspicion. Some women mentioned that some workers were superstitious; they exaggerated events and interpreted them in a way that caused confusion.

Zindi and Munetsi (2008) suggest that simple things like dirty toilets, rumour mongering, unfairness at work and corruption can cause havoc at the work place. Stressors at work can be trivial but the problem is that the women spend more hours at work as compared to hours they spend at home. A combination of long boring hours at work and an unpleasant working environment can cause mental fatigue and anxiety to the working women. When that cycle of stress is in motion, pressure can build up to the extent that one feels as though one can explode.

The results indicated that eighteen women stated that financial distress was also a major stressor. Zimbabwean workers are paid salaries that are below the poverty datum line. Women among the support staff were the most affected since their wages were said to be far below those of the academic staff. Financial distress was viewed as being linked to many financial demands from the extended family and this was a cause for concern to most women. In-laws demanded care while their families also needed care. Hence, the scramble for the few resources (the very low salary) may be the cause of deep stress.

Fourteen women stated that family demands were tearing them apart. The attitudes of the in-laws were in most cases cited as against a working daughter in-law. Their expectations were that the daughter in-law should work for the in-laws at home doing all the household chores. This was

echoed by one participant who said that her in-laws told her that; *varoora ngavarege kuenda kubasa sezvo basa rapamba rakawanda. Usimbe kuenda kubasa* translated as; *daughters' in-law should not go to work since all household chores need their attention. Going to work is a sign of laziness.* They were expected to do all household chores regardless of the fact that they were at work the whole day.

Illnesses in the family especially terminal ones and death of the loved one have proved to cause the highest mortality rate among those who were close to him or her. Most widows indicated that the loss of a loved one was a source of stress. Willis (1994) states that the death of a spouse can cause hundred percent stress levels while excitement can cause up to twelve percent stress. This indicates that family problems linked to death of the loved one may also lead to another early death in the family.

Children were also cited by most mothers as part of those family demands which were a source of stress. Eleven women indicated that their children were also a source of stress instead of them being helpful to them in order to reduce stress. Children as they are part of the family may also demand things which the parents are unable to give them. Teenagers in particular are a source of stress to many mothers. They usually experiment and find themselves in situations which demand the assistance of their parents and most cases it would be quite taxing to the parents.

The religious groups proved to be the source of strength to sixteen women although the other four indicated that the financial demands at the church were also a source of stress. However, the few women indicated that the amount of pressure from the religious group can be resisted as compared to other sources of stress. There are other social commitments based on religion which were also a source of stress and demands the attention of the women and these may add pressure on them.

Effects of Stress

The findings indicated that the effects of stress had gone far beyond the risk of mental illness. Stress is a killer. All the working women admitted that stress was now a fact of life since most of them were affected by stress although some mildly and others severely. Fifteen of the women experienced effects which were quite of unacceptable levels. Stress has been proved to be a killer and more deadly than HIV and AIDS. Lazarus (1991) believes that stress is the major killer in both developing and developed countries. People in developing countries struggle to survive while those

in developed countries have their schedules fully packed that they do not have enough time to rest, hence become very busy and lonely.

Among the fifteen women, five had already suffered severe effects which caused them to have chronic headache (migraine), hypertension, clinical malaria, and diarrhoea and muscle pain. The other serious case was of one who developed a heart problem. It was sad to note that most of the women who were severely assaulted by stress were the widows who were helpless. These were affected by stress to the levels that stress was making them ill. The women stated that stress related illness had become a reality which may also cause stress. *“Stress can also be a stressor”*, said one of the women.

Most women indicated that coping with stress had become a difficult task especially when the cycle of stress is in motion it is very difficult to stop. Mcilveen and Gross (2004) state that stress can affect performances either positively or negatively. It is worrisome to note that the working women were affected by stress negatively and their performance at work had been affected negatively. One of the participant cited that one of the ladies from the support staff withdrew from work due to lack of support during her days of illness. She was expected to work as if she was not ill. The conditions at the institution were heart breaking; working women had become modern slaves.

Management of stress

All the working women in the study indicated that stress management was pivotal to stress control. They stated that coping with job stress required collective effort since both the employer and employee have to understand that the effects of stress are counter productive. Less job stress will mean more productivity. Larson and Simonis (2005) suggest that the first step in reducing stress at the workplace is respect for human life. They cited that the best way was to enhance respect of life is to communicate effectively. Good communication skills whether at home or at work improve relationships. Lamman and Riedmann (1999) cite lack of communication as the most frequent source of discord. Mistrust and suspicion at work are the major fruits of lack of communication which result in tension and anxiety. Mary (1997) encourages people to talk to a friend or share the problems. Most people are not aware of the many forms of stress and their effects, hence sharing problems are critical in avoiding the severe results.

One of the professional working women in the study said; *“management of time, resources and events requires skill and wisdom in order to reduce the effects of pressure on oneself”*. Most of the women indicated that they were finding it difficult to deal with the demands of the job and home. Learning to be content with less is realistic and practical. Most women were suggesting that people especially leaders should be made aware that we are all different and we have some unique problems and other problems which are common to everyone. This enhances collective diagnosis and getting solutions to family problems can help to reduce stress.

Women in the study indicated that it was not easy for them to share some of their problems with their superiors since some of them do not care about them. Managing stress among the women seemed to be difficult to most of the women. However, scholars such as Berns (2007) suggests, when all piles up, it is better to cry and get it all the stress out, and then talk through all the things that bottle up inside during the day and one usually feels better. Larson and Simonis (2005) also suggest that bottling up will worsen the situation. Women in this study were encouraging each other to share their problems as it was critical in alleviating the effects of stress.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study focused on the causes and effects of stress on working women. Stress has become a fact of modern life and it is exacting its toll on mankind. Women were the most vulnerable group in the Zimbabwean context. The Zimbabwean culture largely influences gender role socialization. Women have more roles than their male counterparts. Working women are finding it difficult to balance work, family and other social commitments.

The results of the study indicate that all the working women were assaulted by stress. The main stressors were the work place, family demands and financial distress. Nineteen of the twenty women expressed that the work place had become a pressure cooker while eighteen women indicated that financial distress and family demands were also key stressors. The findings proved that stress is a killer since fifteen women in this study were being affected by stress to dangerous and very dangerous levels. Some participants were experiencing heart problems because of stress. Medical records for one case suggested that she was supposed to see a psychologist for counseling. However, the cash for her to do that was nowhere to be found. It was heart breaking to note that most of the women heavily assaulted by stress in this study were the helpless widows.

Coping with stress was possible if communication skills were improved at the workplace and home said one of the professional women. Lack of good communication had proved to be the source of discord, while good communication could be a source of mutual comfort and understanding. Sharing burdens and being kind to one another whether at a workplace or at home could be useful in reducing stress. Incorporating children in planning and running the home could also reduce stress. Children, when not involved in family issues may be a source of stress. Children should be taught how to reduce burdens on their parents by being involved in the affairs of the home.

The study recommends that the plight of working women be treated as a matter of urgency by all the stakeholders. The government should pursue policies which encourage gender neutrality since some of the demands are gender stereotype such as cultural gender roles. Working women should seek a forum which can make their voices heard such as establishing women associations. Such associations may assist them in matters that are gendered. Their suffering is a cause for deep concern since some in-laws have a negative attitude towards working daughter in-law.

The government should come up with policies which cater for widows and those who cannot help themselves. Free counseling at the workplace can also go a long way in alleviating the pressure on women. Social funds which are made available to members of staff are very important. Members should be allowed to borrow cash with no or very little interest. Non-governmental organizations may be encouraged to sponsor projects and associations for women. Women in Zimbabwe are a vulnerable group in every respect such that they need the support of all stakeholders.

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Every Dark Cloud Has Silver Lining: Searching for its Existence in the 2008 Economic and Political Recession in Zimbabwe.

By

Jephias Matunhu

Abstract

Since time immemorial, human life has always been busy either trying to avoid problems or searching for solutions to problems. Poverty is one of the main problems that face humans today. The paper argues that problems are not inherently bad because most of them have opportunities embedded in them. What opportunities were presented to the Zimbabwean people by the devastating economic and political recession since 2000?

Key words: Poverty, Zimbabwe, economic, political recession, benefit, Diaspora.

Introduction

It is generally accepted that an average human being cherishes a life that is free from all forms poverty. Regrettably, a multitude of socio-politico-economic and environmental challenges militate against human desire to live a peaceful and progressive life style. Such challenges include; disease, wars, food insecurity, climate changes and natural disasters. Despite their negative nature, problems have a brighter side. At the turn of the new millennium, Zimbabwe found itself in a socio-politico and economic crisis. According to Matunhu (2009), the political impasse between the ruling party-Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) and the Movement for Democracy (MDC) led to economic meltdown, which reached its climax in 2008. Inflation reached its all time high of 231 000 000 % while unemployment stood at 85% as at 12 November 2008 and the life expectancy of the average Zimbabwean person had fallen from 56 to 35. The level of poverty in the country was worsened by the nationwide Operation Restore Order (*Murambasvina*) whose objective was to destroy all illegal structures. According to Tibaijuka in Maphosa, Kujinga and Chingarande (2007), most of those who were affected were women, children, squatters and the unemployed. The victims were left unable to meet the basic needs for human life: such as; food, shelter, health and education, which in fact, are basic human rights. Some of the people had to move back together with their families to the rural areas where they were not immediately in a position to generate income.

The Operation Restore Order came a few years after the controversial fast track land reform programme (FTLRP) of 2002. In 2000, President Mugabe ratified the controversial fast track land reforms in a bid to win back the confidence of the electorate, which had been wrestled away from

him by the MDC in a Constitutional Reform Referendum of 2000. The politically motivated FTLRP evicted the white commercial farmers from their farms and parceled the land to the Blacks. By 2004, many blacks were sitting on land that they could not make good use of because the lack of skills, inputs and capital. Some could not invest in the land because they were not sure of land ownership rights. The ultimate result was that there was a paralysis of the agriculture sector and a severe food shortage in the country.

On the political landscape, the March 2008 general and presidential elections failed to produce an outright winner. Morgan Tsvangirayi of the MDC won the presidential election ahead of Robert Mugabe of ZANU (PF). However, Tsvangirayi failed to secure enough votes (50%+1) to allow him to form a government. A runoff presidential election was conducted in June 2008; but Tsvangirayi did not contest because of the alleged violence and intimidation of the electorate by Mugabe and his party cadres. Thabo Mbeki was then tasked by SADC to mediate a power-sharing deal between the main political parties in Zimbabwe. However, the parties to the deal (ZANU PF, MDC-led by Tsvangirayi and MDC led by Mutambara) reached a deadlock on the distribution of the key government posts such as the Ministry of Home Affairs, Reserve Bank Governor and that of Attorney General.

Due to the political and economic recession in the country, the health service delivery, education, employment and food supply plummeted. The country recorded massive labour and brain leakage to the world outside Zimbabwe, as people fled from their country to seek political and economic refuge. To date, Zimbabwe still suffers a huge skills gap, which is a critical element for the country's development. The list of challenges that the crisis created to the people of Zimbabwe and to the countries that received emigrants is long. Notwithstanding the negative effect of the crisis, this study postulates that there are benefits that the crisis brought to both the receiving nations and the people of Zimbabwe.

Objectives of the Study

The study is revisionist and so is driven by the desire to establish the benefit of the Zimbabwe crisis to the people of Zimbabwe. The second objective is to contribute to knowledge on the flip side of the Zimbabwe economic and political recession.

Research Questions

What economic benefits were created by the Zimbabwe crisis?

What ideological benefits were created by the crisis?

Are there any political benefits that were created by the Zimbabwe crisis?

What human capital development benefits were created by the Zimbabwe crisis?

Conceptual Framework

In its generic sense, poverty is a complex socio-economic and political problem which has bedeviled society for centuries. The phenomenon of poverty is complex in that it is neither an economic nor purely a social problem but is multifaceted with social, political, economic, cultural, religious and demographic dimensions. All of the above factors contributed in varying degrees to the socio-politico-economic crisis in Zimbabwe since independence (Chimhowu, 2006). The study conceptualises poverty as a situation of deprivation of rights and needs. The Zimbabwe crisis created political, social and economic poverty. According to Narayan and Petesch (2007), poverty refers to an individual's inability to consume enough to fulfill his/her basic preferences.

The challenge with the above definition is establishing and quantifying the basic preferences because there is no agreement on what the basket of basic preferences should contain. The study holds that a basket of poverty should contain political rights, physiological, spiritual and material rights of individuals. According to this view, a person may have huge amounts of money, but this is not enough to bring about true happiness. In this context, true happiness is achieved in the absence of wants and needs. Although money is required to purchase other needs such as food and shelter, its presence does not mean absence of poverty. With money, a person may continue to suffer other forms of poverty such as physiological inadequacy, spiritual inadequacy and social challenges. The paper argues that poverty drains away self-confidence and self-worth from the poor people, and that it turns the poor people 'voiceless' and 'vulnerable' to exploitation by social elites.

Methodology

The study adopted the mixed research methodology, but with a greater bias toward qualitative research methodology. One of the advantages of the methodological preference is that it captures lived experiences of the respondents. The researcher is able to appreciate the meanings that the respondents give to the subject under study. In some cases, responses were recorded vebartim.

Data were collected from a purposive sample of 50 acquaintances in and outside Zimbabwe. The number of respondents was influenced by the time allocated to the study and the total number of people who could be accessed throughout the period of study. Apparently, the study was carried out when the researcher was living in the Diaspora. Data were collected through the cellular short messages services (sms) and through informal conversations. In some cases, the E-mails service was used to capture data from the respondents; and the response rate was good. All the responding acquaintances had a professional qualification. Table 1 is a profile of the respondents.

Presentation of Findings and Discussion

Data from the field is presented, analysed and discussed below with respect to the study questions.

The first section presents a brief bio-data of the respondents.

Table 1: Classification of Respondents by Location and Gender.

Respondent Location	Males	Females	Total
Diaspora			
Africa	10	9	19
Outside Africa	4	2	6
Sub Total	14	11	25
Zimbabwe			
Rural Area	8	8	16
Urban Area	4	5	9
Sub Total	12	13	25
Grand Totals	26	24	50

The Table above shows that there was gender sensitivity in the selection of the respondents for the study. Eleven females living outside Zimbabwe participated in the study. Of this number, 2 were living outside Africa and 9 were living in other countries within the continent of Africa. Fourteen male respondents were in the Diaspora; 10 of them were in Africa while 4 were living outside of Africa. Table 1 also shows that 12 male participants were drawn from Zimbabwe; 8 of them were living in the rural areas and 4 were urbanites. Notably, 13 female respondents lived in Zimbabwe during the study; 8 of them were drawn from the rural areas and 5 were urbanites. In summary, on one hand 26 males participated in the study, of which 12 lived in Zimbabwe and 14 lived in Diaspora. On the other hand, 24 females participated in the study; 11 of them lived in Diaspora and 13 lived in Zimbabwe during the period of the study. Notably, the study did not collect data on age and race of the respondents; the nature of the study did not considered such data to be of much significance.

Table 2: Employment Status of the Diaspora Respondents

Employment Status	Male	Female	Poverty status (Meet basic needs)	Able to save
Not formally employed	2	1	Somewhat	A bit

Under employed	9	8	Yes	Yes
Looking for employment	1	0	Yes	No
Gainfully employed	2	2	Yes	Yes
Total	14	11		

Table 2 shows that most of the respondents in the Diaspora were able to meet their basic bodily needs such as: water, food, shelter and clothing. Apart from that, most of them were able to save for future needs and wants. According to Alcock (1993) and Narayan and Petesch (2007), workers should save money for use during retirement.

Table 3: Employment Status of Respondents in Zimbabwe

Employment Status	Male	Female	Poverty status (meeting basic needs)	Able to save
Not formally employed	5	8	Somewhat	No
Under employed	2	2	No	No
Looking for employment	2	2	No	No
Gainfully employed	2	1	Yes	Yes
Total	12	13		

The Table above shows that all the respondents in the country (Zimbabwe) were unable to save. This is common in a hyper inflationary economy; the price of goods and services rise much faster than the rise in salaries and wages. Notably, there are people who were not formally employed but being able to meet basic requirements. The study established that such people were surviving on the black market and part time cross border trading. In Zimbabwe, many civil servants started combining formal employment and informal cross border trading to supplement their incomes. The

above view is supported by Maphosa, Kujinga and Chingarande (2007), who noted that most civil servants left employment to enter into the informal trading for survival.

The silver lining in Zimbabwe's socio-economic crises

(a). Cheap labour

A majority of 38 out of the 50 respondents mentioned that the international community benefitted from the poverty crises in Zimbabwe. Countries, such as South Africa and Britain were singled as some of the countries that benefitted from the economic recession in the country. According to the respondents, South Africa benefitted cheap labour as the country was preparing for the 2010 FIFA world soccer tournament. The respondents noted that there were many illegal immigrants in the country. Cheap manual labour could be sourced from the immigrants. According to one of the respondents, most illegal immigrants landed themselves in farms and mines where they were exploited by their employers. When asked to explain the immigrants accepted such working conditions, one of the respondents claimed that the situation of the illegal immigrant was complicated in that if they reported the breach of labour laws, they risked being arrested and deported back home, where the situation was even worse off; again if they decided to keep quiet, they stood to be exploited further.

The receiving countries were also able to benefit cheap scarce skills from the immigrants. For instance, during the time of recession in Zimbabwe, South Africa had a critical shortage of science and maths teachers. By that time Zimbabwe had a good crop of science teachers. The crisis affected teachers to the extent that many had to cross the borders for employment.

One of the respondents mentioned that the brain drain in the country allowed these countries to access skills and knowledge from those who sought economic refuge in other countries. People who benefit from the situation of poverty may not view it as a pressing problem (Lister, 2004). For instance, Zambia, Malawi and Namibia benefitted many of the white commercial farmers who left Zimbabwe during the crisis period. Perhaps this explains why South Africa and SADC appeared to drag its feet in solving the Zimbabwe crisis. During the crisis situations, some unskilled and semi-skilled Zimbabwean people illegally crossed into the neighbouring countries where they were exploited by the private sector.

(b). Ideological benefit

Eleven respondents said that the international community benefitted ideologically in that they were able to create a condition that forced the poor to fight their government. In this regard, one of the respondents said, "instead of waging a military action against the Mugabe regime to effect a regime change, America and Britain saved their money and personnel by engineering a situation of

distrust between the governors and the governed in the country". According to this school of thought, the rich countries created and financed an opposition movement (MDC). In this project, the opposition party was to be the resident representative of the rich countries in Zimbabwe. Along with this idea, instead of the rich countries coming to help fight poverty, they preferred to use their funds on creating scenarios that exacerbated poverty in the country. According to Takirambudde and Fletcher (2006), the international community may put pressure on the national elites and insist on the adoption of certain policies. In this respect, financing the opposition movement and the imposition of sanctions against President Mugabe's regime is one of the many ways through which external countries have been able to influence events in the country.

The respondents also mentioned that the business community benefited from the crises in the country through profiteering. This could be true in business enterprises that were run overtly and covertly by the politicians-cum business people. Some of the respondents noted that they could make money by accessing scarce commodities and supplying them to the black market. For instance, the medium diverted much of the donated food aid from the international community, leaving the intended beneficiaries suffering (Mushipe, 2007). The researcher witnessed cases where such food items were sold on the black market.

(c) Political mileage

Some of the respondents claimed that local politicians benefited from the crises. They believed that the image of the opposition movements in the country was elevated by the recession. According to this perspective, the failures of the Zimbabwean economy were largely blamed on President Mugabe and his supporters. The opposition movements presented themselves to the general public as the panacea to the people's plight. One of the respondents said, "People are following the MDC just because ZANU PF has failed to deal with the economic crises in the country". According to the above perspective, the Government of National Unity would not have come into existence; and Tsvangirayi and a few other opposition leaders would not have become cabinet ministers. One of the respondents claimed that Mr Tsvangirayi, Mutambara and their party members would not have served in the Mugabe regime.

In the same vein, some of the respondents claimed that the ruling party was able to take advantage of the effect of the recession in order to spruce up its dwindling image among the Zimbabwean electorate. The point is that politics is a discipline of creating difficult scenarios for the ordinary people and then turn around and promise the same victims that something was being done to solve the problem. For instance, during the winter season of 2005, the Mugabe government engaged the Operational Restore Order (*Murambasvina*) which resulted in many business and residential

dwellingings being bulldozed (Chirwa, 2007) and the most affected members of the Zimbabwean society were children and women. The Operation left thousands of poor people homeless. Soon after creating this disorder, government initiated a national housing project for the poor. The project was named 'Garikayi/Hlalani Kuhle' (Live better).

(d). Economic benefit

The respondents also claimed that the crisis gave them a chance to be creative. One of the respondents said, "I was able to make a lot of money during the crises period. For instance, I had to quit my job as a school teacher in order to engage in black market. I sourced goods from my well placed relatives." Further inquiries revealed that the crisis encouraged corruption in the country. In this case, corruption refers to the misuse of public power for private gain. It encompasses such abuses by government officials such as embezzlement, fraud, influence peddling, nepotism and extortion.

Twenty one respondents claimed that they benefited cheap housing stands during the crises. A further 13 respondents claimed that the recession made it easy to pay-off their mortgages. What happened was that Building Societies were not allowed to raise mortgage rates at the inflation rate. At some point salaries went up to the extent that most people where able to clear their mortgages sooner. One of the respondents, a university lecturer had this to say, "I had just purchased a house on mortgage. The good thing is that I was able to repay the loan in just about three years. This one benefit that I enjoyed from the Zimbabwe crisis" Ten Diasporas claimed that they were able to purchase houses in the up-markets residential areas because of the recession. One of the respondents said, "I left the country a very poor person, but now I own three mansions- one in Harare and two in Bulawayo. In the absence of the recession, I would not have migrated to the United Kingdom; neither would I have been able to purchase the properties".

(e). Skills acquisition

The economic recession in the country also allowed the Zimbabwean people to scatter around the world, thus exposing them to skills and knowledge that would one day benefit the country. Over half of the respondents claimed that they were able to further their studies whilst in the Diaspora. For instance, one of the respondents said that she went out of the country without a trade but she is now an IT expert. She went on to say that she was already preparing to set up an IT company in Zimbabwe – what was holding her was the uncertainty in the political landscape in the country. One lecturer at a university in South Africa mentioned that in every class of Masters and PhD students, Zimbabweans constituted 30 percent of the registered students. She went on to say that most of the students were part time learners.

Conclusion

The 2000 to 2008 political and economic recession in Zimbabwe has exacerbated poverty in the country. The study established that the crises benefitted some sections of the national and international community. For instance, Zimbabweans who joined the Diaspora were able to purchase properties in the country while others were able to advance their educational qualifications. Some of the respondents believe that the recession also benefitted the opposition movements in the country because they were able to win the hearts and confidence of the people. The study concludes that the political and economic recession in the country had its share of advantages that society must appreciate.

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