

Review of: "Square peg in a round hole: Migration and romantic relationship troubles in the UK Zimbabwean diaspora"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The article *"Square peg in round hole: Migration and romantic relationship troubles in the UK Zimbabwean diaspora"* speaks to a topical issue related to gender relations. The authors add to this discourse by situating the study within a new context - migration. Within this context, the authors were able to interrogate the renegotiation of gender roles and power relations within a society which operates a system that reduces the effect of traditional cultural statuses and norms; which normally would have defined gender relations within marriages. The identification of these factors as potential variables for violence within relationships is a great contribution by the scholars.

However, some points need to be considered to give the paper more academic strength and relevance. These are itemised below:

1. In the abstract, the authors indicate that: *"The research revealed how enculturation tensions are associated with marriage problems, but also how male divorcees were resistant to change as the change was perceived as a threat to their masculinity, leading to conflicts and ultimately divorce."* Based on the first phrase of this sentence, the subject of the sentence are 'male divorcees' however, the data presented suggest that the respondents are mainly females. This is based on the pronouns used by the respondents when narrating their experiences with their spouses. The only respondent which may be a male is respondent #2.
2. Because gender is a major variable for this study, the authors should indicate in the description of the participants the percentage of male/female respondents. To ensure that that the data used for the study is a true reflection of the situation for both genders within a relationship, an almost equal representation of the genders would be ideal
3. In the description of the participants, a summary of the marital status of the participants should be included. This is based on the study focus of couples which in some places are indicated as still married, however the abstract suggests that majority were divorced
4. The study aims do not reflect the identified themes. It is suggested that the study aims are structured along the line of the study themes. This is especially as the study themes seem related to the overall study objective
5. A short explanation of what each theme entails can add value to the overall study and put the data presentation within a context. This can be derived from the data interpretation given under the data presented. Such an introduction may be slotted in just before the data is presented. For example, the extract: *"The role of the institution in seeking a valid immigration status not only highlights the inherent structural inequalities within the system, as immigrants are subject to different experiences and further hardship, be that deportation or seeking additional support from extended friends*

or the wider community, but it also plays a fundamental role in within the dynamics of the relationships between men and women. The systemic immigration process impacts the dynamics within the marital and domestic relationship because when the one partner has their position within the system validated, they will leverage their status over the other partner whose position is dependent upon the other person which means their options become limited and inextricably linked with their partner. If the process says no to one person and this produces a negative outcome for them, that person will in turn apportion those negative outcomes with their partner, thereby perpetuating a cycle of domination and control." could be used to introduce Theme 1 (*Structural inequalities and the intransigent boundaries of immigration*)

6. Some conclusions made by the authors were not supported by the data presented. For example, the statement: *Men are no more likely to utilise support available and accessible by other members of society from the new social context than their female counterparts*". Such a conclusion may not be a true reflection of the data presented because as indicated previously, most of the voices seem to represent the female gender. Also the statement: *"These extracts provide a unique lens through which the relationship between the couples can be analysed"* may likewise not be a true reflection of the data. This is because the voices indicated in the data seem to represent how migrant females evaluate and renegotiate their positions as wives and mothers in a foreign land. Lastly, the sentence: *"In turn, the additional person may themselves be positioned as leverage by enabling the man to feel empowered and embolden as he becomes systematically dis-empowered by the immigration process."* The data however, seems to rather indicate how women are dis-empowered and faced with violence because of their migrant status. The data does not indicate that men systematically get dis-empowered by the migration process. Thus, at the conclusion, where the authors indicate that: *"From this analysis, we can deduce that immigration into the UK has a negative association with the marital relationships of migrant couples."* may need to be rephrased to indicate that the data speaks of the experiences of married female migrants in the UK. Stating that the data considers couples will not be a true reflection as the data indicates that the experiences were narrated by Zimbabwean married/divorced migrant living in the UK and their negative/violent relationships with their husbands