

Motherhood and Its Essence among Zimbabwean Migrant Women in Australia

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Abstract : Childlessness in non-Western societies has wide-ranging social implications and profoundly affects the gender identity and well-being of women. The aspirations of women in these societies are shaped by various sociocultural expectations, encompassing social norms and their own social standing. Currently, there is limited knowledge regarding the perceptions and experiences of Zimbabwean migrant women living in Australia regarding childlessness and motherhood. This paper explores the cultural perspective on children in Zimbabwean society and investigates the personal and social consequences of infertility, as well as the cultural expectations of motherhood among Zimbabwean migrant women residing in Australia. The perceptions and experiences of this migrant community are of utmost importance in order to prevent misunderstandings about the core essence of motherhood among Zimbabwean women. Ultimately, this will lead to the provision of sensitive and culturally appropriate healthcare and social support for migrants in Australia's multicultural society. The study adopts a constructivist paradigm and employs qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews, drawings, and photo elicitation, involving 15 Zimbabwean women. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data. In Zimbabwean culture, the ability to bear a child holds significant meaning for women. Children not only ensure the continuity of society but also provide social security, as parents rely on their children for care in old age. Childlessness jeopardizes a woman's social status and carries social repercussions that have a profound impact on their gender identity and well-being. Cultural expectations of motherhood place the sole responsibility for the emotional and physical care of children on the mother. Despite residing in Australia, the procreative value has not diminished for Zimbabwean women. Raising awareness of the procreative needs of Zimbabwean women in a culturally sensitive manner would enhance the emotional well-being of these women.

Keywords : motherhood, culture, migrant women, Zimbabwe, Australia

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