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JOURNAL PURPOSE

The purpose of the *Ngenani - Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University Journal of Community Engagement and Societal Transformation Review and Advancement*, is to provide a forum for community engagement and outreach.

CONTRIBUTION AND READERSHIP

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Names of scholars: beginning with the first name and ending with the surname

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Abstract: must be 200 words

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Italicise *et al.*, *ibid.*, words that are not English, not names of people or organisations, etc. When you use several scholars confirming the same point, state the point and bracket them in one bracket and ascending order of dates and alphabetically separated by semi-colon e.g. (Falkenmark, 1989, 1990; Reddy, 2002; Dagdeviren and Robertson, 2011; Jacobsen *et al.*, 2012).

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AN ETHICAL EXPOSE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ZIMBABWE: CASE IN ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS BY CROSS-BORDER TRADERS, 2005-2015.

ELISHAH MUTIGWE¹ AND FAITH CHIPFAKACHA²

Abstract

The economic and political ambivalences that affected Zimbabwe between 2005 and 2015 saw the extrinsic development of immoral informal cross-border entrepreneurship in the troubled citizens as they endeavoured to eke a survival. This research investigates the tribulations that created the flaws that militated against the trade during this period of economic-politico crises. The research used the triangulation methodologies to tap into the informants' data sets. Thus interviews, questionnaires and participation observation were basically employed to gather the data for this study. The study appropriates analytic interpretivism, analytic philosophy within an enculturation hermeneutical framework with a view to fully comprehend the phenomena in question. The study establishes that the moral repugnant strategies employed to outwit the challenges were politically generated. It, therefore, argues for a fusion of ethics into informal cross-border trade for sustainability in Zimbabwe's developmental strategies.

Keywords: *entrepreneurship, cross-border, politics, profiteering, ethics.*

INTRODUCTION

The Zimbabwean economic and political life has been marred by a plethora of problems to the extent that formal employment and

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national pride were relegated to the doldrums of perpetual worthlessness. These catastrophes have been necessitated by the ingenuity flaws embedded in the interconnectedness of politics, religion and economy. That is, the advent of Christianity in the African sphere introduced demerits than benefits due to the ideological clashes between the former and the African indigenous religion(s). Thus, the modern type of education was wheeled on this new wave of religious artifact. In this education, the western philosophy and its mode of political governance were engraved into the hearts and brains of the natives. The establishment of missionary schools facilitated the spread of western conception of the ideal democracy, dictatorship and the liberal economic system hence, the introduction of formal, capitalistic assetisation and monetisation of human labour. This marked the inauguration of industrialisation and privatization of the properties formerly owned collectively. It was indeed the transitional period of *kushava* (selling) into the modern entrepreneurial flair. The two became the kernel of individualistic tendencies in the then transformed traditional leadership and the subsequent Zimbabwean political and economic systems.

An array of the methodological skills and techniques employed by the researchers in fact delineated alongside the justification of such a selection. To this point, the article appropriates the sequential development in the political organisation of the state and that became the defining instrument in the Zimbabwean economic spectrum. To contextualise the study, the scholars define the key terms. In this section, terms and phrases such as entrepreneurs, cross-border trade, morality ethical evaluation, economy, politics and Zimbabwe are unpacked. Thereafter, the research article provides a cursory survey of major appealing and destructive events and decision that have led to the embellishment of the “underground economy” in Zimbabwe (Pophiwa, 2010). We adopt a critical discourse analysis and re-constructionism technique to unravel and re-order the trajectories to

the particular effect. The next segment unravels the gist of the study by presenting the multifarious immoral and legal practices undertaken by the Zimbabwean informal traders whose under-dealings across the international boundaries undermine national policies and agendas. Before rolling back the tide, the researchers offer an evaluative position in regard to the morally repugnant business acts and practices; that is, reordering the moral fiber for the sake of continuity and sustainability of this business line. Commendations are also proffered to mark the end of the study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a triangulated desk research methodology in its quest to capture all the pertinent issues much needed for a clear presentation of cross-border dealings. It is worth noting that desk research involves the probing in search for information from the already published and archived resources namely; books, journal articles, online sources, reports and statistics from all array of organisations. The triangulation approach, encourages the use of several methods to collect data and multiple investigators with varied expertise (Johnson *et al*, 2017). Thereafter, cross referencing and the comparison of data were undertaken. In conjunction, the study used analytic interpretivism to fully comprehend the phenomenon. Through analytic philosophy, all the wrangles involved in the political organisation of Zimbabwe and its economic policies were unravelled. Critical analysis offered an informed position before new insights were proffered pertaining to the morally permissibility of the salient survival strategies by the cross-border traders.

In a quest to make the whole reflectional process relevant to the study context, the researchers employed Gerald West's inculturation hermeneutical framework (West: 1993). Accordingly, Ukpung (2000) is of the opinion that analytic interrogation of the secondary texts is done 'through a grid developed within the African socio-cultural context' as

‘the subject of interpretation’. Thus, the researchers interrogated the various textbooks, journal, newspapers and even unpublished literature to profess a comprehensive understanding of the informal business undertakings in Zimbabwe. These sources were put under scrutiny through the analytic discourse and critical re-constructionism to forge a new way of the cross-border business but, from an ethical perspective. The employed methodological scheme did benefit the study because most of the facts were adequately captured without any hustle.

In general, entrepreneurship is the art of buying and selling as a form of business. As observed by Mutigwe (2013), Africans, in particular Zimbabweans had their own conception from business from time immemorial. Thus, the study further argues that they had the concept of *kushava* (selling), *shave* or *zvitengeswa* (goods for sale). Against such a backdrop, it can therefore be averred that the Zimbabweans engaged in entrepreneurial activities in the form of butter trade between specialists from different craftsmanship. However, it is mandatory to comprehend the notion at hand from a global perspective to set the universally agreed boundaries to its conception. To this point, Anderson and Starnaska (2008, 8) as cited by Williams *et al* (2012) observe how the term entrepreneurship has long proven to be a problematic and elusive concept because it means different things to different people. Williams *et al* (2012) have striven to furnish a working definition of an entrepreneur appropriate for the task at hand. For them, an entrepreneur is “someone actively involved in starting a business or is the owner or manager of a business”. By implication, it can be inferred that entrepreneurship is a coordinated chunk of transactions meant to generate a profit or a wealth.

Having canvassed the concepts of entrepreneur and entrepreneurship, it is worth it to proffer a distinction between formal and informal entrepreneurship. Formal trade or entrepreneurship is any business

that is legal and available for government taxation. However, Williams *et al.* (2012) define informal entrepreneurship as monetary transactions not declared to the state for tax and or benefit purpose when they should be declared but that are legal in all other aspects. Pophiwa (2010) defines informal trade as second economy or underground economy. He further argues that informal economy is a highly organised system of income generating activities that deprive the state of taxation and foreign exchange. In this respect, the relations between the state and the cross-border traders determine the course and nature of clandestine activities performed by cross-border. In juxtaposition, Amin *et al* (2002) as cited by Williams *et al* (2012), assert that informal trade is unregulated, lowly paid and insecure kind of the survival driven self-employment conducted under sweatshop-like conditions by marginalised populations excluded from the formal labour market. Nevertheless, the scholars note that Pophiwa's terminology in describing informal entrepreneurship is less emotively charged so much that the overtones of immorality implied in the line of business are under carpeted. To this end, there is no effect to discourage these illicit activities that promote livelihood for the unemployed masses. The researchers note that informal trade in some spheres is considered a residue of the disappearing traditional economic system common in the primitive communities. More often, it has suffered a derogative labeling such as 'underdevelopment' and 'backwards mode' of earning a living in comparison to the formal employment in the modern industries. Insinuatingly, the article therefore conceives it a necessity given the obscurity around the under economy to present a nap survey of the informing theories in informal trading.

STRUCTURALIST THEORY

Some structuralists have theorised that the underground economy or black market is a direct by-product of the advent of a de-regulated open world market economy. Davis (2006) is of the same view and he argues that informal trade is really a primitive form of exploitation that

got a new life from postmodern globalization. To substantiate on their line of argument, structuralist observes how an increment in functional integration of a single global economic system has resulted in subcontracting and out sourcing. Subcontracting and outsourcing became a reckoning force upon that an integrated informal sector and its contemporary capitalism hinge on. These notions have led to increasingly down grading of wages, social services, benefits and the burgeoning informal entrepreneurship.

NEO-LIBERAL THEORY

Due to more complicated and oppressive measures by the state many formal employees were forced to surrender and do their own businesses for livelihood. This has proven to be on the increase in the African autocratic state. The neo-liberal theorists argue that informal trade came as result of voluntarism by large number of people deciding to exit the formal repressive economy (Williams *et al.*, 2012). Normally, the voluntarists are celebrated to be heroes for the bravery to shake off the shackles of state's bondage. Williams *et al.* (2012) augment their line of thinking as they assert that the 'heroes' decide to operate off book to avoid the costs, time and effort in formal registration. Accordingly, this becomes a consequent driven by the stifled spirit due to high taxation system of the state. This theorem seems very much fitting to explain the Zimbabwean economic crisis factoring the hectic flush in the 'black market' oriented cross-border entrepreneurship.

POST-STRUCTURALIST THEORY

Apart from the two theories discussed, the persistent progression of second economy has been attributed to yet another explanation. However, an alternative third explanation has emerged. The informal entrepreneurs are no longer always viewed as rational economic actors engaged in profit-motivated monetised transactions and swayed by the cost/benefit ratios confronting them, as depicted by structuralists

and neo-liberals (Davis, 1992). This school of thought holds that, the motive behind informal trade is the assentation of real equity in distribution of the opportunities in both the political and social spectrums for the sake of own unique identity as a people. The participants in this line of business are considered to be both causative and agency in mitigating the inequalities perpetuated by the over-regulated formal entrepreneurship. The post-structuralist theorist denies the negative labelling awarded to informal entrepreneurs as victims of relegation from the formal sector, rather it celebrate them as agents of self-realisation and own prescribers of self-identity as it incorporates everyone through division of labour.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TURBULENT: A NECESSITATING FACTOR

In Zimbabwe, just as in other countries world over, political and economic issues are intertwined. The harmonious symbiotic relation between these notions provides birth to a just nation with a vibrant economy for all. As conceptualized in the Platonic Utopian democratic state, the politics based on rationality should have an edge to control the economic system without any overlap. For instance, Plato (1930) in his famous deductive rhetoric discussion that had this to proffer in *vis a vis* to government and its mandate to the masses writes:

“I will do so”. said I. “Tell me, then; you affirm also, do you not, that obedience to rulers is just?” “I do.” “May I ask whether the rulers in the various states are infallible or capable sometimes of error?” “Surely,” he said, “they are liable to error”. “Then in their attempts at legislation they enact some laws rightly and some not rightly”.

Apparently, Plato investigates the civil obedience by the populace to the states’ dictates as an ingredient for a just society. Indeed, he ascertains that justice for the sake of the general happiness inherently deceits in the conformity to the polity’s laws in general. Also, Plato deductively intuited that any human government is fallible of incorrectly reaching decisions in the parliament. The erroneous

enactments result in chaotic or despotic tendencies distorting a democracy. Against such a backdrop, the article observes how national politics are central in either building or destructing the national economy. In congruency to the argument herein, Mawere (2011) is of the view that the cataclysmic meltdown of Zimbabwean economy since the turn of the new millennium cannot be legitimately divorced from the prevailing political undercurrents since independency from the white colonial settler rule in 1980.

Significantly, the costly decisions by the Zimbabwean government whose ripple of negative effects begun to roll away in 1997 when it awarded the Z\$50 000 to the disgruntled war veterans. As if was not enough, the same government was led into an intervention into the Democratic Republic of Congo's civil war. The tax payers' wealth was wasted in conjunction with the human resource in the army. This error was soon coupled by the unplanned land invasion of 1998 that stretched up to date. The land saga proved to be the mother of all blunders as it multipronged into both political, social, religious and economic problems leading to the strategic isolation of the once bread-basket of the SADC Zimbabwe. The land invasion had no financial and technological strategic plan. In fact, it lacked a fallback plan in case of the resultant negative effects. Almost every agricultural operation drew to a halt as both white farm owners and their poor workers ran away in the international community seeking political asylums for dear life. The cessation implied a cut on the raw material supply to the manufacturing industry, hence the de-industrialization of the nation. Against that backdrop, Mawere (2011) observes how, such moves condemned a large chunk of the formerly employed people to the streets where they had to among other things, start up their own informal small business ventures to sustain themselves and their families, the kind of business widely known as the "black market or parallel market".

Realising that it has negated the national production and exportation trade, the government embarked on strict and ruthless tax systems especially on those exporting and the civil servants. Such oppressive taxation pushed many people out of formal employment, even those in the private sector. The wrongly made laws as pointed by Plato continued to haunt the national pride as masses resorted to “political exodus” seeking political asylum in the neighbouring states and the United Kingdom while in actual fact it was economic asylums sought. The more resilient populace sought solace in the under economy, inclusive of the cross-border trade.

‘DOG EAT DOG’ IN CROSS-BORDER TRADE: A MYTH OF AMORAL BUSINESS

By definition, cross-border trade is a form of informal entrepreneurship plied across the national boundaries. It is unregistered for the sake of evading tariffs to maximise the profits. This type of business has a long-standing history backdating to the pre-colonial era before the establishment of oppressive national boundaries by the white colonizers. The underground trans-border entrepreneurship has seen its growth being wheeled on many factors. Notably, the informal vocation in South Africa and Zimbabwe has been flown by economic crunch in Zimbabwe. To this effect, a multifarious factors have been blamed for the persistence by the cross-border traders. These include high unemployment, high inflation, shortages of foreign currency, shortages of goods and commodities, high levels of poverty and food insecurity (Chani, 2008). Unemployment in Zimbabwe has resulted from the de-stabilisation of the agrarian economy following the unplanned land re-distribution programme dating back to 1999 spearheaded by the Svosve people of Wedza. Also, the inconsiderate taxation system that milk the already slim wages of the impoverished workers by the Zimbabwean government has steered the masses to join the second economy where they hope to earn a living, among such group are cross-border traders

who specialise in a range of goods in scarcity mainly in the home country.

To buttress the foregoing, Chiliya *et al.* (2012: 566), argue that “The presence of a thriving black market given the differential in foreign currency rates, poor political environments, the collapse of the social sector such as health care and education also promote cross-border trade”. Banda (2010), buttresses the same opinion as he asserts that, “the informal cross-border trade provides people with a source of income and employment”. However, it is important to note that, privatization programmes in response to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank economic structural adjustments aided the decrease of job opportunities in Zimbabwe.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRAITS OF CROSS-BORDER TRADERS IN ZIMBABWE

Despite being an all-encompassing profession, it is worth to take a brief account of the social and economic characteristics defining the profile of the cross-border business people. Against the political and economic catastrophes bedevilling the nation the decade of 2005-2015 saw much dropouts from the educational sector, primary, secondary and tertiary respectively. By implication, it follows that the Zimbabwean economically active population that is between the age of 15 and 65 years. Most of them have at least a grade seven certificate while others have or do not an Ordinary Level certificate but, a small chunk of them are graduates and professionals. In terms of gender ratios, largely the group comprises of females as compared to the male counterparts. Deductively, men are less responsible and are mostly drug abusers prone to political exploitation in carrying out political aggravated violence. Most of the female crew are single mothers trying to fend for the children whose fathers would have denied paternal responsibility. A small portion of the married female cross-border traders group soon or later join the single mothers after divorce due to the morally repugnant treaties involved in the trade.

SALIENT GOODS IN CROSS-BORDER TRADE

The underground economy is a bilateral trade in which both illegal exportation and importation of goods is undertaken. However, due to the collapse of both the primary and manufacturing industries, the informal trade functioned as a supply conduit to the local market than being a siphon. During the period under study, the informal entrepreneurs greatly did their business in the provision of food stuffs, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, and electrical gadgets such as DVD players, phones, television sets, satellite dish sets, refrigerators and clothes. In fact, the cross-border trade supplied every type of goods. Since the micro informal entrepreneurs engage in this sector mostly to supply the scarce essential commodities, they often play running battles with the ZIMRA officials and the police force in trial to evade paying duty. To that effect, the United Nations: World Food Programme (2004) Issue 2 says.

An assessment carried out in October 2004 revealed that trade barriers between Zimbabwe and her neighbours were the major constraint to informal food trade. Zimbabwe appears to be relying on an official maize import programme (executed through the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) – that has the monopoly on grain trade) to cover its deficit. Import levies have been imposed for individuals or traders importing more than a single bag of food including rice and maize unless they have an import permit from the GMB. Rice and maize attract import levies of ZIM\$20,000, equivalent to US\$3.56 per 50kg bag, where the trader has more than one bag of either commodity. Considering that most cross-border traders deal in very small quantities, the restrictions and levies make the trade unfeasible. Indications from private traders are that some 100,000 MT of maize imports have been supplied to GMB through formal channels since the start of the marketing year. Commercial wheat imports mostly from Argentina, USA and South Africa have also been reported. The South African Grain Information Service (SAGIS) reports that up to 155,000

MT of wheat has been imported into Zimbabwe since April 2004. With regard to Zambia, the trade barriers have a significant impact on trade. (United Nations: World Food Programme, 2004 Issue 2)

A MYTH OF AMORAL BUSINESS

The underlying principle as far as the myth of amoral business is that business is just like any other game with its rules but, not morality. Thus, business is amoral. In this case, the argument goes, business has nothing to do with ethics. In business, moral considerations are not needed. Business and ethics are incongruous. Implied herein is that, not all the times are business immoral, but it is not concerned with morals. It is worth noting that, even good acts are praised not in terms but only in the cost/benefit language of good business (De George, 1993). This philosophy seems to have crippled into the Zimbabwean informal trade as the political and economic crisis worsen especially between 2005 and 2008. In response to the deepening crisis, the 'smugglers' paid an adamant eye to the moral calls in their professional. To this point, they began to do anything, anyhow and anywhere, so long a profit. That was a dog-eat-dog situation in pursuit of a livelihood. These became the survival skills by the cross-border traders in face of the politico-economic oppressive policies by the Zimbabwean government and ever-going up inflation rate.

Chief among all, the informal traders designed measures through which they would circumvent the problem of paying the exorbitant import duty. Such a need gave rise to another form informal office called *maguma-maguma* playing a middleman role between the ZIMRA officials in and around the border posts. *Maguma-guma*, is a term that translates as people who seek to make a living through dubious means (Chiliya *et al.*, 2012).

To enhance their informal business, the traders in conjunction with bus drivers, conductors and *madhiraivha emagonyeti* (haulage trucks'

drivers) formed a syndicate union for smuggling purposes. In agreement to this observation, Chiliya *et al.* (2012) assert that, The cross-border traders, bus crews and customs officials engage in massive organised tax evasion resulting in massive losses to the very badly cash-strapped Zimbabwe government. Some bus crew charge “border fees” to facilitate passengers passing through the borders without declaring their goods. Bus crews collect money, outside the regular bus fare, for the purpose of bribing Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) officials. Cross-border traders feel the US\$300 duty free every month affects the viability of their operations.

One striking practice in this quote is that, in such situations even the bus crew become informal traders as well. Embedded in the African culture is the concept or practice of *kuchekeresha* (ritual killing meant to boost one’s business). In this regard, some cross-border traders were often accused for such practices. Muzvidziwa (1998) postulated that reports are abound that women traders have been accused of using “muti” (African traditional herbs) to influence the behaviour of their customers. Muzvidziwa further posited that women cross-border traders were linked to the sale of human parts. The human parts mixed with herbs are believed to bring luck to businessmen in South Africa. Though Chiliya *et al.* (2012) refute these to be baseless accusations, this study ascertains the former claim. When it comes to the concept of *kuchekeresha*, Bourdillon (1976) observes how, the Shona frequent the traditional healers’ shrines for exorcism of the avenging spirits of people they would have killed for business ritual. It is therefore evident that cross-border value no ethical consideration for it is immoral to murder for a wealth.

The informal traders clandestinely secure accommodation in the foreign lands. Some female and male cross-border traders share a single co-rented room in a bid to cut on costs. Resultantly, they indulge in sexual repugnancy, hence the spread of Sexual Transmitted

Infection (STI) and the deadly Human Immune Virus (HIV). In some instances, the female offer sex in exchange of accommodation to the natives of the hosting countries. On the other end, men end up indulging in homosexual relations, them being the girlfriends for the same benefit because they want to cut on expenses for a hefty profit. The study has leant that the same moral crimes can be committed in return to some assistance rendered in smuggling *zvinopisa* ('hot stuff'/restricted or illegal goods, like drugs) The Zimbabwean cross-border traders enter into marriage of convenience with the natives of Botswana as a way of getting a residence permit best done for earning economic benefits.

Female cross-border traders often hide their valuables in their genitals to avoid paying duty. Some woman may insert diamonds in their private parts. This may result in ailments like cancer devouring the trader in the long run. Similarly, some would swallow the precious stone into foreign lands for the sake of fetching a lucrative price. However, some die in the course of being operated to remove the smuggled goods. After keeping the costs low through bribes and fake declaration forms, the article notes that the cross-borders step up the profit margins by offering credit facility to their clients. Thus, they sell their wares on instalments but with doubled or tripled price as a means of profiteering.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has explored, examined and critically analysed the landscape of informal cross-border entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe. The main observations by the study are that the cross-border trade had been insinuated by the politically unfavourable decisions by the Zimbabwean government. Also, the symbiotic relation between economy and politics is really delicate to the extent of causing problems for the masses. In conjunction, the political intuited causes of informal trade, the inherent need for profiteering in man drive them to

venture into this unregulated economy for self-realisation economically. The article has unravelled the immoral strategies adopted by the cross-border traders for survival in each case the government tighten its laws to curb the national income loses. Largely, it was learnt that, all the practices are based on the myth of amoral business. To that effect, the traders decided to depend on the vegetative and passionate components of their souls just like non-rational animals to evade extinction. It actually resulted in no respect for human life as shown in the exposition. Before the article draws to a halt, it is worthwhile to proffer some ethical recommendations as a way of re-protracting the trade. Those who ascribe to the notion of separating moral evaluations from business operation are in fact missing it. De George (1993) is of the view that a business that does not morally care for the environment in which it operates would quickly come to a standstill. Imagine a situation in life where the buyers, sellers, workers and management act immorally or amorally; chaos will mark the order of the day and no progression at all. It is morally absolute that ethics is glue that binds people in all life endeavours.

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