



The expatriate entrepreneur: Drivers to migrate to South Africa



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Orientation: Expatriate entrepreneurs (EEs) willingly seek to relocate abroad independently and belong to the self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) group. They possess the classic behavioural characteristics of entrepreneurs, have the propensity to embrace risk and uncertainty and have high self-efficacy and control while seeking opportunities to initiate business development.

Research purpose: This study explores the drivers behind EEs' decisions to migrate to South Africa.

Motivation for the study: The global demand for talent remains the most crucial issue facing many countries. South Africa must attract EE's to grow the economy as they will start their businesses and provide employment.

Research approach/design and method: The research philosophy used in the study was interpretivism. A qualitative methodology adopting snowball sampling was used to identify focus groups, as no reliable records existed. Thematic analysis was adopted to analyse the data collected.

Main findings: Drivers to migrate included infrastructure development, business and trade, education, family problems, political instability and the desire to travel abroad.

Practical/managerial implications: Expatriate entrepreneurs should acquire the knowledge and understanding of the local culture to help them integrate into South African society. Expatriate entrepreneurs and their families should be willing to learn and speak the local dialects, especially isiXhosa and isiZulu. The Department of Home Affairs needs to make the acquisition of permits and visas less problematic.

Contribution/value-add: The study examines EEs who choose to live and start their own businesses abroad by exploring the drivers behind North-South mobility on the African continent.

Keywords: expatriate entrepreneurs; entrepreneurship; self-initiated expatriation; international career development.

Introduction

Globalisation has seen the number of skilled individuals searching for better employment opportunities and a better quality of life outside their home country rise (Castelli, 2018; Chaudhary et al., 2017). The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA 2017) reported that more than 272 million people do not reside outside their home countries, which is roughly 3.5% of the world's population. The UNDESA (2019) reported that there had been an exponential increase of approximately 281 million people living outside their home countries in the last 20 years. Côté (2022) states that the nature of the international career is changing as it offers expatriates new roles and career paths.

Kanayo and Anjofui (2021) explain that expatriates have been attracted to South Africa since its reintegration into the global economy in 1994. New forms of expatriation other than traditional company-backed expatriation have emerged. One of these is self-initiated expatriation, where individuals are responsible for their international careers without the support of an organisation (Andresen et al., 2020). Even with events such as the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, which may have altered the decisions to migrate, many expatriates considered permanent relocation away from their home countries (Everett-Allen, 2020). Some individuals, instead of residing in their home countries, in areas where the pandemic severely impacted, left to move away to more favourable environments (Côté, 2022). In addition to this new trend among expatriates, many are becoming entrepreneurs in their host countries. The expatriate entrepreneur (EE) can be defined as 'an individual temporarily living abroad who initiates a new business in

the host-country' (Vance et al., 2016, p. 202). However, scant research has been done on this phenomenon (Paik et al., 2017). This study examines the drivers behind EEs' decisions to migrate to South Africa.

Research aim

What are the drivers behind expatriate entrepreneurs' decisions to migrate to South Africa?

Literature review

International Human Resource Management (IHRM) literature has focused mainly on company-backed expatriates who go overseas to fulfil an overseas assignment. However, in recent years, because of globalisation and, more recently, COVID-19, new forms of expatriation have emerged. Self-initiated expatriation in its various manifestations is more commonplace as individuals seek better opportunities for themselves and their families. While many international studies have focused on self-initiated expatriates (SIEs), they have been limited in the African context (Al Ariss & Syed, 2011; Andresen et al., 2020; Baruch & Forstenlechner, 2017; Connor, 2016; Froese, 2012; Olabi, 2023). A few studies have examined the drivers to migrate for SIEs (Harry et al., 2019a, 2019b; Maharaj, 2014, 2017). The following section presents different definitions of expatriation.

Defining expatriation

The existing literature differentiates between voluntary and forced migration. Voluntary migration refers to cases where the choice to migrate is primarily in the hands of the prospective expatriate motivated to achieve positive goals in a new country.

McNulty and Brewster (2017) define expatriates as:

[I]ndividuals voluntarily working legally and residing temporarily in a country in which they are not citizens in order to achieve professional goals, to be relocated abroad, whether through an organisation or on their country. (p. 30)

In this study, attention is directed to individuals seeking and self-initiating to relocate abroad independently. Self-initiated expatriates are defined as individuals who have temporarily relocated 'under their own initiative to the desired host-country and gained local employment using various host-country career-entry strategies' (Suutari & Brewster, 2000, p. 422). Expatriate entrepreneurs are individuals who form part of the SIE group and have been described as individuals who are voluntarily living abroad and start international 'self-employment' in a host country (Pinto et al., 2024).

Forced migration, on the other hand, takes place when persons having no other reasonable options or alternative but to escape from 'threats to life and liberty by coercive political conditions' (Khosa & Khalitanyi, 2016, p. 49). Refugees and displaced persons would fall under this cluster.

In the case of EEs in South Africa, Khosa and Khalitanyi (2016) reported that the majority left their home countries for South Africa because of political instability. Post COVID-19 there are several EEs who started businesses to exploit a business opportunity and receive financial rewards, rather than because of the unusual obstacles faced by EEs in the host country (Ruhe, 2022). In the next section, the key differences between the different types of EEs are explored.

Key differences between the two types of expatriate entrepreneurs

In the section below, the key differences between the types of EEs, namely, 'necessity' and 'opportunity' EEs are presented. Chrysostome (2010) states that 'necessity' EEs attempt to survive in the host country and are generally from developing countries. They are not well educated and often struggle with a lack of capital. They have a solidarity relationship with co-ethnic employees who provide their flexible labour to help necessity immigrant entrepreneurs and, in return, get the status of a worker, which is very difficult to acquire in the mainstream job market (Chrysostome, 2010; Khosa & Kalitanyi, 2016; Olabi, 2023).

'Opportunity' EEs are immigrants who freely decide to start a business to take advantage of the business opportunity (Olabi, 2023). Chrysostome (2010) describes 'opportunity' EEs as professionals who because of their profiles have better access to start-up capital from financial institutions in the host country. Often they are highly educated and hold a qualification from a university in the host-country, as such as proficient in the main language of the host-country. They hire host-country employees as well, thereby employing locals (Olabi, 2023). The following section describes the drivers to migrate among EEs.

Drivers to migrate

A distinction is made between positive factors that 'pull' (opportunity-based entrepreneurship) and negative situational factors that 'push' people into entrepreneurship (necessity-based entrepreneurship) (Khosa & Khalitanyi, 2016). Pull factors include the need for achievement and the desire for independence. Push factors include unemployment and family pressure (Pinto et al., 2024).

Pull factors

These factors attract expatriates to relocate to other countries:

Better job opportunities: A macroeconomic factor that influences the person's willingness to migrate is the desire for better job opportunities. These findings are consistent with Dickmann et al. (2018) who state that SIEs take the initiative to look for job opportunities overseas. Mostert (2014) explained that many, mainly younger people, leave their countries of birth looking for employment and a high standard of living. Harry et al. (2019b) and Maharaj (2017) found that the desirability of job opportunities drives most expatriates, especially those from neighbouring countries, to South Africa. Shortland

(2018) explains, like most expatriates, being successful in one's career is important to SIEs. Arifa et al. (2021) posit that SIEs desire to find job opportunities in various countries. Besides career opportunities, migration is influenced by changing employment patterns and career paths (Fejes et al., 2021; Shan & Fejes, 2015), leading to role changes. Paik et al. (2017) discovered that many expatriates are becoming entrepreneurs in their host countries, resulting in the emergence of the 'expat-preneur' phenomenon.

Opportunities for further education: Opportunities for scholarship and access to a better education system have been identified as pull factors influencing expatriation. Howe-Walsh and Schyns (2010) found that SIEs migrate mainly to advance their careers, especially when such career opportunities do not exist in their home countries. Andresen et al. (2020) found that most SIEs migrate to South Africa because of valuable infrastructure and educational institutions that nurture career progression and development. Maharaj (2017) found that South Africa is considered to be a destination of choice for many African SIEs is because of the presence of world-class institutions of higher learning and sound infrastructure.

Host location characteristics: Fejes et al. (2021) stated that living conditions, reputation and the desire of the expatriates to travel are key characteristics. Chaudhary et al. (2017) stated that most people relocate, especially from less to more developed nations, to enhance their living standards. South Africa's diverse culture, relative economic and political stability, well-established infrastructure and excellent education system make it an attractive destination for expatriates, especially from other African countries (Harry et al., 2019a). South Africa has a diverse culture, so expatriates are exposed to new ways of life and thinking, products and services and consumer behaviour stimulating creativity, leading to knowledge transfer, and bring new ideas, solutions and business models (Harry et al., 2019b).

Networking opportunities: According to Doherty et al. (2011), opportunities that build personal and professional networks motivate people to travel abroad. Shortland (2018) reiterates this point by stating that many SIEs use informal networks when seeking professional opportunities, motivating their decision to relocate. Dickmann et al. (2018) maintain that more robust networks emphasise self-directed behaviours and organisational commitment. Harry et al. (2019b) ratify that strong social networks are a leading factor in attracting SIEs to South Africa.

Business opportunities: Niedomysl et al. (2019) maintain that entrepreneurs extensively stimulate prosperity in various countries. It is critical that globally, governments target such entrepreneurs through various mediums. Niedomysl et al. (2019) discovered that the desire of entrepreneurs to grow their businesses internationally influences migration. This contention emphasises the idea of 'footloose' entrepreneurs, which implies that entrepreneurs have a high migration predilection (Niedomysl et al., 2019).

Push factors

These are factors that force people to leave their home countries for host nations:

Pressure from social networks: Dickmann et al. (2018) contend that social cohesion influences SIEs to relocate abroad. Doherty et al. (2011) assert that most expatriates are pressured by their social networks to relocate abroad in search of opportunities like career advancement and a better quality of life for the family. Ambonil et al. (2023) suggest that because some SIEs already have relatives abroad, such as spouses or immediate family they feel pressured to join them.

Poor economic conditions: Al Ariss and Syed (2011) and Harry et al. (2019a) reveal that most SIEs, especially those from developing countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, relocate to more developed countries such as South Africa to escape economic recession. Similarly, Maharaj (2017) found that the financial prosperity influences the decision of SIEs to travel overseas. Harry et al. (2019a) discovered that SIEs are not purely motivated by the desirability of careers in developed nations but rather by the economic recession in their own nations. Moreover, Harry et al. (2019b) and Maharaj (2017) reveal that the recession in SIEs home countries motivated their decision to relocate to South Africa and abroad.

Political conditions: Self-initiated expatriates are driven by deteriorating political conditions, corruption and secular persecution in their home countries (Al Ariss & Syed, 2011; Thorn, 2009; Van den Bergh & Du Plessis, 2012). Worsening political climates in African countries have motivated people to expatriate to South Africa and abroad (Harry et al., 2019a; Urbański, 2022). The postcolonial era in Africa is characterised by issues of political instability. In Ethiopia and Kenya, for example, Ruhe (2022) reveals that political insurrection and instability influence individuals' decisions to migrate.

Family obligations: The family obligations that affect expatriates' experiences include their family, including the extended family situation, work-life balance and children's education and well-being.

Family, including extended family situation: For example, the family situation may include the number of dependents an expatriate has (Doherty et al., 2011). Extended family is an important factor influencing an expatriate's decision to move to South Africa (Maharaj, 2014, 2017). The cohesion of the family unit in terms of the closeness of the relationships and the degree of support given are important factors that influence the decision to relocate (Mansor et al., 2014). The most common reason for an international assignment to fail among expatriates is the inability of a partner or spouse and children to adjust or migrate to a different environment (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008).

Work-life balance: Kelliher et al. (2019) and Thilagavathy and Geetha (2020) explain that the changing nature of work, especially since COVID-19, has made the world of work to become demanding. The drive to constantly seek competitive advantage takes a commitment that often affects an employee's work-life balance (Ambonil et al., 2023).

Mujtaba et al. (2011) reason that work-life balance in a family may influence SIEs, more likely women are under pressure to balance their work and family responsibilities. According to Froese (2012), it is common, especially for SIEs, to spend long hours performing their tasks. Froese (2012) found that many expatriates are subjected to inhuman conditions at work. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2010) expressed similar concerns about expatriates' working conditions in their host countries. The ILO (2010) observes that expatriates, especially SIEs, have no standard working hours.

Children's education and well-being: Children's education is an important consideration when deciding to relocate because it has significant consequences for the child. Deciding to leave the child behind can have a significant emotional impact on the child's psychosocial well-being because of prolonged parent-child separation (Zhao et al., 2018).

Zhao et al. (2018) explain that parental absence may lead to inadequate support and care for children left behind. The harmful effects of parental migration are aggravated by other factors such as poverty, parents' divorce and grandparent caregivers' frailty. The following section looks at the post-pandemic implications for EEs.

Post-pandemic implications for expatriate entrepreneurs

The economic recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced existing inequalities in the business market. Typically facing numerous structural constraints, EEs were at a greatly heightened risk during the ongoing crisis. Coronavirus disease 2019 has also enhanced the sense of competition among entrepreneurs and existing businesses. Many economies such as China have formed strategies to encourage and facilitate entrepreneurship (Donthu & Anders, 2020). Globally, governments have realised that COVID-19 has threatened an established system. The lesson learned from COVID-19 is that this threat must be well regulated so that economic competitiveness in comparison to other countries can be regulated.

Owing to the nature of the EE's coping strategies, four main types of responses, disengagement, delay, compensation and adaptation, as well as their combination, were identified in the business practices of African entrepreneurs in Finland (Vorobeva & Dana, 2021). The responses prove to be closely related to disrupted transnational business networks, limited technological solutions and restricted access to resources (Vorobeva & Dana, 2021).

The following section explains the research methodology and design.

Research methodology and design

Research philosophy

The research philosophy used to guide this study was interpretivism. This form of thinking supported the researcher in investigating a social phenomenon of SIEs migrating. Interpretivism was considered appropriate for this qualitative study, and the position of epistemology was applied in exploring the aim of this study. This position helped gain critical knowledge and increased the understanding of the factors that influenced SIEs to migrate abroad.

Research design

This study adopted an exploratory design. In optimising this design, the researcher was able to understand the research problem better.

Research approach

An inductive approach was used to explore the drivers behind SIEs migrating to South Africa.

Research method

This study adopted a qualitative research method as it was found most appropriate for this investigation. This method allowed the researcher to study a social context and understand experiences from the research participants' perceptions.

Research setting

The study was conducted among EEs and their families in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Important reasons for selecting this setting were firstly convenience, and secondly, Durban houses a substantial number of EEs who own and operate various businesses (Mathe, 2023).

Population and sample

The population is described as the number of EEs living in Durban, South Africa. The study's target population was approximately 200 000 expatriates who reside in Durban, South Africa. Thirty individuals were selected to participate in this study by applying a nonprobability snowball sampling technique. These individuals included small business owners from Africa. The number of participants who participated in this study was 18. Table 1 provides participant demographic information.

Data collection method

Focus group interviews were used as the data collection instrument of this study. These interviews comprised six groups, with three participants in each group. Predetermined, open-ended questions were developed, which served as a guide to the investigation. This allowed for probing and gaining rich participant data as they spoke of the influences. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, remote data were collected using social communication methods such as

TABLE 1: Participants' demographic information.

Participant number	Gender	Age (years)	Country	Number of years in South Africa	Education	Occupation
1	Male	33	Zimbabwe	5	Diploma	Business owner
2	Male	29	Zimbabwe	3	Diploma	Business owner
3	Male	35	Ghana	4	Bachelor	Spaza shop owner
4	Female	44	Ethiopia	5	Diploma	Business owner
5	Female	38	Zimbabwe	6	Matric	Business owner
6	Female	31	Zimbabwe	5	Matric	Business owner
7	Female	28	DRC	5	Matric	Business owner
8	Female	34	DRC	6	Diploma	Business owner
9	Female	27	Ghana	3	Diploma	Business owner
10	Male	39	Malawi	5	Diploma	Business owner
11	Male	41	Nigeria	7	Diploma	Business owner
12	Female	25	Nigeria	3	Diploma	Preschool owner
13	Female	33	DRC	4	Matric	Business owner
14	Male	37	Ethiopia	6	Diploma	Internet café owner
15	Female	30	Ghana	3	Bachelor	Hair salon owner
16	Female	36	Malawi	4	Diploma	Business owner
17	Female	33	Nigeria	5	Diploma	Business owner
18	Female	34	DRC	5	Diploma	Business owner

DRC, Democratic Republic of Congo.

WhatsApp and Zoom. The duration of the interviews was between 40 min and 90 min.

Data analysis

NVivo software version 12.0 was utilised to code and organise the data. The study employed thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The analysis process followed the six steps to thematic analysis, which are listed as follows:

Data familiarisation

The researcher actively engaged in the repeated reading of the data to search for meanings and patterns. The entire data set was read three times before the coding.

Generation of initial codes

The researcher engaged in the production of the codes from the data set. The coding process helped simplify and focus on specific data characteristics. During the coding process, important texts were identified and highlighted as they relate to particular themes in the data set.

Searching for codes

At this stage, the relevant codes related to the data were sorted and collated into different themes. Moreover, tables were employed to present the themes identified in the data set.

Review of themes

At this stage, the coded data extracts for each theme were reviewed to determine whether they appeared to form a coherent pattern. The validity of individual themes was examined to determine if they accurately represent the meanings in the data set. In addition, some of the themes that need more data to support them were merged with other themes. Moreover, some of the themes were also broken into subthemes.

Definition and naming of themes

At this stage, the researcher focused on aspects of the theme captured and identified what was of interest to them and why. The researcher conducted and wrote a detailed analysis to determine the story that each theme communicates. During this phase, decisions were made regarding how each theme related to the story of the entire data set about the research questions. Furthermore, some of the themes were modified and refined to reflect the information from the data set accurately.

Production of the report

This is the last phase of the thematic analysis process after defining and naming the themes. This phase provides concise, logical and exciting information of the data and themes obtained from the research (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Participants' views were used to support each finding and theme. Short codes were included in the final report to help understand specific points of interpretation and demonstrate the prevalence of the themes.

Data quality

The data quality of this study was determined based on credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability. Credibility was ensured by recording the research step from the beginning to the end of the study. Dependability was attained through the in-depth description of the research design and its application as well as the data collected from participants. While generalisability is not a characteristic of qualitative findings, the results could be applied in similar organisations. Adequate contextual information during the fieldwork was recorded to ensure the transferability of the findings.

Ethical considerations

Before data collection, ethical approval was granted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Ethics Committee. The ethics approval number is HSSREC/00000941/2020. Participants provided their informed consent prior to the interviews. The study strictly adhered to ethical guidelines, protecting participants' rights and well-being. Throughout the research process, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained.

In the next section, the results of the study have been presented.

Results

Data analysis revealed six themes from the responses received by participants. The results of the findings are presented as follows:

Figure 1 presents the expatriate entrepreneurs' drivers to expatriate. The verbatim responses of participants as per the themes that have emerged have been summarised in Table 2.

Theme 1: Business and trade

Globally, there has been a rapid increase in migration. This worldwide occurrence is frequently discussed in the political and public space. A major theme in this discussion is that people migrate seeking out opportunities for career advancement. The study supports this finding in that job opportunities were the main factors that enthused EEs to relocate to South Africa. For instance, 12 participants indicated they relocated to South Africa to find job opportunities. The participants expressed that finding jobs in their home country was difficult.

Globally, trade is increasingly important because of globalisation. In the last decades, empirical literature has revealed a significant link between migration and trade. This study also revealed that most expatriates migrated to South Africa to engage in business opportunities. According to the interviews, nine participants indicated that establishing new businesses influenced their expatriation to South Africa. Furthermore, the participants said there are more business opportunities in South Africa than in their home countries.

Theme 2: Education

There is a general misconception that expatriates are often illiterate and underprivileged people who are seeking ways of escape from poverty in less developed areas. However, it is important to understand that migration has many nuances,

and the expatriate's education level has many dimensions too. The results showed that most expatriates relocated to South Africa to seek better education. Seven participants said they left their home countries for South Africa because of the better education system. They claimed that even though

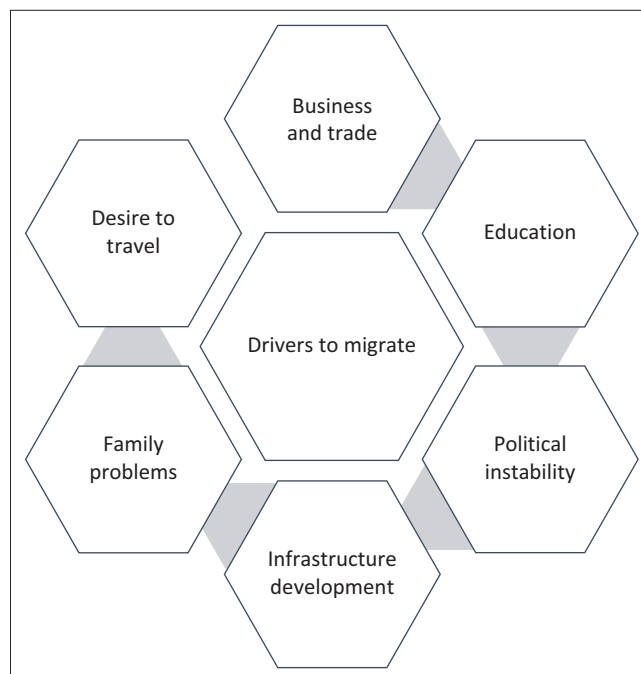


FIGURE 1: Expatriate entrepreneurs' drivers to migrate to South Africa.

TABLE 2: Verbatim responses from participants as per major themes.

Themes	Verbatim responses from participants
Business and trade	<p>Participant 2 said: 'I came here because I needed to be employed or maybe start my own business. There are no job opportunities in my country. Could you imagine that after completing my studies, I stayed home for five years without a job. The youths in my country are becoming very frustrated because there are no jobs. I think leaders in that country had failed us completely'.</p> <p>Participant 8 indicated: 'Unemployment is a big problem in DRC Congo. The youth are not finding it easy at all when it comes to jobs. Some of us have decided to travel to secure greener pastures. Life is becoming difficult without a job for many years'.</p> <p>Participant 11 said: 'South Africa has more business opportunities. Nothing is working in my country. It is more difficult to set up new businesses in my country. Most of us moved to this country because we desire to do well in our businesses. I mean legal business and not drug business. The economic activities in this country are booming as compared to our country'.</p>
Education	<p>Participant 3 indicated: 'South Africa has one of the best education systems in Africa. I moved to South Africa to have better education. I am not saying that there are no better universities in Ghana. The truth is that when you compare universities in Ghana and South Africa, you will realise that the first six best universities are found in South Africa'.</p> <p>Participant 12 mentioned: 'It is a privilege to study here in South Africa. This country has the best universities. The quality of education in South Africa is far better than that of Nigeria. I am not ashamed to say this because the strikes and protests in Nigeria are too much. The government is interfering in the governance of the university system in Nigeria. There is also a lack of resources to support universities to deliver'.</p>
Political instability	<p>Participant 7 claimed: 'It is not safe living in DRC Congo. Some of us have decided to relocate because of the political tension. Thank God that we are alive today. I am not thinking of going back to that country because of the frequent killing of innocent people. Most of our friends and family members died not because they were criminals but also due to political struggles. For example, my dad was shot dead because he was an opposition leader. How I wish I could see my dad being alive'.</p> <p>Participant 8 said: 'It was a hell in DRC. You may not understand me until you visit that country. These leaders are wicked, and they can do anything for power. We have lost everything because of this war. Everyone is living in fear of being attacked and killed. You cannot express your opinions on national issues'.</p> <p>Participant 1: 'I moved to South Africa because I was afraid of going to prison. My parents do not have money to defend me in court. Life was tough for me. I do not think of going back to my country'.</p> <p>Participant 18: 'I left my home country because of the court issue I was facing. You will not believe this; my uncle was behind. How I wish my parent were alive. I left because no one was there for me'.</p>
Infrastructure development	<p>Participant 7: 'I love this country because it has enough infrastructure. Most of my family and friends love South Africa due to infrastructure development such as roads, hospitals, and schools'.</p> <p>Participant 8: 'Even though my country has enough resources, South Africa is far developed than it. Our leaders have failed us. The roads are terrible in my country. We are also having energy problems. Most of our children attend less privileged schools'.</p>
Family problems	<p>Participant 10: 'I moved to this country because there is too much death in my family. I think there is a spiritual problem in the family, but everyone is afraid'.</p> <p>Participant 12: 'I left my home country due to family issues. I was very young when my parent passed on, and my father's family has taken away everything from me'.</p>
Desire to travel	<p>Participant 5: 'My dream is to live in a foreign country. You know what, people who travelled in my country to different countries are the most respected'.</p> <p>Participant 8: 'I travelled to this country because of my desire. It has always been my dream to live in advanced countries. I planned to live in the United Kingdom, but there is no family member there to help me. This country is beautiful, and it has everything that advanced countries have'.</p>

DRC, Democratic Republic of Congo.

their home countries had many schools, the quality of education was low.

Theme 3: Political instability

Countries such as Somalia, Syria, Mali, Afghanistan, Gambia and Eritrea are still experiencing political instability and civil war. Fundamental human rights are denied to its citizens such as access to education, safe living environment, such as access to clean drinking water and electricity. For example, Boko Haram's activities in northern Nigeria and Mozambique have led to many citizens leaving the country in fear of their safety. Thirteen participants said they left their countries for these reasons.

Fear of persecution from political parties and military regimes was also listed as a main driver to relocate to South Africa. Five participants stated that their expatriation resulted from the fear of persecution from the powers in charge of their home country because of their differing political beliefs.

Theme 4: Infrastructure development

The results showed that poor development and maintenance of infrastructure in their home country was a major driver for EE to relocate to South Africa. Eleven participants said that living in South Africa was better than their home countries as the infrastructure there was poorly maintained and had deteriorated significantly.

Theme 5: Family problems

These findings showed, unlike many other expatriates, others who were trying to escape their family situation in their home countries. Eight participants expressed that they left their countries to avoid family problems such as death, poverty and spirituality.

Theme 6: Desire to travel abroad

The desire to travel abroad was also a motivator behind EEs' desire to relocate South Africa. Nine participants indicated that their expatriation was influenced by the desire to live in more developed countries. In the next section, a discussion of the findings takes place.

Discussion

Thematic analysis identified six factors that emerged as drivers to migrate to South Africa among EEs: business and trade, education, political instability, infrastructure development, family problems and desire to travel abroad (Mathe, 2023).

Business and trade

The results indicated that EEs migrated to South Africa to find job opportunities and are supported by previous studies by Arifa et al. (2021), Ferrie (2018), Shortland (2018), Harry et al. (2019a, 2019b) and Connor (2016). Connor (2016) claims

that economic opportunities are the main driver behind millions of individuals migrating from their countries. Harry et al. (2019a, 2019b) also found that the desire for job opportunities is a motivating factor in expatriates relocating to South Africa. It is important to note that many EEs may not have initially intended to migrate to South Africa to start their businesses but found themselves in situations where they were presented with an opportunity. Some EEs revealed that establishing new businesses abroad influenced them to migrate to South Africa as there were better business opportunities here. Niedomysl et al. (2019) found that entrepreneurs radically promote economic growth in different nations. Niedomysl et al. (2019) state that governments globally should aim to attract and maintain such entrepreneurs.

Political instability

One of the main drivers of expatriation for EEs was the political instability and civil war in their home countries. Findings revealed that political unrest and civil war had led to the demise of the EEs' families and friends. This is consistent with earlier research (Harry et al., 2019a; Ruhe, 2022; Urbański, 2022; Van den Bergh & Du Plessis, 2012). Schroeder (2020) found that EEs are driven by career prospects and political conditions in their home countries. Worsening economic conditions in EE's home countries appear to influence the EE's decision to migrate to South Africa and abroad, and South Africa has a relatively stable political climate, thus allowing for freedom of expression (Harry et al., 2019a; Maharaj, 2017). The study findings show that some EEs left their home countries because of fear of persecution from the law, and the only way of escape was to travel out of their countries. In support, Castelli (2018) also found that many expatriates left their home countries because of legal and political persecution.

Many EEs left their home countries because of the political instability, which in turn destabilised the economy, thus making it very difficult for them to make a living; therefore, many of them with the business skills left, and came to South Africa looking for opportunities to start their own businesses (Ambonil et al., 2023).

Education and career opportunities

Results revealed that EEs left their home countries for South Africa because of the better education system. South Africa has many highly ranked universities on a global scale. Harry et al. (2019a) and Maharaj (2017) identified that South Africa is considered the top destination for many migrants from Africa because of the quality of education and infrastructure development. Moreover, many expatriates relocated to South Africa because of career advancement and employment opportunities (Harry et al., 2019b; Maharaj, 2017). Harry et al. (2019b) found that South African universities have adequate teaching and learning facilities, unlike Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Zambia and Kenya. Most expatriates are more willing to remain in South Africa because they feel

their careers started there. Thus, pursuing personal and professional development (Baruch & Forstenlechner, 2017), many EEs left their home country because of the political and economic instability as well as the business opportunities that South Africa presented.

Infrastructure development

These findings support the link between location characteristics and migration (Alsharif, 2019; Andresen et al., 2020; Dickmann et al., 2018; Froese, 2012; Mitrev & Culpepper, 2012). Mitrev and Culpepper (2012) found that expatriates relocate to host countries because of the advanced infrastructure than remain in their home country. Mitrev and Culpepper (2012) contend that people from African countries like Zimbabwe, Namibia, Nigeria, Togo and others relocate to advanced nations, such as Australia, Canada and the United States because of their advanced infrastructure. Furthermore, it has been claimed that the desire for adventure and a wish for excitement are the drivers that influence EEs to migrate abroad (Dickmann et al., 2018). Arifa et al. (2021) found that the status of EEs in the host nation is a much more decisive pull factor towards expatriation.

Family problems

Gillespie et al. (2022) state that the family situation is a significant driver of an expatriate's desire to relocate and vice-versa. The study found that most EEs left their home countries to avoid family issues such as poverty, death and spirituality. Castelli (2018) found that family obligations are one of the social drivers that influence the migration of people into different countries. It has been found that expatriates with family issues are less likely to return home (Gillespie et al., 2022) and this was supported by this study's results.

Desire to travel abroad

Findings suggested that the desire to travel was one of the determinants of the migration of expatriates to South Africa. Mostert (2014) and Carling and Collins (2018) found that the desire to travel together with other external drivers of migration helps cement the decision to expatriate. Participants of this study shared similar ideologies. Furthermore, Dickmann et al. (2018) and Arifa et al. (2021) found that the desire for adventure and a wish for excitement are the factors that influence EEs to migrate abroad. Expatriate entrepreneurs have several destination options and can travel to different areas, with participants of this study choosing South Africa as their country of relocation.

Practical implications

This study reviews the nascent field of expatriate entrepreneurship that has gained little attention so far. It demonstrates that multiple personal, contextual, circumstantial and relational factors contribute as drivers to the international career of the expatriate. This study also has important practical implications. Expatriate entrepreneurs

need to acquire the knowledge and understanding of the local culture to help them integrate into South African society. Expatriate entrepreneurs and their families should be willing to learn and speak the local dialects, especially isiXhosa and isiZulu, as language diversity fosters unity and facilitates information flow between expatriates and locals. The South African government needs to uphold the United Nations (UN) Convention and Protocol and ILO Conventions on migrant workers. The Department of Home Affairs needs to make the acquisition of permits and visas less problematic. The process of acquiring the necessary permits and licences to open up their own businesses should be streamlined and less complicated.

Limitations of the study

The study was limited to the eThekweni Municipality in Durban South Africa. The sampling strategy of snowball sampling may have led to bias as one participant introduced the researcher to the next. Coronavirus disease 2019 made it difficult to access participants because of restrictions. The xenophobia prevalent in South African cities also made participants reluctant to share their stories.

Future research

This study only concentrated on EEs in the eThekweni Region of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Expanding the geographical reach of the study to include all major metropolitan cities in South Africa will give a deeper and more complex understanding of the careers of EEs in South Africa. This will enable a more comprehensive investigation into the factors that motivate EEs to migrate to South Africa and identify ways and means of supporting entrepreneurial careers to reduce unemployment in South Africa. Longitudinal research is required to understand the dynamics of the EEs' integration into the South African economy. Furthermore, the effects of COVID-19 and its long-term consequences on global mobility and entrepreneurial career intention are areas for future study. Future studies could explore the challenges unique to EEs such as the regulatory hurdles for business owners, access to capital and the entrepreneurial ecosystem in South Africa. Studies could also explore how networking among EE's is different to networking for employment. Finally, the study highlighted that both SIEs and EEs face risks. Future studies could explore how EEs navigate the risks differently because of their entrepreneurial nature.

Conclusion

This study has examined expatriate personal predispositions and motivations as critical drivers of an entrepreneurial career. It was found that many EEs came to South Africa looking for a better life, economically and socially. It is important to note that one of the key recommendations of this study is governmental and local community support for entrepreneurial careers, be they expatriates or locals, to overcome the large-scale unemployment plaguing South Africa.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

S.K.M. conceptualised the study including collecting and analysing the data. A.M. supervised and assisted in its conception.

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Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

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