



Review Article

**STRATEGIES USED BY SOUTH SUDANESE MIGRANTS IN ADAPTING TO THE NEW WAY OF LIFE
IN NAKURU MUNICIPALITY, NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Migration is part of human life and involves peoples' movement from one place to another depending on many factors that include resource distribution and the opportunities that some areas in the world present as compared to other areas. As a result of the conflict in Sudan, from 1983-2005, South Sudanese migrated to Kenya for fear of political persecution, human right violation, social, economic and cultural abuses to search for a better way of life. However, South Sudanese who migrated to Kenya have no access to all types of assets and basic livelihoods mean including rights to land ownership and housing. Despite, their limited access to livelihood assets especially rights to land ownership and housing, South Sudanese migrants managed to settle in Nakuru municipality. However, it has remained unclear as to what strategies are used by South Sudanese migrants in adapting to their new way of life in Nakuru municipality. Thus, the need for this study. The objective of this study was to establish social strategies used by South Sudanese migrants in adapting to the new way of life in Nakuru municipality. This research paper was guided by Cultural Ecological Theory. This study was conducted in Nakuru municipality. It had a sample size of 110 respondents recruited through snowball sampling. Data was collected by the use of both interview schedules and focus group discussions. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics and then reported in percentages, tables, pie charts and excerpts. The study found out that the process of adaptation and socio-cultural change is observed to be occurring in various aspects of South Sudanese life. These include adjustment to the host culture, acquiring language competency and advances social interaction between respondents and host citizens and the increased amount of contacts with members of the host society.

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INTRODUCTION

Migration is part of human life and where people move to depend on resource distribution and the opportunities that some areas in the world present than other areas (Bryant, 2005). This concurs with Skeldon (1997) and Spaan (1999) view that migration is the movement of people from one location to another within and beyond a country of normal residence. Hence, the process of migration deals with the change in place of residence from a place of origin to a place of destination (Singh, 2012). It also brings change in process of social interaction, social group, culture, obligations and duties, new expectations, problem of adjustment at the new place and many other social and political challenges. African Union (2006) points out that in Africa multiple push and pull factors drive migration both within the continent and to other regions.

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The push factors which create fertile grounds for migration, these include poor governance, corruption, political instability or conflict, low wages, high levels of unemployment; poverty and lack of opportunity as the major causes of migration for both skilled and unskilled workers. African Union further explains that pull factors are factors which attract the migrants to the destination. These are opportunities for a better life, safer environment, less crime, greater security, and better quality of education, good climate and health care at the destinations influence decision to migrate. As a result of the conflict in Sudan, from 1983-2005, South Sudanese migrated to Kenya for fear of political persecution, human right violation, social, economic and cultural abuses to search for a better way of life. However, South Sudanese who migrated to Kenya have no access to all types of assets and basic livelihood means including right to land ownership and housing. Despite, their limited access to livelihood assets especially right to land ownership and housing, South Sudanese migrants managed to settle and live a normal life in Nakuru municipality.

However, it has remained unclear as to what social strategies are used by South Sudanese migrants in adapting to their new way of life in Nakuru municipality, hence the need for this research paper. The objective of this study was to establish the social strategies used by South Sudanese migrants in adapting to the new way of life in Nakuru municipality, Kenya. Migration is universally acknowledged as one of the most important social strategies adopted by individuals, households or communities to enhance their social capacity. It is crucial to understand the coping mechanism of South Sudanese migrants in adapting to the new ways of life given the changes and responses to particular social and physical environment as they search for a better or more secure livelihood. It is the aim of this study to understand the survival strategies used by South Sudanese migrants living in Nakuru municipality. Secondly, it is important to understand the different lifestyles that confront South Sudanese migrants in Nakuru municipality since they are non-citizen residents who escaped from past individual and community histories, to seek self-realisation, maintaining quality of life, freedom from prior constraints and maintain their new preferable lifestyles.

Furthermore, South Sudanese migrants do not have access to social welfare and benefits provided by the Kenyan government such as state sponsored education and public health care services through their national health care plan. Lack of proper documentation result in restriction of their freedom of movement often make them live in fear of arrest, detention and deportation back across the border. It is the aim of this study to understand how South Sudanese migrants develop coping mechanism in adapting to the new way of life in Nakuru municipality. Thirdly, this study expects to recommend the development of comprehensive integration of South Sudanese migrants into host community. This is intended to enable them search for a better way of life in response to social and physical environment, and to provide a clear justification for their migration in making their dreams a reality to achieving an appropriate life balance. Integration aims at giving the migrants an opportunity to take part in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their new country so that at the end of such a process they can live under the same legal, social and financial conditions as natives of that country. This research paper was guided by Cultural Ecological Theory.

Cultural Ecological Theory was used to explore South Sudanese migrant families living in Nakuru municipality as regards to their interaction with the new environment and socio-cultural change, adjustment and adaptation. The theory argues that after the process of change, adjustment and adaptation the migrants' life is modified to suit the needs for the new setting. This concurs with Chhetri (1986) points out that migrations brings together at the destination populations with different social and cultural background, this in turn initiates a process of change in social, economic, religion and cultural lives of people in question in order to make adjustment or adaptation. Berry (1997) acknowledges that adaptation refers to changes that take place in individuals or groups in response to environmental demands. Berry further explains that good socio-cultural adaptation is predicted by cultural knowledge, degree of contact, intergroup attitudes and minimal cultural distance.

Chhetri (1986) maintain that adaptation is a two way process, it involves an interaction between the migrant and the host community. In this process both parties undergo adaptation changes although one of them may change more than other which leads many of us to view the process of adaptation from the migrant point of view only. It is the aims of this study how the South Sudanese migrants fit into adapting to the new way of life which is traditionally different from their traditional culture. The study employed purposive sampling procedure. Nakuru municipality was purposively selected because it is one of major municipality hosting South Sudanese migrants who left their traditional homeland due to conflict, fear for political persecution, human rights violation, social, economic and cultural abuses to search for better way of life. The second technique was snowball sampling. Snowballing sample was applied in identifying respondents from South Sudanese migrants living in Nakuru municipality. Using this technique, hundred and ten (110) respondents were sampled for the study. Data collection was designed to meet the needs of research objectives and questions for the study.

The study used both interview schedule and focus group discussion to collect primary data. Interview schedule and focus group discussion were used to enable the researcher understand the strategies used by South Sudanese migrants in adapting to the new way of life in Nakuru municipality, Kenya. Amin (2005:178) Points out that an interview is an oral questionnaire where the interviewer gather information through direct interaction with respondent. In this connection, respondent provide the needed information verbally in a face-face contact where idea are exchange. Amin further explain that interview is appropriate when dealing with all types of persons for example; young people, mothers, fathers, and illiterate persons. In this study the general themes for the interview schedule questions include migration process of South Sudanese migrants, experiences in Nauru municipality including challenges or difficulties, coping processes or mechanisms, opportunities, languages and relationships, gender related experiences, changes in life, social support networks. This interview schedule used follow-up questions by tracking respondents perspective to enables them structure their voice-over freely. Whereas focus group discussion (FGD) was applied to South Sudanese migrant families household heads in Nakuru municipality.

In this connection, focus group discussion was applied for household heads, which constitute two focus group discussions of both (men and women) separately in the respective areas. The advantages of using focus group discussion is that it is highly efficient for data collection since the amount and range of data are increased by collecting from several people at the same time. It provides checks and balances on each other and extreme views tend to be weeded out. It provides an opportunity to go deeper into issues as group is relatively small. It is easier to handle most controversial issues in such a small, manageable, and less threatening group (Mulwa, 2010:102-103). Data analysis is meant to interpret the meaning and understanding from a set of data (Silverman (2011). In this study, data was analyzed qualitatively to give a deeper understanding of the issues under consideration. The focus of the analysis was to address the research question guided by the set objective.

This category needed was developed through organizing and analytical reading of the data. The data analysis process started in the field, by focusing and refocusing of research objectives and questions, and through the methods used in collecting data. This was to ensure that important details were not forgotten from the fieldwork. The three objective of the study was analyzed using descriptive statistics in which percentages, tables and pie chart was used to provide complete analysis of data. The results of the study were summarized and then presented in percentages, tables and pie charts.

Findings of Research

Social strategies used by the respondents in adapting to the new way of life

Language proficiency

Language is an important strategy employed by South Sudanese migrants in adapting to the new way of life in Nakuru municipality. This study considered language as cultural bridge and weapon of communication linking South Sudanese migrants with host community. This study established that language competency in the host culture advances social interaction between migrants and host citizens. As a result, the study revealed that respondents had learnt the languages of the dominant linguistic group in their locality especially Kiswahili. Kiswahili Language facilitates and helps to increase amount of contacts with members of the host society. This again is a timely step towards internationalization of the culture of the host community by the respondents to widen their relations and networks. This is reflected in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Respondents language ability

Language ability	Frequency	Percent
Kiswahili	56	50.9
English	54	49.1
Total	110	100

It is interesting to note from table 1 that 50.9% and 49.1% of the respondents said that they speak Kiswahili and English or both the languages beside their own mother tongue. This study wishes to argue that Kiswahili language ability function as a protective factor, facilitating social contact, help to solve the problem of dependence on others, represent instrumental adaptation to the new culture and increasing one's social support network. As a result the study revealed that speaking Kiswahili helps respondents in negotiating the market price without the use of translator and help build their communications with the local people. In light of the research and observations, the process of adaptation and socio-cultural change is observed to be occurring in various aspects of South Sudanese life. While cultural persistence may continue to characterize them as separate cultural group, with the passage of time and generations, this situation may change gradually. The study also noted that already the younger generations of the South Sudanese born in Kenya (Nakuru municipality), show tendency to give up learning mother tongue. In the course of time the South Sudanese migrants in urban centres might become less distinction than it is today from the other communities living in the same socio-economic and cultural setting.

The study also observe that some South Sudanese migrants showed tendency to give up their traditional dressing in South Sudanese fashion, they have now adopted the Kenya dressing pattern as well as the western world styles of dressing. On the other hand, for instance during the focus group discussion the group had this to say on how important is learning to speak Kiswahili language in helping them adapt to the new way of life. Kiswahili affects their life positively in social relationships. They have relationships with their Kiswahili-speaking neighbourhoods. Kiswahili language is a cultural bridge and weapon of communication linking them with host community. Language competency advances social interaction between them and host citizens. Kiswahili Language increases the alternatives in social relationships. Kiswahili Language is a resource for them and functions as a protective factor in feeling confident and helps them socially adapted in Nakuru municipality.

Mode of communication

In this study mode of communication is considered an important strategy employed by South Sudanese migrants in adapting to the new way of life in Nakuru municipality. The major mode of communication used by South Sudanese migrant families in adapting to the new way of life were telephone calls, home visits and email communication. These promote the concept of social remittances that is to say transfer of ideas, skills, attitudes learned and experienced by South Sudanese migrants living in Nakuru municipality. This is reflected in the Table 2 below.

Table 2. Respondents modes of communication

Mode of communication	Frequency	Percent
Phone	58	52.7
Home visits	31	28.2
Emails	21	19.1
Total	110	100

The findings of the present study found out that the most common way for South Sudanese migrants maintaining contact with their country of origin is to regularly keep in touch with people still residing there, through telephone calls supported by 52.7% of the respondents. The next most common means of maintaining contact with their country of origin is through home visits which accounted 28.2% of the respondents and persons who cited email communication constituted 19.1% of the respondents respectively. Furthermore, the study observed other means of South Sudanese migrants in Nakuru municipality maintaining contact with their country of origin is to regularly follow up the news about life or culture in their homeland. This again is a timely step toward adaptation made by the respondents to widen their relations and networks. This study wishes to argue that larger families have more social and material needs than those with fewer children. Therefore, larger families who cannot on their own provide fully for their children would find much relevance in having closer social ties with their relatives in the country of origin and other urban based relatives in Kenya and other part of the world. Such relatives would provide a valuable source of both material and social support to the families by means of communication. In this connection, it is observed that family members who understand and

perform their roles, spirit of togetherness and respect is encouraged. They feel more comfortable to talk about their problems whether or not they stem from the home or the society. This is unlike the families with fewer children, who may find it less tedious to have sufficient provisions for the family. Such family may not find a lot of meaning in having closer ties with other relatives. This therefore partly explains why smaller sized families tended to have weaker social ties with urban based relatives.

Relationship with host citizens

The question of relationship or contact with the host community is explored. South Sudanese migrants living in Nakuru have relatively open access to the economy and society in the municipality, permitting business and trade ties with local individuals. In general, this study observed that South Sudanese migrants in Nakuru municipality and its surroundings interacted relatively freely with the wider economy and society. The fact that many resided in rented houses could freely intermingle, socialise and do business. The study indicated that while interaction with the host economy, it was also structured in many cases. There were many instances, of course, of individual-level interactions between South Sudanese and Kenyan as buyers and sellers, tenants and landlords, clients and service providers. In essence, relationship is a process that depends on networks creation based on personal ties, network of friendship and community ties as well as economic links in life of migrants. In this respect, migration brings together populations with different social and cultural background and in turn initiates a process of change in social, economic and cultural life of the people in question in order to make adjustment or adaptation. This is indicated in the Table 3 below.

Table 3. Respondents relationship with host citizens

Relationship	Frequency	Percent
Good	108	98.2
Bad	2	1.8
Total	110	100

The findings of the present study showed that 98.2% of the respondents cited good relationship with host community and that they enjoyed harmony with the civilians. Respondents who cited good relationship pointed out issues such as visiting each other for meals, visiting friends, good neighbourhoods, attending marriages and business meetings; their out-group participation is fairly good. In this connection, these were sufficient to bring them into contact with host community in the town and thereby initiate among a process of social and cultural change and adaptation. This indicates that respondents were socially well adapted in the host community. Further, the study noted that once some initial contact has been made, the average migrant had reasonable chance of making friends from the contacts available in their neighbourhoods. However, 1.8% of the migrants cited bad relationship with the police because their harassment. On the other hand, for instance during the focus group discussion the group had this to say regarding their relationship with host citizens. When they first came to Kenya, they just absolutely had no friends at all. In their neighbourhood, they just sat there and understood nothing. When Kenyan said something, they just nodded.

But after some time they found some Kenyan friends who approached them first. And they really helped them us get their our confidence back to approach others, who were also friendly as well. It is useful to know more Kenyan friends, listens to them and knows more from their experience. They guide us how to settle down gradually... During the difficult time of their our earlier settlement while they we were was so stressful, they we were lucky to have some good friends around them us and support them us. Our friends gave us lots of help and emotional support.

Residence consideration

The question of residence consideration is explored. The results revealed that South Sudanese migrant families living in Nakuru municipality generally tend to prefer living in a locality where they have people belonging to their own community or culture. Furthermore, different tendency is also observed. They are also found to be living in both localities where they have people belonging to their own community or culture and mixed settlements, where they are distributed in different areas of the town and seem to be happy in whatever locality they are living. This again is a timely step toward adaptation made by the respondents to widen their neighbourhoods relations and networks. This study argues that the choice of where South Sudanese migrants live within the municipality was considered as an important strategy in adapting to the new way of life. While some preferred residing within the neighbourhoods of fellow South Sudanese, others chose to live in neighbourhoods that were not populated by fellow South Sudanese migrants. These two factors were however, not considered by some of the respondents as Table 4 shows.

Table 4. Respondents residents' consideration

Community type	Frequency	Percent
Same community	53	48.2
Host community	48	43.6
Neutral community	2	1.9
Both communities	7	6.3
Total	110	100

As results in Table 4 the nearly half of South Sudanese migrants chose to live in neighbourhoods already populated by fellow South Sudanese migrants constituted 48.2% of the respondents. While those who preference to live in neighbourhoods populated by host community accounted for 43.6% of the respondents. Further, the result showed that persons who considered neighbourhoods as neutral community accounted for 1.9% of the respondents. The study also confirmed that both the same and host communities as immediate neighbors accounted for 6.3% of the respondents. The reasons given for preference neighbourhoods were equally important interesting. Respondents who chose to live in neighbourhoods already populated by fellow South Sudanese migrants cited this as being important in getting support when they are in times of needs, since they already understand them. The main reason for living in neighbourhoods not already populated by fellow South Sudanese migrants was driven by desire for exchange of ideas, cultures and business to get integrated into host community. Respondents discussions pointed out that people belonging to different communities have different roles to play in the social, economic and cultural

life therefore; it is desirable to live among people belonging to different communities. This enables them to have a better understanding of each other's ways of life in the urban environment and in adaptation to the new way of life.

Conclusions

Empirical conclusions

In light of the research and observations, it may be concluded that the process of adaptation and socio-cultural change is observed to be occurring in various aspects of South Sudanese life. Social strategies, namely language ability, mode of communication, relationship with host citizens/network of friends contributed to the establishment of a sense of home in Nakuru municipality, Kenya. While cultural persistence continues to characterize them as separate cultural group. With the passage of time and generations, this situation may change gradually. The study also observed that already the younger generations of the South Sudanese born in Nakuru municipality of Kenya, show tendency to give up learning "mother tongue".

This again is a timely step toward internationalization of the culture of the host community by the respondents to widen their relations and networks. In the course of time the South Sudanese migrants in Nakuru municipality urban centres might become less distinction than it is today from the other communities living in the same socio-economic and cultural setting. The study also observe that some South Sudanese migrants living in Nakuru municipality showed tendency to give up their traditional dressing system, they have now adopted the Kenya dressing pattern as well as the western world styles of dressing. The above discussion of how the South Sudanese migrants are maintaining and changing as a result of migration shows the direction that they are heading towards the knowledge of which might help them outline their future strategies in Nakuru municipality, Kenya. In this connection, some important arguments emerge from the above discussion the need to consider a two way approach to adaptation Chhetri (1986). First, it is argued that adaptation is two way process, it involves an interaction between the South Sudanese community and the host community. In this process both parties undergo adaptation change although one of them may change more than the other which leads many of us to view the process of adjustment or adaptation from the migrants points of view only. This is valid approach but proves to be inadequate. There is a need to look at the process of adaptation as two way process wherein the migrants are not only undergoing change but are at the same time introducing some change in total cultural system at the site of their settlement.

The change occurring not only to the migrants as they adapt to a new setting but also the change taking place within the community of destination effected by the new settlers. Second, this study argued that the process of adaptation or adjustment may not necessarily lead to the assimilation of the South Sudanese migrants in the host culture and community. This become true when the host community itself is multi ethnic in character as Nakuru municipality and also when migrants mostly share the same geographical location, social, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds as South Sudanese migrants in Nakuru municipality. Therefore, even though social and cultural change may be observed in cultural contact situations, this does not necessarily lead to the creation of a fully homogeneous social and cultural setting. What may be observed, instead, is adjustment, or adaptation which refers to a process whereby a group or community social, cultural and economic life is modified to suit the need of the new setting.

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