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South-South Migration Explored: A Systematic Review of African Migrants' Experiences and Challenges in South America

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This systematic literature review examines African migration to South America, focusing on its historical, socio-economic, and policy dimensions within the broader framework of South-South migration. Using diverse qualitative and quantitative studies, it explores the drivers of migration, including economic instability, restrictive policies in the Global North, and relatively open migration frameworks in South America, particularly in countries like Brazil and Argentina. The review underscores the pivotal role of African diasporic communities in fostering socio-economic inclusion and cultural integration while addressing significant challenges such as systemic racism, socio-economic exclusion, and precarious legal statuses that hinder migrants' full participation in host societies. By bridging knowledge gaps, this study contributes to migration research by analyzing historical legacies, contemporary migration policies, and the lived experiences of African migrants, emphasizing the importance of these dynamics in informing effective policy development. A critical gap in research is identified in countries like Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay, where the absence of studies limits understanding of migration patterns and experiences. Recommendations include implementing inclusive migration policies, enhancing legal regularization processes, and fostering cultural integration through community-driven programs. Future research should prioritize comparative analyses across regions, explore the economic and gendered aspects of migration, and address research gaps to ensure migration policies and practices are equitable, inclusive, and responsive to diverse migrant experiences.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Global migration trends highlight the prominence of South-South migration, which now accounts for over one-third of international migration, outpacing South-North movements. This phenomenon is notably seen in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and South America (Schewel and Debray 2023). Extra-regional migration has also surged, such as South Asian flows to the Middle East, forming the largest South-South migration corridor (Schewel and Debray 2023).

In South America, intraregional migration has risen sharply, driven by economic and political dynamics. Argentina, Chile, and Brazil have become key destinations due to their relative stability and economic prospects (Rosas and Zapata 2023; Vera Espinoza 2023). A defining feature is the Venezuelan exodus, with over seven million displaced due to crises, profoundly impacting countries like Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador (Restrepo-Betancur 2021; Vera Espinoza 2023). Moreover, migrants from the Middle East, West Africa, and Southeast Asia have increased the region's cultural diversity (Uebel and Abaide 2018).

South America has adopted liberal migration policies since the 2000s, emphasizing human rights and recognizing migration as a fundamental right (Campani 2023). Despite these advancements, governance remains fragmented, leading to irregular migration and reduced migrant protections (Vera Espinoza 2023). These dynamics underscore the need for cohesive regional strategies to manage migration effectively and equitably..

African migration to South America is a significant phenomenon shaped by globalization, restrictive immigration policies in the Global North, and the relatively open environments of countries like Brazil and Argentina. Motivations for this migration include the search for economic opportunities, personal aspirations, and alternatives to increasingly inaccessible European and North American destinations (Zubrzycki, 2012; Freier, 2010; Minvielle, 2015). African migrants contribute to the multicultural fabric of South American societies while facing integration challenges such as cultural and linguistic barriers (Minvielle, 2015; Winters & Reiffen, 2019). This migration exemplifies the rising importance of South-South migration, enabled by globalization and strengthened by transnational networks that provide support and resources (Winters & Reiffen, 2019). As migrants navigate these complex pathways, their experiences underscore the dynamic and interconnected nature of global migration systems and highlight the socio-political and economic shifts reshaping the Global South (Freier et al., 2023; Minvielle, 2013).

The objective of this systematic literature review is to explore and analyze post-colonial African migration to South America, focusing on its patterns, motivations, and socio-political dynamics. This review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how historical, economic, and political factors have influenced African migration to the region, particularly in countries like Brazil and Argentina. It seeks to examine the integration, identity formation, and socio-economic inclusion of African migrants, as well as the broader implications of South-South migration within the context of globalization and regional migration policies. The scope includes both historical and contemporary perspectives, incorporating qualitative and quantitative studies, policy analyses, and ethnographic accounts from peer-reviewed articles, books, and gray literature.

Research questions guiding the review are as follows:

1. What are the primary motivations and drivers of African migration to South America in the post-colonial era?
2. How have socio-political and economic factors in South America shaped the integration and identity formation of African migrants?
3. What role do transnational networks and diasporic communities play in supporting African migrants in South America?
4. How have South American migration policies and global migration dynamics influenced African migration patterns and experiences in the region?
5. What are the main challenges and opportunities faced by African migrants in achieving socio-economic inclusion in their host countries?

These guiding questions will help uncover the complexities of African migration to South America and its implications for migration studies and policy development.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Migration theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex dynamics of human movement across borders, encompassing economic, social, and political perspectives. The push-pull theory highlights migration as a result of factors pushing individuals away from their home country, such as economic hardship, political instability, or environmental disasters, and pulling them toward destinations with better opportunities and stability (Ren, Raghupathi, and Raghupathi 2024). This theory explains movements like refugee flows from conflict zones to safer regions or the migration of scientists influenced by cultural and economic conditions (Shintawati and Suharman 2023). Transnationalism, on the other hand, emphasizes the ongoing connections migrants maintain

with their countries of origin, challenging traditional assimilation views and highlighting the complexities of migrant identities and networks (Laubenthal 2023). Despite critiques of its methodological rigor and its focus on cross-border activities, transnationalism remains valuable for understanding migrant experiences (Caglar 2022). Post-colonial theories contextualize migration within the legacies of colonialism, exploring issues of race, class, and power in the movement from former colonies to colonial powers, while drawing attention to ongoing inequalities shaped by globalization and capitalism (Nair 2013). However, these theories face limitations; the push-pull model may oversimplify motivations, transnationalism might overlook restrictive migration policies, and post-colonial theories may not apply to economically secure migrants or those in welcoming host nations. Together, these perspectives underscore the need for an integrated approach to migration studies, reflecting the diverse experiences and contexts of migrants globally.

The concepts of integration, identity, and socio-economic inclusion are central to understanding migration dynamics, reflecting how migrants adapt to and participate in host societies. Integration encompasses social, economic, and cultural dimensions, focusing on migrants' inclusion in the host country's fabric. Social integration, for instance, examines how group identity enhances participation while social exclusion hinders it, as seen in China, where strong group identity mitigates exclusion's effects (Xu, Ma, and Zhu 2024). Theoretical approaches such as classical, segmented, and neoclassical assimilation theories highlight factors like resource transferability and discrimination as key to understanding integration as a dynamic societal process (Kalter 2022). Identity plays a critical role, influencing both migrants' self-perception and societal reception, with identity-based integration approaches emphasizing mechanisms that affect inclusion behavior (Burnazoglu 2021). This process is particularly significant in contexts of mass migration, where adaptation shapes migrants' social well-being (Cormoş 2022), and across generations, where societal biases can impede the automatic integration of migrants' descendants (Kupriianova and Kupriianova 2024). Socio-economic inclusion focuses on access to economic opportunities, such as employment and language acquisition, as formal and substantive measures of integration, as evidenced in Canada (Shields, Türegün, and Lowe 2014). Beyond employment, participation in communities like sports, internships, and civil society fosters relationships and social ties that are vital for inclusion (Nyström, Fejes, and Mešić 2023). These interrelated concepts are complicated by structural barriers and societal biases, requiring comprehensive approaches that address both individual experiences and broader socio-political contexts. Together, they illuminate the multifaceted nature of migrant adaptation and inclusion processes.

A theoretical framework encompassing migration theories and concepts of integration, identity, and socio-economic inclusion provides a compelling justification for conducting a systematic literature review on post-colonial African migration to South America. **Push-pull theory** highlights the drivers of migration, including economic hardship, political instability, and environmental factors in African countries, as well as the pull of economic opportunities and relatively open migration policies in South America (Ren, Raghupathi, and Raghupathi 2024; Shintawati and Suharman 2023). **Transnationalism** enriches this understanding by focusing on the ongoing ties African migrants maintain with their countries of origin, challenging traditional views of assimilation and highlighting the complexities of dual identities and social networks (Laubenthal 2023; Caglar 2022). **Post-colonial theories** provide critical insights into the historical and structural dimensions of migration, underscoring how colonial legacies and global inequalities shape migration patterns and experiences (Nair 2013). Furthermore, concepts of **integration, identity, and socio-economic inclusion** highlight the challenges migrants face in adapting to host societies, navigating biases, and achieving access to resources (Xu, Ma, and Zhu 2024; Burnazoglu 2021; Shields, Türegün, and Lowe 2014). By synthesizing these perspectives, the review can uncover nuanced migration dynamics, address gaps in current knowledge, and inform policies that foster inclusion and equity for African migrants in South America.

3. METHODOLOGY

PRISMA process in conducting the systematic literature review

Research design

This study adopts the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework as the guiding methodology for conducting the systematic literature review. The PRISMA process, a widely recognized framework, ensures transparency and reproducibility by providing a structured approach to synthesizing existing research (Asar et al., 2016). The review comprises distinct steps, including the identification of relevant studies through comprehensive searches, screening for eligibility, and detailed analysis of included studies. This structured approach has been effectively applied across diverse disciplines to distill current knowledge, identify research gaps, and propose directions for future inquiries. The application of PRISMA in this study aims to maintain methodological rigor, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings while contributing to the broader literature on African migration to South America.

The PRISMA framework provides a structured and transparent process for conducting systematic reviews, ensuring rigor and reproducibility. The process involves the following steps:

1. Identification

The identification process for this review aimed to locate all relevant studies from diverse sources to ensure a comprehensive synthesis of the literature. A systematic search was conducted across multiple databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, and Google Scholar, using predefined keywords such as "African migration," "South America," "diaspora," and "integration." Additionally, gray literature, such as government reports, policy documents, and non-indexed academic works, was included to capture a broader spectrum of information. Duplicate records were removed using citation management tools like EndNote and Zotero. The search yielded 102 records from database searches and an additional 42 records from other sources, forming the initial pool for further screening and analysis.

2. Screening

The screening process aimed to exclude studies that did not meet the predefined inclusion criteria, ensuring relevance and quality. Inclusion criteria were established to focus on studies published in peer-reviewed journals, addressing African migration to South America, and written in English, Spanish, or Portuguese. Exclusion criteria included studies unrelated to African migration, outside the geographical scope such as Mexico and Cuba, or not peer-reviewed. Also, studies that focuses on transatlantic transportation of African slaves. Titles and abstracts of the 42 records remaining after duplicate removal were screened to filter out irrelevant studies, resulting in the exclusion of 102 records and refining the dataset for further analysis.

3. Eligibility

The eligibility process involved a detailed evaluation of the full-text versions of studies that passed the initial screening stage to ensure alignment with the research objectives. Full-text articles were retrieved and assessed against the inclusion criteria, which required relevance to African migration to South America and adherence to the research scope. Reasons for exclusion, such as lack of sufficient data, geographic mismatch, or theoretical irrelevance, were documented. Of the 42 full-text articles assessed for eligibility, 25 were excluded based on these criteria, refining the selection for final inclusion in the systematic review.

4. Inclusion

The inclusion process finalized the selection of studies for the review, ensuring that only those meeting all predefined criteria after the full-text review were included. Relevant data, including author(s), publication year, methodology, study focus, key findings, and geographic scope, were extracted using a standardized data extraction form to ensure consistency and comprehensiveness.

A total of 17 studies were included in the qualitative synthesis, forming the basis for the systematic analysis and synthesis of findings.

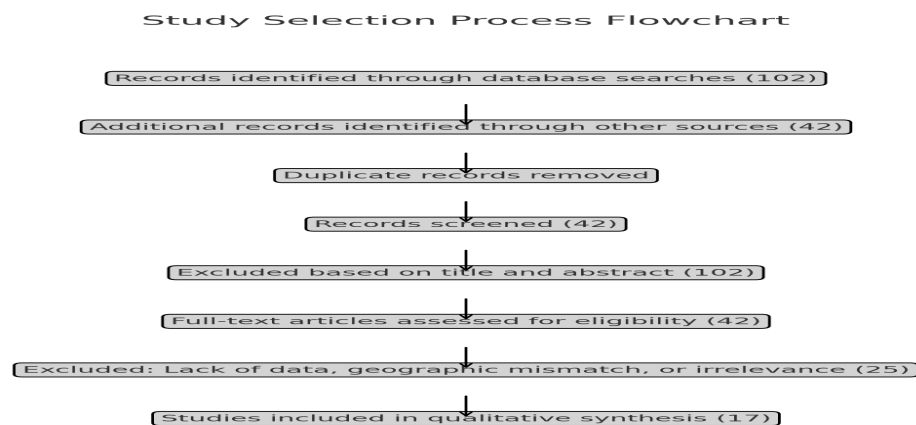


Figure 1: PRISMA study selection process flowchart

4. THEMES AND FINDINGS

4.1. Historical context of African migration to South America

Early migration patterns (e.g., transatlantic slave trade): The literature extensively explores early African migration patterns, particularly the transatlantic slave trade, which forcibly transported millions of Africans to South America, laying the foundation for African-descended communities, especially in Brazil, which heavily relied on enslaved labor (Freier, Lucar Oba, and Fernández Bautista, 2023; Winters & Reiffen, 2019). This migration's cultural legacy is evident in South America's music, religion, and cuisine, with Afro-Brazilian traditions like Candomblé and Capoeira reflecting African roots (Espiro, 2021; Winters & Reiffen, 2019). Historiographical critiques highlight the marginalization of African contributions in countries like Argentina, where policies of "whitening" overshadowed Afro-Argentine identities (Lawo-Sukam, 2019; Vammen, 2019). In the 20th and 21st centuries, African migration patterns evolved due to restrictive policies in Europe and the U.S., driving migrants to destinations like Brazil and Argentina, which now host both historical African diasporas and recent migrants (Freier et al., 2023; Minvielle, 2015). These migrants often face systemic challenges, including racism, xenophobia, and economic barriers, as seen with Senegalese migrants in Argentina who engage in street vending and community organizing (de los Ángeles Gattari, 2022). Furthermore, integration intersects with identity politics, where cultural and religious heritage, such as the Mouride community from Senegal, shapes migrants' social and economic strategies (Vammen, 2019).

Post-independence migration trends: The literature on post-independence migration trends highlights the complex economic, political, and cultural dynamics that have shaped African migration to South America since the mid-20th century. Economic instability in post-independence African states, exacerbated by structural adjustment programs of the 1980s and 1990s, drove many Africans, including Senegalese migrants, to seek better livelihoods in countries like Argentina and Brazil (Espiro, 2021). This period also marked a shift from traditional destinations like Europe and North America to Latin America, where more liberal immigration policies and accessible economic opportunities, particularly in informal sectors, attracted African migrants (Zubrzycki, 2012). Transnational networks, such as the Senegalese Mouride community, have facilitated integration by providing social and economic support, fostering collective identity, and ensuring economic survival through informal commerce (Winters & Reiffen, 2019). However, migrants face significant socio-cultural challenges, including racism and xenophobia, as seen in Argentina, where Senegalese

migrants navigate dual identities and varying levels of acceptance (de los Ángeles Gattari, 2022). Despite the inclusivity of migration policies in countries like Argentina and Brazil, gaps in policy implementation and bureaucratic inefficiencies often hinder migrants' ability to regularize their status (Zubrzycki, 2012; Freier et al., 2023). The motivations for migration are diverse, encompassing economic aspirations, political refuge, and educational pursuits, reflecting both the challenges of post-colonial African states and the opportunities in South America (Vammen, 2019). These trends underscore the resilience and adaptability of African migrants in building new lives and communities in a shifting global migration landscape.

Recent trends in African migration to South American countries: This trends reflect significant shifts driven by global economic, political, and social factors, including diversification of migration routes, emerging diasporas, and integration challenges. Stricter immigration policies in Europe and North America have redirected migratory flows toward South America, where countries like Brazil and Argentina have become key destinations due to relatively open migration policies and economic opportunities (Winters & Reiffen, 2019; Zubrzycki, 2012). Economic challenges in African nations, exacerbated by structural adjustment programs, unemployment, and weak governance, further drive migration, with migrants perceiving South America as a region of untapped potential and fewer entry restrictions (Zubrzycki, 2012; Serrano, 2012). Vibrant African diasporas, such as the Senegalese Mourides in Argentina, support new arrivals and promote African culture through religious and community networks (Vammen, 2019). However, migrants face socio-cultural barriers, including racism, xenophobia, and precarious legal statuses, as seen in Argentina's marginalization of African migrants and Brazil's systemic discrimination despite its Afro-descendant population (Zubrzycki, 2012; Fernandes, 2023). Liberal immigration frameworks in countries like Argentina and Brazil are offset by bureaucratic inefficiencies and irregular statuses that expose migrants to exploitation (Minvielle, 2015). Additionally, many migrants use South America as a transit region, navigating critical nodes like Ecuador and Colombia and hazardous routes such as the Darién Gap en route to North America (Freier et al., 2023). These trends underscore the resilience of African migrants and their transformative role in reshaping South America's cultural and demographic landscapes.

4.2. Motivations and routes

Push factors (e.g., conflict, economic challenges, political instability): The literature highlights several push factors driving African migration to South America, including economic challenges, conflict, political instability, restrictive global migration policies, environmental stressors, and the role of migration networks. Economic difficulties in post-independence African states, exacerbated by structural adjustment programs and rural economic decline, have driven many, particularly from West Africa, to seek opportunities in more accessible regions like South America (Espiro, 2021; Zubrzycki, 2012; Vammen, 2019). Armed conflicts and political unrest, especially in the Sahel and countries like Somalia, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, have displaced millions, leading to asylum applications in nations such as Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, and Colombia (Winters & Reiffen, 2019; Freier et al., 2023). Political instability, characterized by authoritarianism, corruption, and weak governance, further compels migration from fragile states like Guinea, Senegal, and Eritrea (Minvielle, 2015). Restrictive immigration policies in Europe and North America indirectly act as push factors by forcing migrants to explore South-South migration routes, facilitated by relatively open policies in countries like Brazil and Argentina (Winters & Reiffen, 2019). Environmental stressors, including droughts and desertification, further exacerbate economic vulnerabilities in rural African communities, prompting migration (Vammen, 2019). Additionally, established African diasporas in South America reduce migration risks by offering resources, information, and social support (de los Ángeles Gattari, 2022). These interconnected global and regional conditions illustrate the complexity of migration patterns and the resilience of African migrants seeking refuge and opportunities in South America.

Pull factors (e.g., economic opportunities, political asylum, cultural connections): The literature highlights several pull factors that make South America an attractive destination for African migrants, including economic opportunities, political asylum, cultural connections, accessibility, and

opportunities for social mobility. Countries like Brazil and Argentina offer economic prospects in informal sectors such as street vending and construction, enabling migrants to leverage their entrepreneurial skills as viable alternatives to limited opportunities in their home countries (Vammen, 2019). Relatively open immigration policies and asylum frameworks in South America provide refuge for migrants fleeing conflict and persecution in countries like Eritrea, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, with Argentina framing migration as a human right and Brazil fostering ties with Portuguese-speaking African nations (Zubrzycki, 2012; Espiro, 2021). Historical and cultural connections, rooted in the transatlantic slave trade and shared linguistic and religious elements, further attract migrants, as seen in Brazil's cultural affinity with Africa and engagement with Angola and Mozambique (Vammen, 2019; Fernandes, 2023). South America's liberal visa regimes and porous borders enhance its accessibility, exemplified by Ecuador's former open-door policy and Brazil's lax border controls, making the region an alternative to the restrictive policies of Europe and North America (Freier et al., 2023; Espiro, 2021). Additionally, migrants find opportunities for social mobility through education, community organization, and established diasporas, such as the Senegalese Mourides, who provide vital social and economic support in countries like Argentina (Winters & Reiffen, 2019; de los Ángeles Gattari, 2022). These pull factors not only shape migration flows but also influence migrants' integration and contributions to their host societies.

Migration routes and transit countries: The literature highlights the complexity of migration routes and the role of transit countries in shaping African migration to South America, driven by stricter border controls in Europe and North America. Migrants increasingly use diversified routes, including dangerous sea crossings from West Africa to Brazil and overland treks through hazardous terrains like the Darién Gap between Colombia and Panama, encountering risks such as exploitation, detention, and deportation (Vammen, 2019; Freier et al., 2023). Transit countries like Ecuador, Colombia, and Brazil are pivotal due to their liberal visa regimes and geographic advantages, though policy shifts toward stricter regulations have introduced new bureaucratic hurdles (Freier et al., 2023; Espiro, 2021; Minvielle, 2015). Brazil and Argentina serve as both transit hubs and final destinations, with migrants leveraging informal networks and diaspora support to navigate fragmented routes and legal complexities (Freier et al., 2023; Vammen, 2019). The focus on South-South migration underscores the unique dynamics of African migration to the region, shaped by geopolitical, economic, and social factors, reflecting the resilience and adaptability of migrants in navigating increasingly challenging global systems.

4.3. Integration and identity

Socio-economic inclusion (e.g., access to jobs, education, and housing): The literature on socio-economic inclusion of African migrants in South America highlights the challenges and opportunities they face in accessing jobs, education, and housing. Migrants often find employment in the informal sector due to systemic barriers like language difficulties, unrecognized qualifications, and irregular status, with Senegalese migrants in Argentina engaging in street vending and craft-making, while others in Brazil work in construction and informal trading (Winters & Reiffen, 2019; Fernandes, 2023). Community networks, such as the Mouride trade networks in Argentina, facilitate entrepreneurship and economic integration (de los Ángeles Gattari, 2022). However, educational opportunities are limited due to socio-economic constraints, cultural differences, and institutional biases, though cultural organizations play a significant role in providing language classes and navigation support (Winters & Reiffen, 2019; de los Ángeles Gattari, 2022). Housing remains precarious, with many migrants living in overcrowded and substandard accommodations in cities like São Paulo and Buenos Aires, often relying on community associations for temporary solutions and social support (Fernandes, 2023; de los Ángeles Gattari, 2022). Systemic racism, xenophobia, and irregular status further exacerbate exclusion, restricting access to formal employment and public services (Vammen, 2019; Zubrzycki, 2012). While countries like Argentina and Brazil have implemented inclusive migration policies, such as recognizing migration as a human right and providing language programs, gaps in implementation due to resource constraints often leave migrants marginalized (Zubrzycki, 2012; Fernandes, 2023). Despite these barriers, community

networks and cultural organizations remain pivotal in bridging gaps, underscoring the resilience and agency of migrant communities in navigating these challenges.

Challenges of cultural adaptation and identity formation: The literature on African migration to South America extensively explores the challenges of cultural adaptation and identity formation, emphasizing the complexities of navigating new cultural landscapes while maintaining connections to one's heritage. African migrants often face significant cultural barriers, including language difficulties and prejudice against religious practices like Islam, which contrast with the predominantly Catholic or secular societies in countries like Argentina and Brazil (Winters & Reiffen, 2019; Minvielle, 2015). The pervasive racialization and marginalization of African migrants, rooted in Argentina's Eurocentric narrative of whiteness and systemic racism in Brazil, complicate identity formation as migrants navigate stereotypes while asserting their cultural identities (de los Ángeles Gattari, 2022; Fernandes, 2023; Vammen, 2019). Migrants frequently form hybrid identities by blending cultural retention with socio-economic adaptation, as seen with Senegalese Mourides in Argentina who maintain strong ties to their heritage through community networks and religious activities (de los Ángeles Gattari, 2022; Vammen, 2019). Migrant networks, such as cultural centers in São Paulo, provide spaces for mutual support and foster diasporic solidarity, helping migrants navigate cultural adaptation (Fernandes, 2023; de los Ángeles Gattari, 2022). Generational dynamics further shape identity, with first-generation migrants focusing on cultural preservation and second-generation migrants balancing dual identities, often facing pressures to assimilate (Espiro, 2021; Vammen, 2019). Gender also intersects with identity formation, as female migrants face distinct challenges related to cultural expectations and norms in host societies (Espiro, 2021). Despite these challenges, African migrants actively construct hybrid identities that balance cultural retention and adaptation, demonstrating the resilience and transformative potential of diasporic networks.

Role of African diasporic communities in South America: The literature underscores the essential role of African diasporic communities in South America in facilitating socio-economic integration, cultural preservation, and identity formation for African migrants. These communities provide critical socio-economic support, helping newcomers navigate bureaucratic and employment challenges through networks that facilitate informal trade and entrepreneurial opportunities, such as those established by the Senegalese Mourides in Argentina and African groups in Brazil (de los Ángeles Gattari, 2022; Fernandes, 2023). Diasporic networks are vital for preserving African culture, hosting religious gatherings, promoting language and music, and organizing events that help second-generation migrants maintain ties to their heritage (Minvielle, 2015; de los Ángeles Gattari, 2022). They foster a sense of belonging and solidarity, creating spaces where migrants can express their identities and develop hybrid cultural identities that balance adaptation and tradition, while also advocating for migrant rights and combating systemic racism in countries like Argentina and Brazil (Vammen, 2019; Espiro, 2021). Diasporic associations also address educational gaps by providing language training and mentoring programs, particularly for second-generation migrants (Winters & Reiffen, 2019). However, these communities face internal challenges, including resource constraints and fragmentation along ethnic, national, or religious lines, which can hinder their capacity to support migrants fully (Espiro, 2021). Despite these challenges, African diasporic communities play a transformative role in shaping the migration experience and fostering resilience among African migrants in South America.

4.4. Policy and institutional responses

National and regional migration policies in South American countries: The literature highlights the progressive nature of national and regional migration policies in South America, with a focus on inclusivity and human rights, but also emphasizes significant implementation challenges. Argentina's 2004 migration law frames migration as a human right, offering access to health, education, and work regardless of legal status, though bureaucratic inefficiencies and socio-economic barriers limit its effectiveness for African migrants (Zubrzycki, 2012; Minvielle, 2015; de los Ángeles Gattari, 2022). Brazil's 2017 Migration Law reflects its historical ties with Portuguese-speaking African countries and promotes inclusivity, but systemic racism and limited access to documentation hinder migrants'

full participation in society (Fernandes, 2023; Espiro, 2021). Ecuador's 2008 open-door policy initially facilitated migration but was partially reversed due to irregular migration concerns, leaving African migrants reliant on Ecuador as a transit hub with limited support (Freier et al., 2023). At the regional level, frameworks like Mercosur provide mobility for South American nationals but exclude most African migrants, while trends toward securitization and restrictive measures further complicate migration routes (Zubrzycki, 2012; Minvielle, 2015). Policy implementation is marred by delays, resource shortages, and systemic discrimination, disproportionately affecting African migrants who often rely on informal networks for support (Espiro, 2021; Fernandes, 2023). Political shifts, such as stricter enforcement in Argentina and nationalist rhetoric in Brazil, have also undermined inclusivity (Zubrzycki, 2012; Fernandes, 2023). Despite these challenges, African migrants continue to navigate these systems with resilience, highlighting the gaps between policy aspirations and on-the-ground realities.

Role of international organizations in supporting migrants: The literature highlights the pivotal role of international organizations, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR, in supporting African migrants in South America by addressing systemic challenges and ensuring access to basic rights. These organizations provide critical humanitarian assistance, offering food, shelter, and medical aid to migrants, particularly those stranded in transit countries like Ecuador and Colombia, and intervening during crises, such as rescuing stranded migrants or assisting those affected by detention policies (Freier et al., 2023). They also offer legal and bureaucratic support, aiding asylum seekers with applications and facilitating access to documentation and regularization in countries like Brazil and Argentina (Espiro, 2021). Advocacy for migrant rights is another key focus, with organizations promoting human rights-based migration policies, raising awareness about discrimination and xenophobia, and fostering inclusive societies (Freier et al., 2023; Espiro, 2021). Additionally, international organizations foster regional and international cooperation by coordinating responses to migration challenges and harmonizing policies to support migrants transitioning between countries (Minvielle, 2015; Freier et al., 2023). Capacity-building initiatives include training officials and strengthening infrastructure for migrant reception and asylum processing, particularly in Ecuador and Colombia (Minvielle, 2015; Freier et al., 2023). However, their efforts are limited by resource constraints and dependence on host governments for policy implementation (Espiro, 2021). Despite these challenges, international organizations play an essential role in filling gaps left by national and regional systems, ensuring vital support for African migrants in South America.

Case studies of policy successes and challenges: The literature presents case studies of migration policies in South America, highlighting notable successes and persistent challenges in countries like Argentina, Brazil, and Ecuador. Argentina's 2004 *Ley de Migraciones* is celebrated for framing migration as a human right, offering pathways for regularization and access to services for African migrants, including Senegalese communities. However, bureaucratic delays and social discrimination undermine the law's inclusivity (Zubrzycki, 2012; Espiro, 2021; de los Angeles Gattari, 2022). Brazil's 2017 Migration Law, grounded in rights-based principles, and its historical ties with Portuguese-speaking African nations, facilitate integration, but systemic racism and difficulties in obtaining documentation hinder its full effectiveness (Fernandes, 2023; Espiro, 2021). Ecuador's 2008 visa-free policy initially provided a safe entry point for African migrants but was reversed due to irregular migration concerns, exposing infrastructure limitations (Freier et al., 2023; Minvielle, 2015). At the regional level, frameworks like Mercosur promote intra-regional mobility for South American nationals but exclude African migrants, highlighting the need for more inclusive coordination (Espiro, 2021; Freier et al., 2023). International organizations like the IOM and UNHCR have successfully advocated for migrant rights, but their impact is constrained by dependence on host countries for policy enforcement (Espiro, 2021). These case studies reveal the potential of progressive migration policies while emphasizing the need for improved implementation and regional cooperation to address systemic barriers and discrimination.

5. CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

Legal and administrative hurdles: The literature highlights legal and administrative hurdles as significant barriers to the integration and mobility of African migrants in South America, exacerbating their vulnerability and socio-economic exclusion. Bureaucratic inefficiencies, such as delayed documentation, leave migrants in precarious legal statuses, restricting access to employment and public services in countries like Argentina and Brazil, despite progressive migration laws like Argentina's 2004 migration law and Brazil's 2017 Migration Law (Vammen, 2019; Fernandes, 2023). Inconsistent implementation of policies, such as Ecuador's 2008 visa-free policy and Mercosur's regional frameworks, further complicates regularization for African migrants (Freier et al., 2023; Espiro, 2021). Restrictive policies, including Ecuador's reintroduction of visa requirements and stricter enforcement in Brazil, create additional barriers, while a lack of regional coordination leaves transit migrants in countries like Colombia and Ecuador exposed to exploitation and legal ambiguity (Freier et al., 2023; Espiro, 2021). Irregular status often makes migrants vulnerable to exploitation, especially in informal labor markets in Argentina and Brazil, where legal protections are limited, and language barriers hinder access to justice (de los Ángeles Gattari, 2022; Vammen, 2019). These challenges perpetuate social and economic exclusion, impacting access to healthcare, education, and formal employment, while the stress of navigating complex systems takes a toll on mental health and well-being (Espiro, 2021). Addressing these hurdles requires streamlined processes, regional coordination, and enhanced support from international organizations to improve migrants' integration and rights.

Discrimination and xenophobia: The literature highlights discrimination and xenophobia as pervasive challenges for African migrants in South America, deeply rooted in systemic racism and societal biases that hinder social and economic integration. Systemic racism, influenced by historical narratives of racial hierarchy, marginalizes African migrants in Argentina, where a Eurocentric national identity erases African heritage, and in Brazil, where racial discrimination intersects with foreigner status to amplify exclusion (Vammen, 2019; Fernandes, 2023). Xenophobic attitudes further manifest in stereotyping, exoticization, and workplace discrimination, relegating African migrants to informal sectors where they face exploitation (de los Ángeles Gattari, 2022; Vammen, 2019). These dynamics contribute to social exclusion, isolating migrants within their communities and limiting their participation in broader societal life, with second-generation migrants navigating dual identities amidst persistent racism and xenophobia (Fernandes, 2023; Vammen, 2019). Dual discrimination, based on both race and migrant status, exacerbates vulnerability to racial profiling and exploitation, with African women facing additional barriers due to racialized and gendered stereotypes (Espiro, 2021). Efforts to combat these issues include advocacy by diasporic communities, international organizations like UNHCR and IOM, and grassroots initiatives that promote inclusive policies and challenge societal prejudices (de los Ángeles Gattari, 2022; Freier et al., 2023). While these efforts offer critical support, addressing discrimination and xenophobia requires broader societal and policy reforms.

Access to social and economic resources: The literature on access to social and economic resources highlights significant challenges faced by African migrants in South America, including disparities in employment, housing, education, and healthcare due to systemic barriers, irregular status, and socio-economic exclusion. Migrants often rely on informal labor markets, with Senegalese migrants in Argentina engaging in street vending and craft-making, and others in Brazil working in construction and domestic services, where they face poor conditions and lack of labor protections (Vammen, 2019; Fernandes, 2023). Housing remains precarious, with African migrants in São Paulo and Buenos Aires often living in substandard accommodations due to affordability issues and discrimination, though diasporic networks provide some temporary solutions (Fernandes, 2023; de los Ángeles Gattari, 2022). Educational access is limited by cultural and linguistic barriers, with children struggling to integrate into public schools and adults facing scarce vocational training opportunities (Vammen, 2019; Espiro, 2021). Healthcare access, though guaranteed by Argentina's migration law and Brazil's universal healthcare system, is undermined by systemic racism, language barriers, and bureaucratic inefficiencies (Zubrzycki, 2012; Fernandes, 2023). Migrants often depend on support from diasporic communities, NGOs, and international organizations like the UNHCR and IOM for resources like food, shelter, and legal aid (de los Ángeles Gattari, 2022; Freier et al., 2023). Despite progressive legal

frameworks, gaps in implementation and a lack of targeted programs, such as language training and regularization pathways, continue to impede integration, underscoring the need for more inclusive and effective policies (Vammen, 2019; Zubrzycki, 2012).

The emerging themes from the review, such as historical and recent African migration trends to South America, integration challenges, socio-economic inclusion, and the role of diasporic communities, directly address the research questions. These themes elucidate the motivations for migration, such as economic instability and restrictive policies in Europe and the U.S., aligning with the question about primary drivers (e.g., Espiro, 2021; Winters & Reiffen, 2019). Discussions on socio-political factors, including integration challenges and systemic barriers, respond to inquiries about how host countries shape migrant experiences (e.g., Vammen, 2019; de los Ángeles Gattari, 2022). Furthermore, the role of diasporic networks and their support systems answers questions about transnational networks' contributions (e.g., Fernandes, 2023), while policy and institutional responses provide insight into the influence of South American migration frameworks on these patterns (e.g., Zubrzycki, 2012; Freier et al., 2023). Together, these themes offer a comprehensive understanding of African migrants' experiences and their socio-economic trajectories in South America.

6. FUTURE TRENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Demographic shifts and economic trends significantly influence migration patterns between Africa and South America. Africa's rapid population growth and high youth unemployment rates act as push factors, while South America's aging population and demand for a younger workforce create pull factors, particularly in countries like Brazil and Argentina. Despite the opportunities, systemic challenges in informal labor markets highlight the need for robust policies to ensure socio-economic inclusion. The cultural, historical, and economic links between the two regions, rooted in shared histories and the growing African diasporas in South America, present opportunities for strengthened ties through bilateral agreements in education, trade, and technology transfer. Enhanced collaboration could promote cultural diplomacy, mutual economic growth, and solutions to shared challenges such as climate change and poverty. However, there is a notable lack of studies on African migration in Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay, which limits understanding of the dynamics and experiences in these countries. This gap in research has significant implications, as it hinders the development of targeted policies and strategies to address the unique needs of African migrants in these less-studied regions. Future research should focus on analyzing the effectiveness of migration policies, the role of diasporic communities in cultural integration, the economic impact of African migrants, and the specific experiences of youth and women migrants. Additionally, examining transnational networks, conducting comparative studies on migration patterns in South America, Europe, and North America, and addressing the research gaps in Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay would provide valuable insights for fostering inclusive policies and practices that support migrant integration and contribute to the socio-economic development of both regions.

7. CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review highlights the significant yet underexplored phenomenon of African migration to South America, underscoring its historical, socio-economic, and policy dimensions. Key findings indicate that African migration is driven by economic instability, restrictive policies in the Global North, and the relatively open migration frameworks of South American countries like Brazil and Argentina. Despite these opportunities, migrants face persistent challenges such as systemic racism, socio-economic exclusion, and precarious legal statuses, particularly in countries with bureaucratic inefficiencies and under-resourced systems. The role of diasporic communities in facilitating cultural integration and economic inclusion is notable, yet gaps remain in addressing broader societal and structural barriers.

This review contributes to migration studies by bridging knowledge gaps on South-South migration, providing a nuanced understanding of the drivers, experiences, and implications of African migration

to South America. It emphasizes the intersection of historical legacies, contemporary migration policies, and the lived experiences of migrants, offering insights that inform both theoretical frameworks and practical interventions. Additionally, the review identifies a significant gap in research on African migration in less-studied South American countries, such as Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay, highlighting the need for localized studies to understand migration dynamics comprehensively.

For policymakers and practitioners, the findings call for the development of inclusive and coherent migration policies that address systemic barriers, promote socio-economic integration, and leverage the potential of African diasporic communities. Policies should focus on improving access to formal labor markets, enhancing legal regularization processes, and fostering cultural integration through education and community programs. International organizations should play a pivotal role in capacity-building and advocating for migrant rights.

Future research should prioritize comparative analyses of migration patterns across South America, Europe, and North America to understand regional specificities. Investigations into the economic contributions of African migrants, gendered migration experiences, and the role of transnational networks are essential. Additionally, addressing the research gaps in countries like Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay will provide a more holistic understanding of African migration in the region, ensuring that policies and practices are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the diverse experiences of migrants.

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