

The Impact of Youth Migration in Contemporary Nigerian Society

Charles Chukwurah Mezie-Okoye

Nigerian British University Asa, Abia State

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ABSTRACT

The perception of human migration is comprehended as the relocation from one location to another within a country or transfer from one's native place to another location within the same regional territory by young people. On the other words, migration can be internal or external. This type occurs when the movement and the settlement process still takes place in the country of origin while the external or international type occurs when the movement and the furthering of the said persons occur in other countries. It can be temporal; and this is where the migrant goes back to his/her original place of residence once gains his/her economic objectives. It may also be permanent when for instance the migrant decided to stay in the migrated place or migrated city or migrated country after the achievement of the goals. Migration amongst the youth in today's Nigeria has tentacles in several areas with pushes and pulls that promote it. Among the push and pull factors are the objectives to develop sustainable means of living, a lack of job opportunities, instability, violent conflicts and changes in climate conditions. It can either complement or hinder sustainable development of Nigeria as a country in view of the impacts of the empire. The position of the current paper is therefore that other things being equal; youth migration has brought about brain-drain or brain-gain culture in Nigeria. Before the youth embark on migration, it is proposed that he/she should consider the odds and probably get well equipped to psychosocial impact of migration, the brief ends with some policy implications of youth migration in Nigeria.

Keywords: Migration, youth, employment, livelihood, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Human migration is the movement from one geo-political region to another, or the movement of people from one country to another (Anyanwu & Erhijakpor, 2010). Youth migration could mean leaving one's geographical location to another one within the same country or leaving one's home stead and settles in another location within the same geophysical location or geopolitical region (internal migration) or leaving one's country to another country (external or international migration). It can be temporal; and this is where the migrant returns to his/her original place of habitation after achieving his/her goal. It may also be permanent when the after reaching their goal, the migrant decides to stay in the migrated place, city, or nation. Migration can benefit people, their families, communities, and Nigeria as a whole. Youth migration in the contemporary Nigeria has many tentacles and multiple factors that propel it. It is important to note that migration is one of the many drivers of social change. Migrants mobilise social and cultural value exchange between societies which affects societies as they struggle to maintain a cohesive society. Migration creates a social dynamic that affects both the migrants those left behind and those they are meeting (IOM, 2011). The purpose of this study is to investigate the social implications of youth migration in current Nigerian society.

This study examines the impact that international migration has had on Nigeria's growth. This study focuses on the flow of people from underdeveloped countries to developed economies. The number of migrants migrating between developing countries is expected to be comparable to the number of migrants moving from developed to developing countries. Thus, the development implications of migration are equally significant to developed and underdeveloped countries. Although violent conflict, political persecution, and economic motivations all contribute to worldwide movement, more than 90% of international migrants travel for economic reasons. However, migration has a favorable economic impact on the migrant household, the sending country, and the receiving country (Idio, Wilcox, Akadi, 2015).

The aim of this articles is to review migration in general as it affects the youths of Nigeria, particularly focusing on the quest for 'peace' as what the youths of Nigerian need in other to force them to leave the country. Nigeria's government provides very little in support to the lively youth that inhabits the nation. As for the country's future the latter one hardly bears thinking of and empowered kids leaving the country unfettered. Nigeria which was earlier regarded as a secure nation has rather become a country characterized by insecurity and extreme terrible poverty. The theoretical framework of this research study is centered on the institutional violence whereby it is established that the push factor for many of the Nigerian youths emigrate from Nigeria is largely institutional violence .

Nigerian Youth

Young people make up about a quarter of migrants worldwide. Those involved in migration are in the age bracket of 15-29 years with a mean age of 22 years. Nigeria witnessed the initial exit of her strong and young minds to other places like big towns within the country and foreign lands for better living in the 1980s and 1990s, and this has remained constant. Migration has gross positive and negative effects on every facet of national growth and development - politics, economy, value system, social- communication, trade, agriculture, religion, science and technology among others. Today Nigerian youth migrants are counted in millions and billions (Ezema, 2017). The United Nations (2015, 2017) indicated that there were 244 million international migrants in 2015, with 20 million refugees in different countries. Deotti, Laura and Estruch (2016) observed that as many as 740 million people migrated to different countries, and among these young people are in the majority. Isiugo-Abanihe and IOM- Nigria (2014) observed that over one million Nigerians are living abroad.

Population explosion has been the core and bottom-line jet that propels young Africans to migrate with the sole aim of increasing their earning power and the number increases on daily bases. The socio-economic stand of many Nigerians coupled with the continued population increase as well as the inability of Nigerian government to provide basic infrastructure for job and wealth creation, continues to cause pressure for many young Nigerians. In the recent years, migratory pressure has increased, and it is expected to intensify further in the incoming decades, given the rising and widening gap in wages between the developed and developing countries and their differing demographic futures.

Nowadays, it is not only the youth that migrate, adult and some elderly do migrate also for greener pasture. Doctors, Lawyers, Lecturers and ordinary people are leaving Nigeria in droves on daily basis because of the way things are going on in the country.

Human migration is therefore not a new affair. Migration has been part and parcel of human history right from the creation of man. The notion of migration might be tracked back to the pre-colonial commercial period whereby 1500- 1800 European immigrants moved to Africa through merchant capitalism to create protectorates and settle on large sections of the area for greater than 300 many years.

Migration

Moving is moving from one place to another for the express intention of residing in the new place. It implies a way of getting from one place to another for purposes of dwelling and earning a livelihood. Many are now changing from his or her local town or country to another city, state, or nation for employment, protection or other purposes. In an attempt to define migration the Nigerian National Migration Policy 2015 quantified it by saying, "Migration is inherent in man." It went on to add that, "In its broader sense, migration therefore refers to the movement of a person from one dwelling place to another, for any length of time but with the intention of staying temporarily or permanently in the new location in search of better living conditions, reunion with family members or for purposes of studying or for other reasons (2015, p.5)." Emigration is not inexpensive and the majority of the leave takers are not poor to say the least, it is therefore mostly the affluent and middle classes that are emigrating. Everybody can get affected by it and it is the kind of disease that makes those with no hope, quit.

Frankly, there are two types of elements that influence people's migration decisions: push and pull influences. The push factor This is a factor that results in people being forced to change from the current/present situation

of residence. It could be as a result of political issues, lack of job opportunities or as a result of congestion. There may a 'pull factor' where people are compelled to migrate to other places to enhance their quality of their standard of living. And therefore, the factors that cause people to leave that area are referred to as push factors, whereas the factors that attract people to move to another place to reside are called pull factors. There are two forms of migration: domestic and international.

Domestic migration is defined as the migration of persons from one region of the country to another region. It can be rural to rural, rural to urban, urban to urban or urban to rural mobility. The most prevalent of these is rural to urban migration simply because; due to limitations in social services, land and capital people have to relocate from the rural areas to urban centers. It is common to find many of these prospects and attractions centering a huge turnout from the rural participants. National Migration Policy highlights some of pull factors directing the out migration from rural areas as poverty, low productivity in agriculture and jobless mobility due to lack of cheap, quality education and health care. Employment opportunities, qualitatively superior education and better health cover in metropolitan areas are some of the pull factors (2015, p.6). Inward or international migration is the migration of people beyond their country of origin or birth or the national boundary. This movement is often driven by a variety of socioeconomic factors. International migration refers to the movement of people between countries. People who leave their home nation are referred to as emigrants, whilst those who relocate to another country are referred to as immigrants. Nigerian emigration is not just intra-regional within the ECOWAS group, which is greatly helped by the free movement agreement, but also continental migration to Africa America Australia Canada and Europe.

Causes of Migration

It is now common knowledge that there are diverse causes for changing residence. In this presentation, I will specifically discuss on four features of Nigerian scenario.

Economic migrants.

Ordinary immigrants are those people who relocate to another country because the economic opportunities in that country are much better than in the country of origin. People are now travelling with the intention of living from less developed economy to more developed economies. The common reason that compel individuals develop interest to travel from their home country to other countries is due to; employment, better pay, and enhanced conditions of work.

Educational migrants

Due to a breakdown in a country's educational system, many people go to other countries to obtain an education. Countries with high-quality education attract people, particularly wealthy youngsters, who can afford to study abroad.

Political migrants.

As in the past, hundreds of thousands of people are forced to migrate due to war and civil strife or legal ban on certain categories of citizens or inhabitants. This remains the case today; most people have had to run to other countries with which they never intended to be refugees.

Family Reunion.

Interstate movement has also been experienced through family reunions, people moving from one country to another. In this instance, friends, relatives, fiancées, spouses, children or parents move intended to join one of their kind living in another country.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Current events include the concepts of peace as well as war as faces of the same medal. This has culminated into the notion of equivocating between, peace meaning no war and war meaning no peace. This definition has been violently rebuked by scholars of peace in both forum and article. Critics have raised their eyebrows on noting that defining peace should necessarily entail conflict. In Ibeanu's opinion, it is possible to have peace

without fighting because it is obvious that fighting is inadmissible. Thus, it may be concluded that peace is possible even when there is war: friendly cross-border contacts – between countries that actively perform military operations (2006: 3). In this regard, Ibeanu used Palestine and Israel to explain how it is possible, although hostile, to exploit water resources to secure peace. Therefore, we have the possibility for forming a definition of peace that respects the absence of war. On the other side, even if one gets out of conflict and war may not dictate the situation, there may not be peace either. That was what Johan Galtung, the founder of Modern Peace Studies and structural violence, had in mind. As per the World Bank, structural violence is a form of violence which in some ways, fixtures of social system can anticipatorily injure folks and infringe on their human necessities. From the foregoing, Ibeanu explained these social conditions as poverty, isolation, threat, subjection, hunger, and other psychological coercion (2006, P. 4). If a country experiences structural violence it cannot in any given right be referred to as tranquil.

To be precise, the perceived unfavorable future makes the Nigerian teenage proceed with a higher level of deserted to other countries. Due to the prevailing poor social standards and psychological coercion, most youthful persons in Nigeria have migrated from the country. This is despite the fact that many countries across the world whenever they first come across a Nigerian kid abroad they immediately assume he or she is a criminal or has come to take over their country, as has been the case in South Africa. Nigerian youths are hopeful, hard-working, productive, emitted and peaceful people who move to other countries in search of better standard of living. Therefore, continuing structural violence leads to and will further propel Nigerian youths to seek greener pastures from their countries.

This paper also tries to show that unemployment has become one the most continuing structural violence facing the youths of Nigerian today. Most Nigerian youths are becoming restive simply because they do not have jobs to do. From Gotan (2018): “The Population of Nigeria’s youth productive age group is about 80 Million which is nearly about 60% of the total population of Nigeria.” Their disappointment must grow with the knowledge that 70% of this demographic is still out of work after having acquired the needed working skills, training, and other attainments required for work (p.26). For Kazeem, 2019: Nigeria’s unemployed population increases for the 13th consecutive quarter and a four-year plan to revive the economy after it contracted in 2016 remains unfulfilled.” It is even getting worse and scarier especially when you calculate the number of children who get admission into university, graduate and even move out from NYSC without any form of employment from the government.

Explaining the current state of emigration, Adepoju (2018) pointed that the ability of the country’s labor market to employ qualified candidates is still very limited (p.2) The limited employment opportunities available to young educated persons in Nigeria compel many of them to emigrate to foreign countries especially those within the European Union.” It’s unfortunate, but true. That is why any Nigerian graduate who would be struggling to afford a decent accommodation in Nigeria, would start sending thousands of dollars, euros etc home as soon as he leaves Nigeria.

The Nigerian government does not adequately cater to this is widely enhanced by the country’s active youth demography that largely comprises our population base. Do you picture this country’s future with those teenagers unemployed and moving out of the country with their potential? As a matter of fact the so-called brain-drain and the flight of young Nigerians is not new, it was in the same outward direction during the military rule in the late 1980s to early 1990s and also during Nigeria’s passage through democratization. The tendency before used to be that the scammers mainly targeted people with certain types of professions, but now it is rather become everyone’s fair game especially among nations like Canada who are trying to fill out various vacancies in their workforce and offer a wide range of jobs from software engineers to chefs and accountants. The employment status is so poor and the income so poor that it does not even meet the economic expectations and needs of the people, that is why young Nigerians are in search of peace and they are moving to areas where they feel their expectations and their social needs are met. Nevertheless, in other situations, the proverb that the other side is always green cannot be said to hold true in Nigeria; because while some of the immigrants face and deal with a lot and very expensive challenges and difficulties in order to emigrate, assimilate into the new country and start over anew. Most employed Nigerians now leave well-paying jobs to go and work in Europeans, America, Canada, Australia, and Asia for 3D (Dirty, Dangerous, and Demeaning) jobs which their country hates. Consequently, most qualified personnel who resign from high profile positions in Nigeria must often begin at a lower level again.

However, one can find the main obvious barriers. Still the opportunity of obtaining a better quality of life, education for children is the driving force that makes many middle class Nigerians who are able to do it, to move. Some individuals know that they committed a mistake and come here, but they do not return because they receive the peace they want in Nigeria. In any given country, education is seen as the major driving force towards the growth of the same country, not to mention the future peacefulness. They include low system of education in Nigeria, bewildering political situations, war and more so, many youth are leaving the country. The quality of education been offered has sharply declined; since the strike is in progress, students are in doubt of which year they would be completing their courses, thereby the input and the output of the students have greatly deteriorated in recent years. The training and learning resources, facilities and morale from the teachers are continuously expelling Nigerian adolescence away. More worrisome are cultism, “sex-for-grades and “Money for Grades and these had equally contributed to the youths’ search for education and in some instances, obtain education and in search of jobs they are compelled to seek them in other countries after education leading to incessant brain drain in Nigeria. According to the National Migration Policy 2015, thousands of Nigerian students have applied for admission in foreign universities for studies, then remain back for jobs, thereby depriving Nigeria education and talent. Nigerian students’ enrollment in these countries could have been estimated at between 60, 000 — 80, 000 (p. 61–62). Furthermore, a group of the young Nigerians who are now Running to Europe and America also believe that the situation will not change soon because they do not trust Nigeria’s political masters to turn around the failures in the education system. The big picture for the Nigerian nation is that many a person who has relocated or plans to migrate, will most likely never come back to the country or take back his or her children for upbringing. Because of their education there are openings available for the youngsters.

Nigerian children have fewer opportunities because they do not go to school. Insecurity as a violation of the peace is at the moment a concern amongst migrants. Life and property loss in Nigeria over the recent past has been another key motivating factor for Nigerian’s youth to seek for greener pastures in other countries. Security is paramount in the development of any nation, its economy, and it’s future state. Boko Haram in the North, farmers and herders’ conflicts, which were initially in the North Central region but have extended to the Eastern region and Nigerian Tombara and the Niger Delta militants in the South are almost made an unpleasant nature of business out of economic activities in the country. Banditry and cases of kidnappings are on the increase all over the country.

A fairly significant erosion of the security architecture seems to have been overwhelmed and neutralized by these offenders. Thus, an increasing number of young people, especially ‘elite’ Nigerians, emigrate from Nigeria for refuge rather than due to the lack of job or education.

Socioeconomic Factors

Many Nigerian adolescents are paid extremely low that has working wages that do not allow them to meet approved necessities of life. Little has been put in place to safeguard the skilled youth’s compensation based on their educational standards. Current analysis indicates that Nigeria has an underemployment youth rate of 22.8% and unemployment rate of 42.5% for the year 2020. This is one of the reasons that force some Nigeria youngsters to try to find a job in Europe and North America. According to a focus group discussion facilitated by the Special Needs Initiative for Growth; a youth led organization in Nigeria, youths, aged 18 to 30, with disabilities revealed that migration presents economic possibilities. For instance, Adebayo who is 21 years old said that the fact that the Naira, Nigeria’s official currency is inferior to almost all international currencies due to this ridiculous exchange rate was enough reason to leave Nigeria. T miss is sometimes assumed as being used to help subsidize and maintain other relations. This is an illustration of one of the respondents I interviewed; Kosi, a 24-year-old unemployed woman that left Nigeria for Spain. Kosi said that her buddy was living lot better life and can now feed her family. Kosi had this belief despite the fact that her acquaintance was said to be involved in 3D which are dirty, dangerous and humiliating occupations, Secondly, many Nigerians are now traveling abroad for education. In the United States, 11,000 of the 35,364 international students from Sub-Saharan Africa are from Nigeria (Ogundare, 2018).

Political Factors

As stated by the Presidential Committee on Brain Drain, which was formed by the former President of Nigeria Ibrahim Babangida the number of Nigerian specialists who served abroad in 1986-1990 was nearly 10 000, and the biggest number of them worked in educational organizations. A mix of political concerns, including weak government and corruption, contributed to this emigration. Political corruption, as well as economic possibilities, have been highlighted as reasons for migration in Nigeria.

However, “The Special Anti-Robbery Squad,” that is SARS was set up as a special policemen force in 1992 to effectively curb the increasing cases of robberies and kidnappings which was carried out by a myriad of criminal gangs all over Nigeria. It has been 27 years now that SARS have been associated with various forms of human rights abuses such as; using brutal force, torture, rape, demands for bribes, and unlawful detention as well as extrajudicial killings across Nigeria but predominantly targeting Nigerian youths (ACLED, 2021). SARS operations are also believed by some Nigerian teenagers to be the reasons why they want to emigrate.

Youth Migration and “Japa Crisis” in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the term "japa" is commonly used as a metaphor for emigration. However, citizen emigration spans a wide age range and a variety of human endeavors. However, the vast majority of these emigrants are young people aged 18 to 35.

Brain Drain

This is one of the nasty effects of migration called brain drain whereby intellectuals education-wise, highly competent individuals travel to other more developed countries in a bid to better their existence. escalates in the sense that the migrant’s home state loses competent people or ‘brains’ or professionals from the place of origin. It means that there are scientists, engineers, doctors, information technology experts and all kinds of intellectuals who go to another country for education, for doing research work or for enhancing their job and working condition which they cannot do in their own country. Nowadays, one can for sure state that Nigeria is of one of the leading countries all over the world that supply doctors, nurses, and even scientists. Professionals and highly qualified personnel within the Nigerian domain works in different part of the world. Nigeria is surrounded with resources as far as people can be considered as a resource due to the powerful human capital. Every year Nigeria loses clients with brains that could have helped the nation better utilize the natural resources that we have.

The direct effect of brain drain on Nigerian universities is the production of low quality scholars. While post achievement faculty members and researchers got employed in foreign universities, Nigerian universities lack competent academicians who can produce quality performance. This wastage of academic human capital impacts the students in that, institutions end up enrolling more students per class, instructors have bigger classes hence limited time to interact with students and students receive little or no assistance from their instructors (Oyewole, 2019).

Most affected is the health and academic sector. Speaking on the numbers, it was revealed that within the period of , as at the January 1, 2022, and September 30, 2022, 1,307 Nigerian-trained doctors were licensed to practice in the UK; Nigeria now came third among countries that produce foreign doctors in the UK, a status that used to be occupied by India and Pakistan only. Ekpali (2024) using Nigeria’s Health Minister Muhammad Ali Pate said that at least 15,000-16000 doctors have left the country in the last five year. Currently, Nigeria, Africa’s most populous country, has a dismal 55,000 doctors to serve a population of 220 million people Early this year, there were about 42,000 Nigerian nurses who migrated abroad in the last three years in search of better employment (Saint Ekpali, April 29, 2024).

CONCLUSION

In line with the objective of this research formulated above which seeks to identify the main causes and impacts of international migration in Nigeria; this study employed descriptive research design. It presented

concept and fact about push and pull factors that compel foreigners to move to Nigeria. Therefore, the study established that work opportunity, unemployment, wealth, safety, better services, cheap wages and improved living standard were the driving factors to international migration in Nigeria. The major push factors towards overseas migration according to economic factors were the... However, safety and security are the only sociopolitical factors that were regarded relevant for international migration in Nigeria.

Further, the study also revealed that besides the positive and negative implications of international migration in Nigeria consists of Integrated development, increase in remittances, ample and cheap labor, pressure on urban services social infrastructural facilities, New tighter immigration policies for immigration, Xenophobic society, Nearly closed gaps in skill and dilution of local culture. In my account, there were social economical and political impacts which were evident as follows. Consequently, International organization for Migration, IOM (2016) realized that “flows of remittaries received from Nigerians living in other countries are a prospect for economic transformation.” Nigeria tops within the Sub-Sahara Region in the receipt of remittances which comprises about 65% of total remittance flows accepted officially in sub-Saharan region as well as 2% globally, according to table 3 on page 91. Moving to ‘already made’ nations will not bring the solution; it’s time for future leaders to rise up and defend the nation’s future. Therefore, this says that eradicating poverty, hunger, unemployment and insecurity and other challenges is a search for peace.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Nigeria's political system must be modified to promote inclusiveness, participation, adherence to the rule of law, respect for human rights, and the constitutional empowerment of state institutions. This would help Nigerian youngsters gain better access to education and employment possibilities. These enhancements may assist reduce the underlying causes of migration. The Nigerian government should prioritize strong governance and suitable socio-political and economic circumstances to prevent skilled migration and brain drain. The brain drain should be replaced by policies that promote brain gain and circulation. For example, Nigerian academics in the diaspora can advise and guide students in Nigeria by sharing their best practices and advanced knowledge, or they may return for brief periods to transfer their knowledge back to Nigeria.

It is also critical to establish the required structures to support Nigerians in the diaspora and foster linkages in order to accelerate Nigeria's growth. Political leaders in Nigeria should try to ensure that conditions at home are favorable for both resident citizens and those in the diaspora who may choose to come home. There is also a need to raise awareness among young people about the risks of irregular migration. The issue should be addressed through instructional initiatives in secondary and tertiary institutions. These universities should also provide courses that cover migrants' rights and international migration procedures. These programs should be supplemented by social media campaigns, special programs, and grassroots project activities to dispel myths about the realities of illegal immigration to destination nations.

Nigerian government leaders must create a youth-friendly socioeconomic climate and help them by giving technical know-how, resources, mentorship, and the financial and practical assistance they require to prosper in the Nigerian economy. These programs must be inclusive and disability-friendly. Youth with disabilities should be included as advisors in the creation of programs that will directly impact them.

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