

# Examining the Effects of International Migration of the Informal Motor Vehicle Mechanics from the Left behind Perspectives: Implications for Vocational Education and Social Work Practices

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## ABSTRACT

International migration affects millions of people worldwide, with 272 million recorded in 2019. In Nigeria, young motor vehicle mechanics from the informal sector are migrating abroad, leaving behind dependents. This research study made concerted efforts to examine the effects of international migration of the motor vehicle mechanics on left-behind family members, both nuclear and extended families. Using the Push and Pull Theory, data were sought through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with 68 left-behind family members, community leaders, and 10 vocational educators and social workers. Findings reveal that international migration profoundly impacts the financial (economic), social, and emotional, over all well-being and livelihood of left-behind family members. While remittances can improve livelihoods, they create new challenges, such as dependence on external support and lack of investment in local development. The study highlights the benefits and significance of vocational education and training in addressing skills gaps and improving career prospects. Social workers can provide support services, including counseling and therapy. The study emphasizes the need for policies supporting the informal sector and recognizing informal workers' skills. By addressing the skills gap and providing support services, it is possible to ameliorate the negative effects of international migration on left-behind family members.

**Keywords:** international migration, informal sector, motor vehicle mechanics, left-behind perspective, vocational education, social work practices.

## INTRODUCTION

With a population exceeding 200 million, Nigeria ranks among the most populous countries in Africa (NBS, 2020). The nation boasts a large and expanding youth demographic, with more than 60% of its citizens under 25 years old (Canton, 2021). However, Nigeria's economy has faced challenges in providing sufficient employment opportunities, resulting in an unemployment rate surpassing 23% (NBS, 2020). The informal sector plays a crucial role, contributing to over 60% of the country's GDP and serving as a significant source of employment for many Nigerians (NBS, 2020).

Nigeria constitutes 15.15% of Africa's total population and 51.66% of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) population. The country's annual population growth rate is relatively high, estimated between 2.4% and 2.8% according to the 1991 and 2006 censuses. Nigeria has a predominantly youthful population, with 43% under 15 years old and only 3% aged 65 and above (Afolayan, Ikwuayatum and Abejide, 2018). This youthful demographic creates a large pool of potential migrants, given that migration often favors the young and active.

International migration is key to the global economy, with many people, including skilled Nigerian motor vehicle mechanics (IOM, 2020; World Bank, 2020), migrating to escape economic hardships and improve their prospects (Adepoju, 2006), though they leave their families behind.

Baio (2006) identified that the primary groups left behind due to international migration are wives, the elderly, and children. These groups face various challenges, but overall their situation is not significantly worse compared to those who live with all family members and do not migrate. However, the effects of international migration on left-behind families and communities in Nigeria, particularly in the informal sector, have been under-researched (Afolayan, 2017). The informal sector, which makes up a large portion of Nigeria's GDP, often lacks formal training, has poor working conditions, and offers limited social protection for workers (NBS, 2020). The emigration of skilled motor vehicle mechanics could intensify these problems, leading to a shortage of skilled labor, decreased economic activity, and lower tax revenues for local governments (Benanav, 2019).

International migration is on a steady rise, with around 272 million migrants globally in 2019, making up about 3.5% of the world population (Ganatra et al., 2017). India has the highest number of people living abroad, followed by Mexico, Russia, and China. Approximately 60% of these migrations are to high-income countries, while the remaining 40% occur in 170 low and middle-income countries, including Nigeria (Population Reference Bureau, 2013). The Nigerian diaspora grew significantly from 465,932 in 1990 to 1,030,322 in 2013 (Isiugo-Abanihe et al., 2016). In 2016, 48,725 Nigerians, predominantly aged 18-34, sought asylum in various countries (Eurostat & WHO, 2017). The rise in migration of young motor vehicle mechanics affects left-behind families and communities, who face significant challenges due to the absence of formal social security in Nigeria (Odo et al., 2022).

In 2017, as posited by (Rufai, Ogunniyi, Salman, Oyeyemi and Salawu (2019), Nigeria contributed significantly to net migration in the Southern African Development (SSA) region, accounting for 17% of its net migration. Factors such as high unemployment, remittances, population growth, political instability, ethno-religious conflicts, and poverty drive migration both within and outside the country. Poor economic conditions and high poverty levels, especially among the youth, compel people to seek better living conditions. Additionally, inequalities between rural and urban areas encourage both internal and international migration. Migration empowers individuals, often enhancing geographical and occupational mobility, as those who migrate are more likely to switch occupations (Adepoju 2009; Young 2013; Nwosu et al 2022; Akanle, Fayehun, Adejare & Orobome, 2019; Darkwah and Verter 2014).

Motor vehicle mechanics are crucial to Nigeria's informal sector, offering essential services to the growing number of vehicle owners. However, the lack of formal training programs has led to a shortage of skilled workers in this field (Bridges, & Walls, 2018; (Afolayan, 2017). The emigration of skilled mechanics to other countries has further intensified this shortage. The informal sector, which accounts for around 65% of Nigeria's GDP (NBS, 2020), is characterized by inadequate training, poor working conditions, and limited social protection for workers. Despite these challenges, motor vehicle mechanics significantly contribute to the transportation industry and the country's economic growth (ILO, 2019).

The migration of motor vehicle mechanics can significantly impact left-behind communities, causing disrupted family relationships, shifts in household dynamics, and potential negative effects on family well-being (Castles & Miller, 2010). The absence of vocational education and training in Nigeria exacerbates these issues, making it harder for families and communities to address the labor gap (Bridges & Walls, 2018).

International migration's social impact on Nigerian families includes altered household dynamics and increased responsibilities for those left behind (Castles & Miller, 2009). The departure of a breadwinner can result in economic challenges for the remaining family members (Adepoju, 2006). Moreover, the emigration of skilled motor vehicle mechanics can weaken social cohesion, impacting community development projects and social activities (Afolayan, 2017).

Nigeria's lack of vocational education and training exacerbates the difficulties faced by left-behind families. The education system's insufficient focus on vocational training leads to a shortage of skilled workers in the informal sector (Bridges & Walls, 2018). Social work practices are essential for supporting families affected by migration and promoting community development (ILO, 2019).

This situation necessitates policy actions involving social workers and vocational educators. The global issue

of international migration of informal sector motor vehicle mechanics requires attention from these professionals to aid left-behind families and communities. In the absence of government support, these families have created self-support measures to maintain their economic well-being and access services previously provided by migrant mechanics (Ebimngbo, Chukwu & Okoye, 2022).

Everett Lee's (1966) theory of migration on push and pull variables served as the foundation for the study's theoretical framework. According to the notion, push and pull factors forces that either compel individuals to leave their previous homes or encourage them to relocate determine the causes behind migration. These might be environmental, cultural, political, or economic. According to Khan et al. (2023), push factors are circumstances that are connected to the nation from which a person migrates and have the power to compel individuals to leave their homeland. Lack of sufficient livelihood possibilities, poverty, population expansion that outpaces available resources, "primitive" or "poor" living conditions, desertification, famines and droughts, fear of political persecution, inadequate healthcare, wealth loss and natural disasters are likely push factors.

The exact opposite of push forces, pull factors draw individuals to a certain place. More employment opportunities and better living conditions, easy access to land for agriculture and settlement, political and/or religious freedom, better welfare and education systems, better transportation and communication infrastructure, better healthcare, a stress-free atmosphere, and security are typical examples of pull factors for a place (Sambe & Duze, 2022).

Researchers like Kirkwood (2009), Prabawa and Pertiwi (2020), and Tran et al. (2023) describe the reasons for migration by taking into account how push and pull variables impact the interaction between two sites (origin and destination). Emigration is caused by push factors that exist in the place of origin, such as a lack of economic opportunity, political or religious persecution, hazardous environmental conditions, and so on. At the destination, pull decisions include political or religious freedom, possibilities for employment, and the impression of a safe environment. As stated by Wang (2010), Pushes and pulls are complimentary; that is, migration can only take place if the pull at a plausible destination addresses the push, or the motivation to emigrate. In the context of labour migration in the informal sector, push factors are often characterized by the, insecurity, poverty, and poor prospect of job/skills opportunities in sending areas or countries, and pull factors are the economic opportunities presented in receiving areas or countries.

The educational system in the country is frequently criticized for its lack of concentration on vocational training, which results in a shortage of skilled workers in the unorganized sector, despite the significance of vocational education and training in addressing challenges faced by families that have been left behind (MacKinnon et al, 2022).The difficulties experienced by left-behind families are made worse by Nigeria's dearth of chances for vocational education and training, which makes it hard for them to adjust to the influx of skilled workers and acquire the skills necessary to close the workforce gap triggered by migration (Morrice, 2021). The issue of Nigerian motor vehicle technicians leaving the country in the informal sector is intricate and multidimensional, necessitating a comprehensive strategy that tackles the financial, social, and educational obstacles encountered by families left behind.

A thorough grasp of the variables influencing migration decisions, the consequences of migration on the informal sector, and the ramifications for social work practices and vocational education in left-behind families is necessary to fully comprehend the complicated issue of international migration's impact on Nigeria's informal sector. With an emphasis on the consequences for vocational education and social work practices in left-behind families, this study attempts to further this knowledge by investigating the effects of international migration on Nigerian motor vehicle mechanics working in the informal sector. The study was directed by the following objectives:

1. To investigate the factors that propels the decision of motor vehicle mechanics to migrate.
2. To assess the impact of international migration of the informal sector motor vehicle mechanics in Nigeria on the left behind families.
3. To examine the social implications of international migration of the informal sector motor vehicle mechanics on left-behind families in Nigeria.

4. To identify the role of vocational education and social work practices in addressing the challenges faced by left-behind families as a result of the international migration of informal sector motor vehicle mechanics.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Design, Area of the study Population, and Sampling

In order to find out the opinions of the family members and community members who were left behind as a result of the informal motor vehicle mechanics' overseas migration and their previous reliance on them, the study employed a qualitative design. The study was conducted in Nigeria's southwest geopolitical zone. One of Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, the South West (often hyphenated to the South-West) denotes both a geographical and political area in the southwest of the country. Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo are its six constituent states. With Kwara and portions of Kogi completing it, it comprises a portion of Yoruba territory in Nigeria.

The zone was selected as the research site because of the high rate of international migration among South Westerners (IOM, 2019). Western Nigerians often work in business, industry, humanitarian services, education, entertainment, and trade. More young Westerners migrated as a result of some of these activities than young people from other geopolitical zones (Afrobarometer, 2019; Isbell & Ojewale, 2018). The research participants were chosen using availability and snowballing purposive selection techniques. Lagos, Oyo, and Ogun States were specifically chosen out of the six states in western Nigeria because they had more migrants in the geopolitical zone than the other three states and because of the significant volume of businesses in the three states. The states have several commercial transportation businesses that facilitate and lower the cost of migration, and one of them has a significant international airport and seaport from which international aircraft and shipping lines operate. According to the UNDESA (2022) estimate, about 205,436 and 301,223 individuals who were thought to be traveling overseas between 2018 and 2020 are from Lagos, Oyo, and Ogun, respectively. From each of the three states that were chosen, three Local Government Areas (LGAs) were specifically chosen. Ikeja, Lagos State's mainland and Lagos Island, Ibadan North, Ibadan North East, and Ibadan South West are the LGAs; in Ogun State, Abeokuta North, Abeokuta South, and Ijebu North were chosen. Similarly, the headquarters of municipal governments were also chosen. We recruited 58 individuals for the study (30 men and 28 women) using availability sampling and snowballing techniques. The researchers were able to connect with more volunteers who were available to take part in the study by using the snowballing strategy. We chose 32 left-behind elderly individuals (18 men and 14 women) from the three districts in the LGA of Lagos State. This suggests that we chose 10 individuals (13 men and 7 women) from Ikeja and 10 from the mainland of Lagos, while we also choose 12 people (five men and 7 women) from Lagos Island. Thirteen elderly persons in Oyo State who were left behind were chosen from Ibadan North, Ibadan North East, and Ibadan South West LGAs (7 men and 6 women). Participants were chosen from Iwo Road in Agodi and Ayete district respectively, while in Ogun State 13 left behind older adults (7 males and 6 females) were also selected from Abeokuta North, Abeokuta south and Ijebu North. For the study, participants were chosen from the districts of Ijebu Ode, Obafemi Owode, and Abeokuta, respectively. Overall, we chose 58 participants for the in-depth interviews (IDIs) and 18 participants for the focus group discussions (FGDs) from the departments of social work and vocational education at the Universities of Lagos and Ibadan, respectively.

### Data Collection

Our sole sources of data were the IDIs and FGDs. We decided to use conversation guidelines and semi-structured interview schedules as our data gathering tools. We were able to do further research on the subject that was not originally covered by the study because to the semi-structured instruments we created. The researchers were proficient in the native tongue, and we prepared the instruments in English. This allowed us to give the instrument to participants who preferred Yoruba interviews; nevertheless, the researchers gave their assent when individuals preferred English interviews. All FGD participants, however, choose to have their interviews conducted in English. With the assistance of local leaders in the chosen towns, we were able to recruit some of the participants. These helped us find the first family members who were left behind, who then connected us with more research participants who fit the criteria. Their chosen time, date, and location for the interviews and conversations were decided upon during their selection process. They were also linked to other



pertinent information about the study's objectives, anticipated risks, and benefits. Additionally, we asked for their consent to record spoken discussion using an electronic recorder and non-verbal communication using field notes.

We guaranteed individuals privacy and secrecy, as well as their ability to leave the research at any time. Through the heads of their respective departments, staff members from the vocational education and social work departments were contacted for the FGD. Consent was granted and authorized prior to the start of the interview sessions in each office. While the FGD sessions were allocated 55–60 minutes, each IDI interview session was designed to last 25–40 minutes. Due to their unavailability and the loss of gasoline subsidies and fuel increments, which resulted in high transportation costs in the southwest geopolitical zone, 14 of the 72 left-behind family members we addressed for the research chose not to participate. However, all the FGD staffs approached all participated in the study.

## Data Analysis

To analyze the field notes and transcripts, we used Braun and Clarke's (2006) inductive theme analysis. To make sure we kept and presented the original data as we collected it in the field, we conducted a manual analysis without the use of any computer software. To guarantee identical meaning in both languages, the audio recordings containing the participants' comments were first transcribed in Yoruba and then translated into English. To create a large number of categories and codes without any reservations, we performed preliminary coding (Charmaz, 2006). At this point, we were able to identify viewpoints that aligned with the study's goals.

The coding categories we first found in the first step of our coding were then eliminated, combined, or subdivided in the second stage. By reading the transcripts several times to become familiar with the recurrent topics, we were able to do this. Both the recurrent ideas and the broader topics associated with the codes were of interest to us (Charmaz, 2006; Krueger, 1994; Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). Four themes that were essential to the study's goals were found and utilized to present the results.

## RESULTS

### Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Thirty males and twenty-eight females participated in the IDI, whereas eleven males and seven females participated in the FGD, according to the data in Table 1. Participants in the FGD group varied in age from 44 to 57, whereas those in the IDI group ranged in age from 18 to 60. Fifteen participants in the FGD group were Christians and just three were Muslims, whereas forty-six participants in the IDI group identified as Christians and twelve as Muslims. At the time of the research, two people from the FGD group were separated and divorced, respectively, and a larger percentage of participants (53) were married compared to three who were single. 2 participants were separated and divorced respectively at the time of the study while from the FGD group all the participants were married. Based on the analysis, a significant portion of the participants 27 had a university degree, whereas just four members of the IDI group had only a basic school education, 13 had an NCE from the college of education, and 10 had a secondary education. Only one member in the FGD held a master's degree; all other participants held doctorates. Of the participants, 18 were teachers, 19 were traders or company proprietors, and 20 were public servants. Each of the 18 FGD participants was a university instructor.

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants by LGA, age, marital status, educational level, occupation, and gender

Participants	Pseudo Name	LGA	Age	Study	Marital Status	Educational qualification	Occupation	Religion	sex
1	Deb	Ikeja	41	IDI	Married	B. Sc	Business	Christianity	Female
2	Pat	Lagos Island	48	IDI	Married	FSLC	Business	Christianity	Female
3	Fills	Ibadan North	47	IDI	Married	NCE	Civil servant	Christianity	Male
4	Matt	Abeokuta North	60	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Civil servant	Christianity	Male
5	Nel	Ibadan	61	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Business	Christianity	Male

6	May	Ijebu-ode	45	IDI	Married	NCE	Teaching	Christianity	Female
7	Lai	Ibadan	48	IDI	Married	WAEC	Business	Christianity	Female
8	Grace	Lagos mainland	48	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Teaching	Christianity	Female
9	Joyce	Lagos Island	45	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Civil servant	Christianity	Female
10	Kemi	Ikeja	48	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Civil servant	Christianity	Female
11	Ige	Ibadan North	61	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Teaching	Christianity	Male
12	Asake	Abeokuta South	45	IDI	Married	NCE	Teaching	Christianity	Female
13	Janet	Ikeja	45	IDI	Married	WASSC	Business	Christianity	Female
14	Banji	Ibadan south	42	IDI	Married	NCE	Teaching	Christianity	Male
15	Moni	Abeokuta north	51	IDI	Married	WASSC	Business	Christianity	Female
16	Maxi	Lagos Mainland	60	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Civil servant	Christianity	Male
17	Rebby	Ibadan south	58	IDI	Married	WAEC	Business	Christianity	Female
18	Allia	Ibadan north	49	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Teaching	Christianity	Female
19	Isah	Ijebu ode	48	IDI	Married	NCE	Teaching	Islam	Male
20	Louis	Ibadan north	42	IDI	Married	WASSC	Business	Christianity	Male
21	Ken	Abeokuta south	18	IDI	Single	SSCE	Business	Christianity	Male
22	Emma	Abeokuta	21	IDI	Single	SSCE	Business	Christianity	Male
23	Laman	Lagos island	45	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Teaching	Islam	Male
24	Snowy	Lagos Mainland	38	IDI	Single	B.Sc	Business	Christianity	Male
25	Liman	Ibadan	48	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Civil servant	Islam	Male
26	Sule	Abeokuta north	43	IDI	Married	NCE	Teaching	Islam	Male
27	Joshua	Ikeja	44	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Civil servant	Christianity	Male
28	Desmi	Abeokuta north	49	IDI	Divorced	FSLC	Business	Christianity	Male
29	Kene	Ibadan south	51	IDI	Married	NCE	Teaching	Christianity	Male
30	Tutu	Ibadan	47	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Civil servant	Christianity	Female
31	Temila	Ikeja	42	IDI	Separated	WAEC	Business	Christianity	Female
32	Gina	Ikeja	44	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Civil servant	Christianity	Female
33	Haasan	Lagos Island	49	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Teaching	Islam	Male
34	Asabe	Abeokuta north	46	IDI	Married	NCE	Teaching	Islam	Female
35	Susan	Ikeja	44	IDI	Married	FSLC	Business	Christianity	Female
36	Justin	Ibadan	49	IDI	Married	B. Sc	Teaching	Christianity	Male
37	Taye	Ikeja	43	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Civil servant	Christianity	Male
38	Ola	Ijebuode	44	IDI	Married	NCE	Teaching	Christianity	Female
39	Rotila	Ijebu-ode	47	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Civil servant	Christianity	Female
40	Gemin	Ikeja	40	IDI	Married	NCE	Teaching	Christianity	Female
41	Kosi	Ibadan	41	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Civil servant	Christianity	Female
42	Chucks	Lagos Island	43	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Civil servant	Christianity	Male
43	Femi	Abeokuta	47	IDI	Married	WASSC	Business	Christianity	Male
44	Solah	Ikeja	51	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Civil servant	Islam	Male
45	Keki	Ijebu ode	44	IDI	Married	B.sc	Teaching	Christianity	Male
46	Keji	Ibadan south	39	IDI	Married	NCE	Business	Christianity	Female
47	Deleh	Abeokuta south	44	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Civil servant	Christianity	Male
48	Soja	Lagos mainland	39	IDI	Married	NCE	Teaching	Islam	Male
49	Fatima	Ikeja	47	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Civil servant	Christianity	Male

50	Kubu	Abeokuta south	40	IDI	Married	NCE	Teaching	Christianity	Female
51	Dolah	Ibadan south	48	IDI	Married	FSLC	Business	Christianity	FEMALE
52	Tinu	Lagos island	49	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Civil servant	Christianity	Female
53	Jummy	Ibadan South	48	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Civil servant	Christianity	Female
54	Jimmy	Ijebuode	44	IDI	Married	WASSC	Business	Christianity	MALE
55	Matha	Ikeja	39	IDI	Married	NCE	Business	Christianity	Female
56	Idowu	Ibadan north	49	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Civil servant	Christianity	Male
57	Fabia	Lagos mainland	48	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Civil servant	Christianity	Male
58	Jumai	Ibadan south	49	IDI	Married	B.Sc	Civil servant	Islam	Female
				FGD GROUP					
1	Susan	Ibadan	49	FGD	Married	Ph.D	Lecturer	Christianity	Female
2	Rejoice	Ikeja, Lagos	57	FGD	Married	Ph.D	Lecturer	Christianity	Female
3	Smith	Ikeja, Lagos	57	FGD	Married	Ph.D	Lecturer	Christianity	Male
4	Johnson	Ikeja, Lagos	51	FGD	Married	Ph.D	Lecturer	Christianity	Male
5	DON	Ikeja, Lagos	55	FGD	Married	Ph.D	Lecturer	Christianity	Male
7	Gabriel	Ibadan	39	FGD	Married	Ph.D	Lecturer	Christianity	Male
8	Hosea	Ibadan	49	FGD	Married	Ph.D	Lecturer	Islam	Male
9	June	Ibadan	45	FGD	Married	Ph.D	Lecturer	Islam	Female
10	Ivory	Ibadan	48	FGD	Married	Ph.D	Lecturer	Islam	Female
11	Mike	Ibadan	51	FGD	Married	Ph.D	Lecturer	Christianity	Male
12	Hakeem	Ibadan	44	FGD	Married	Ph.D	Lecturer	Christianity	Male
13	Debby	Ibadan	48	FGD	Married	Ph.D	Lecturer	Christianity	Female
12	Judy	Ibadan	50	FGD	Married	Ph.D	Lecturer	Christianity	Female
13	May	Ibadan	51	FGD	Married	Ph.D	Lecturer	Christianity	Female
14	Cosmos	Ikeja, Lagos	49	FGD	Married	Ph.D	Lecturer	Christianity	Male
15	Josiah	Ikeja, Lagos	51	FGD	Married	Ph.D	Lecturer	Christianity	Male
16	Musa	Ikeja, Lagos	48	FGD	Married	Ph.D	Lecturer	Islam	Male
17	Jude	Ikeja, Lagos	45	FGD	Married	M.Sc	Lecturer	Christianity	Male
18	Miseh	Ikeja, Lagos	51	FGD	Married	Ph.D	Lecturer	Christianity	Male

### Theme 1: Factors that propels the decisions for International migration

Almost all of the participants voiced concerns and issues regarding the different factors and reasons that drive the decisions of informal motor vehicle mechanics, who also happen to be young family members, to migrate abroad, according to the transcript analysis. According to all participants in the focus group discussions (FGDs) with both males and females in the research regions, poverty in the nation is the primary cause of young family members' relocation. However, some of them stated that their young, unorganized motor vehicle mechanics are moving overseas in search of better opportunities for their families, which would eventually enhance their well-being and life fulfillment. According to others, these issues include the nation's insecurity, a lack of government incentives, low consumer patronage for their business, kidnapping, and the high cost of living, among others, which, if left unchecked, will alter the family's situation. *"My husband decided to travel overseas because of the poverty level in our family, we barely have anything to eat and it became difficult to pay the children's school fees, so when the opportunity came for my husband to travel abroad, we did not hesitate one second,"* stated Mrs. Deb, a 41-year-old Ikeja native with a primary education. The following quotes represent some of the participants' viewpoints:

*"One tragic day, when my husband was his route to work, we received a call informing us that he had been abducted and that a ransom was being demanded. After almost three weeks of being held hostage, suffering*

*several injuries, and being unable to report to work for several days, we ran helter skelter to collect the money and paid before he could be freed. He received a call from a buddy who was employed in Saudi Arabia, who started processing his travel documents”.* (Mrs. Pat; Lagos Island LGA; 48 years old; secondary school)

*At one point, things got really difficult for us, and my husband would constantly complain about either not having enough customers or that the prices that customers were willing to pay did not match the quality of the services that were being provided. They would also argue with customers every day about the cost of spare parts and other issues before the chance to leave arrived, the frustrations were really bad”* (Mrs. Pet; 52 years; secondary education; Lagos Mainland LGA).

The IDI participants who affirmatively stated that migration is necessary for their family shared similar opinions. Some of them pointed out that the country's economic circumstances and bad government were the main causes of the mechanics' foreign migration, some of whom were also the family's primary provider. Mr. Fills, 47, a male participant in an IDI held in Ibadan North who is a P6 and has completed secondary school, stated, *"After taking into account the state of the nation and what the future truly holds for the younger generations, I was merely reflecting on the legacy I will leave for my kids. Seeing my son battle every day to provide for his family and us made me feel terrible. In order to allow him to travel overseas and improve our family's quality of life, I had listed the remaining family acreage for sale. International migration sets migrants apart from the rest of society, according to other participants. One IDI participant stated: “Yes, you will be astounded to witness the kind of lifestyles that foreigners lead when they return to their home countries. You can't help but wonder how they manage given the kinds of vehicles they drive, the home they build and inhabit, and so forth. Show me the way, please. One of the reasons I support my only son and the rest of our family when he travels abroad is because of this”.* (Mr. Matt, age 60, elementary school teacher, Abeokuta North)

*“What occurred is that they are looking for a better opportunity because if you stay put and those who moved back start exploiting you more, you start planning how to go with them. People sometimes assume that you make little money in Nigeria, but there, it's known as “Owo ilu oyinbo” (Whiteman's money); although some people work in the nation to earn money, those who migrate make more. You will thus be enticed to fly out as well when these migrant individuals return with the type of money they spend”.* (Mr. Nel, 61, secondary school student, Ibadan South).

According to other participants, the international migration of young family members who work as informal mechanics depends greatly on their preferences and skill level, which will be beneficial to the nation in which they have chosen to reside and where they will flourish in their pursuit of their life goals. According to a female participant in Ijebu Ode LGA:

*"My husband's ability to travel relies on his health. He believed that his talent level was underappreciated here in comparison to his final earnings and those of his other migratory friends. Even while some of these mechanics might not want to remain in their nation, you don't have to make them stay because they could have been meant to travel elsewhere. Our nation's economic position is appalling; you will work for a master for a long period, but when it comes time to open your own workshop, money will be tight and your skill level won't be appreciated at all”.* (Mrs. May; 48years old P5, NCE education).

Though in a different context, the opinion of another female participant supports the one that Mrs. May first stated. Mrs. Lia, a P17 from Ibadan South with a secondary education, claims that

*“Nothing can prevent someone from experiencing terrible poverty. It will force you to perform some of the most heinous things you can think of, even putting your life in danger. Simply put, poverty and a desire for a better life where living conditions are better and more meaningful than they are in this country are what drive these mechanics to migrate abroad. If things were better in our country, customers would be willing to honour the mechanics' efforts and pay them well for the services they provide; a skilled mechanic might not have the desire to leave, preferring to stay, but now everyone wants to “japa” by all means”.*

## **Theme 2: Impact of international migration on the left behind families**

In order to evaluate the effects of motor vehicle mechanics in the informal sector migrating abroad on the



families left behind, the researchers conducted further study. According to the results, a large number of participants provided detailed explanations of the issues brought about by the relocation of these mechanics, the majority of whom were the families' primary providers. Except for a small number of participants, every other participant highlighted the problems and void caused by the departure of a family member who has gone abroad. A few individuals mentioned that there is some discord in the family as a result of migrating. Mrs. Grace, a Lagos mainland native with a high school diploma, said, *"There are major problems in the family right now because my daughter-in-law is not happy with me because she feels that my son, who has traveled overseas, is sending me more money than she does."*

*"Well, many of us contributed money for him when he was about to travel and family land was sold on his behalf to make the journey, He must thus make amends with everyone; none should be neglected. If he chose to just interact with his close relatives, it would be an act of ungratefulness"* explained Mrs. Joyce, a female participant from Lagos Island with a secondary education.

Other expressions of the participants are reflected in the following quotes:

*"When my husband left for overseas, I was told to learn a trade or go and acquire a skill so that I could support the family. It took him a while to become comfortable over there. In order to support the family, I had to learn fashion and clothing design. After he departed, it was very difficult for me to continue taking care of the family by myself"*. (Mrs. Kemi; Ikeja; 48 years old; university degree)

*"My son leaving for overseas made me very ill. I spent months in the hospital with diabetes and hypertension, and I had no money to cover the costs. In order to support the family in his own small manner, my other son was engaged in okada business. I can't lie to you; things were difficult"*. (Mr. Ige; age 61; elementary school teacher). North Ibadan

*"When my husband went for overseas, his devoted clients continued to contact and visit the house. We don't want to reveal that he was abroad at first, in case he gets deported back, so I had to keep making up stories about where he was. After some time, they were sad to lose a skilled technician, but they were also grateful that he had moved on to pursue better opportunities"*. (Mrs. Asake, Abeokuta South, 45 NCE)

### **Theme 3: Social implications of international migration on left-behind families in Nigeria**

According to the study, the participants highlighted an array of social ramifications of international migration for families and communities that are left behind. The reasons for international migration were cited by a larger percentage of participants as being that young, informal motor vehicle mechanic migrants have more and better opportunities abroad than in Nigeria, but the transit has significant social repercussions for the families and communities at large that are left behind. The international migration of these mechanics to other nations has exposed the families of those left behind to confront and focus on the challenges that lay ahead, according to other participants, Mrs. Janet, Secondary education, P3 from Ikeja LGA, stated: *"I have to take care of my father and mother-in-law, who are quite elderly and also have some sort of geriatric ailment, such as dementia, hypertension, diabetes, blood pressure, and so on. Since my husband moved overseas, it has been quite difficult for the family to care for them"*.

*"The children of the left behind suffer some form of neglect and lack adequate care as a result of the young mechanic's international migration,"* said Mr. Banji Ibadan South, another participant. *"The children of the left behind, especially the female ones who are of a certain age, engage in some strange activities like prostitution, 'hook up' (as they call it now), and the like because their father is not around and they lack control,"* stated Mr. Afore, a university-educated individual from Abeokuta-South.

The view of a female participant was captured in the quote:

*"One of my neighbours was having extramarital affairs of some kind after her spouse just moved overseas. She was humiliated publicly after being caught once by her relatives. I wondered what may have caused the woman to act in that manner, but I came to the conclusion that it might have been the husband's absence, loneliness, or financial difficulties"*. (Mrs. Moni, 51, secondary school teacher, Abeokuta-North)

*"A while back, one of my fellow residents' sons was caught stealing in the area where we live. It came to light that he was surrounded by some dubious individuals and continued to hang out with them until he was apprehended. When his father's whereabouts were inquired about, it was discovered that he had left the family behind and traveled abroad. At that time, the family was going through a lot of financial hardship"*(Mr. Maxi; P4; Lagos Mainland LGA; 60 years; university education).

Other participants also believed that the country's economic circumstances, which led to these mechanics' relocation, had serious repercussions for the families of those left behind. The nation's economic situation is unable to assist the younger families that are left behind, according to all of the participants in the IDIs that were conducted out within the study areas. According to some of them, it will be challenging for the families of those left behind to succeed greatly given the status of the country right now. They pointed out that the country's economy is in terrible shape, that unemployment is rising, that there is insecurity, and that other necessities of life cannot be guaranteed. They believe that these abandoned families would be vulnerable to hardship and criminal activity. Additionally, their families work at a variety of odd jobs or do a variety of other things to make ends meet as they wait for remittances that will allow them to live comfortably and receive high-quality education. *"I felt embarrassed one day when my friends' wives whose husbands had migrated were harassed by another woman for hoarding a certain amount of money and not being able to pay back at the designated repayment time, And the aforementioned woman was already running a rather unsuccessful company, but she was persevering for the time being in order to support the family. In fact, others were making fun of her"* said Mrs. Reby, P12 from Ibadan South LGA, who had completed secondary education.

Another female participant, Mrs. Alli, who is P11 from Ibadan North LGA, and had university education, said, *"I think it is the hardship in this country that pushed them to engage in some these vices to keep life going:*

Participants in the IDI shared similar opinions. The participants also believed that the lack of a breadwinner to appropriately support their requirements exposes children of the left behind to suffering due to the nation's dismal economic situation. They stated their opinion that Nigeria has no better plans for the advancement of its people and that they must use any means necessary to survive. *"The reality is that people perceive the family of the left behind has big money for them to have been able to sponsor one of their own abroad without knowing what they passed through to make it happen, so the families are usually neglected to carry their own cross financially and other wise,"* stated Mr. Isah, who had an NCE and was from Ijebu Ode LGA.

*"Well, my thought is that the country's situation leads to children and families of the left behind to start looking for other means of livelihood and survival, although there will be serious repercussions, it is for their well-being."* added Mr. Louis, who had his secondary education from Ibadan-North LGA.

All other opinions of the participants were captured in these quotes:

*"When my father moved overseas, I had to help my mother take care of my elderly grandparents by working at several menial jobs by myself. Such jobs have never been presented to me before. It's challenging to juggle employment and school activities. At employment, I occasionally face bullying and financial extortion from the powerful people in my community"* (Mr. Ken; 18 years; secondary education; Abeokuta-South)

*"I had to leave my marriage because the pain was too great and I could not stand my in-laws' constant complaints, and to make things worse, my ex-husband had moved overseas and I had no news or information from him."* (Mrs. Emma; 32 years old; secondary education; P9, Abeokuta-North).

#### **Theme 4: Role of vocational education and social work practices in addressing the challenges faced by left-behind families**

Social work and vocational education can have a significant impact on the lives of the families of the left behind, according to the findings of the focus group discussion (FGD) of stakeholders in these fields who are the participants engaged to answer this component of the instrument. According to the study, the participants identified a number of ways that practices in social work and vocational education could contribute to alleviating the difficulties that underprivileged families and communities confront. One of the participants shared with others in the community the primary goals and focus of social work. *"Social work focuses on*

*improving the well-being and quality of life in both individual and group environments," said Mrs. June, Ibadan, with a university degree. According to a different participant, social work encompasses a range of actions intended to solve social issues, promote social justice, and improve the status of marginalized or weaker segments of society.*

*"In order to give the kids of the left behind the assistance they needed, social workers used their professional knowledge, abilities, skills, and values. Social workers may provide adolescents with practical services like advocacy, case management, and counseling that are focused on their growth and well-being. In order to create circumstances that are conducive to excellent youth development, they could also work in conjunction with families, schools, and community organizations" Mrs. Ivory Ibadan University Education*

The opinion of other participants on the role social worker on the left behind families and communities are capture in quote.

*"Social work plays a crucial role in families addressing structural injustices, establishing social structures, and fostering community and individual empowerment due to international migration. A combined approach is often used to strengthen resilience and promote wellbeing among the families left behind. Community-based solutions, utilizing local networks and resources, are the primary means of addressing the needs of these families. This approach is particularly important for those in small towns and families left behind." Mr. Mike University education Ibadan South LGA*

*"Social workers are advocates for marginalized families and communities, advocating for policies and programs that meet the needs of all members. They identify community strengths and advocate for the voiceless, fighting for fair distribution of services and resources. By demonstrating the unique issues faced by left-behind families and ensuring fair distribution of resources, social workers play a critical role in social justice and community development for these communities". Mr. John 44 University education Ibadan*

Mrs Debby 51 University education Ibadan, a social worker at the University of Ibadan, *emphasizes the importance of community engagement, creating a sense of belonging and shared responsibilities, and providing psychological and social support to families affected by various diseases, including depression, dementia, drug abuse, prostitution, broken homes, and hypertension.*

*"The international migration of young motor vehicle mechanics has negatively impacted families, particularly in rural areas and urban centers. These families who had to sell their landed properties for the mechanics' migration need time to heal before remittances can be received. A social worker is needed to assist these families during this period." Mrs Judy 50 University education. Ibadan*

*"Social workers play a crucial role in assisting migrants who have left behind family members with mental health issues. They serve as educators, counselors, and teachers, sharing best practices to meet the unique needs of these families. The stressors faced by these families include behavioral issues in children, depression and anxiety, domestic violence, and altered parental relationships due to young mechanics' international migration. Additionally, most families experience trauma and material loss". May 51 P13 University education Ibadan.*

Participants disclosed the potential impact vocational education can have on families that are left behind. Entrepreneurial and marketable abilities can be developed through vocational education. It provides the foundation for human creativity and advancement, which boosts societal development and economic prosperity. One of the participants stated that *"For people to improve their standard of living, they must be given relevant education and training that will empower them for community living, and that type of education and training is vocational and technical education," Mr. Cosmos 49 University education Ikeja Lagos.*

Another participants is of the opinion and it is captured in quote

*"Vocational and technical education is an adult education program that focuses on acquiring technical knowledge and practical skills for individuals in need. It is skill-based, focusing on developing life skills like critical thinking and problem-solving, and equipping individuals with the necessary technical information and*

*skills for success in their chosen vocation.*” Mr Josiah 51 P27 University education Ikeja, Lagos

*“Vocational education is an adult education that focuses on a person's aptitudes and skills for a specific profession, promoting social responsibility, job orientation, vocational exploration, political engagement, and moral and spiritual values. It is often found in traditional societies where skilled occupations like farming, weaving, carpentry, cooking, block molding, bricklaying, building construction, blacksmithing, carving, knitting, and tailoring have been used to support families and themselves”.* Mr John 48 University education. Lagos.

*“Poor infrastructure and job prospects have led many physically fit young people to leave their villages for better opportunities abroad, leaving destitute families in undeveloped areas. By establishing vocational education training facilities in communities and involving the government, this undesirable trend can be reversed”* Jude 45 University education Lagos.

*“Vocational education empowers families and reduces poverty by promoting self-reliance in individuals and communities. Its main goal is to improve people's quality of life by enabling them to acquire new skills, change behavior, and become more resilient in their communities”* Moseh 51 University education Ikeja Lagos.

## DISCUSSIONS

The study investigated the reasons and motivations behind young motor vehicle mechanics' international migration and the impact on their families. It found that family members who were left behind viewed the move as an exciting experience and a way to improve their happiness and well-being. The migration involved various social groups, including skilled workers, IDPs, refugees, and unemployed youths seeking employment outside their home countries. The findings highlight the diverse nature of international migration (Akanle, Fayehun, Adejare & Orobome, 2019). According to the findings, migration has given the mechanics hope and had led to better means of livelihood, better employment opportunities and better income to care for their left-behind family members. These results support Isiugo-Abanihe et al.'s (2022) assertion that migration has given Nigerians hope by resulting in improved living conditions, career prospects, and family income. The country's instability and bad administration caused the migration rate to rise sharply between 1990 and 2020. In 2016, more than 48,000 Nigerians applied for refuge because of political unrest. Household poverty is decreased by international migration, particularly for families whose income is mostly dependent on remittances. According to Gassmann et al. (2013), receiving remittances enhances wellbeing and buffers situational difficulties.

Based on the findings of their reviews of the factors motivating the migrations, the findings supports Kirwin and Anderson (2018) study which found out that the motivations for international migration were heightened by migrants' intense wants to enhance their wellbeing regardless of distance and location. Therefore, information technology accessibility reduces the negative effects of migration on the families left behind by bringing migrants and those left behind closer regardless of distance and making it simple for migrants to send resources across time and space (Akanle, Fayehun, Adejare & Orobome, 2019). In general, the desire to migrate, particularly abroad, is a result of a confluence of local (push) and global (pull) causes, frequently motivated by economic considerations and a hopeful outlook for the betterment of the migrant's family (Fleischer 2006; Akanle and Adesina 2017).

The study reveals that poverty is the primary reason for Nigerians migrating to Western countries. This finding is in agreement with (Nwosu et al, 2022) who posited that with 70% living below the poverty line, Nigeria has experienced four distinct periods of migration: slave trade, colonial, post-independence, and post-military. Between 1952 and 1953, a significant number of Nigerians migrated to North America and Europe, with an estimated 257,000 settling in West African nations like Ghana, Benin, and Togo. Both the origin and destination countries often experience social, demographic, and economic repercussions from migration (Nwosu et al, 2022).

The study's theoretical framework and anchor, the Push and Pull factors, identified the push factors as being connected to a lack of employment prospects, a dangerous environment, flooding, inadequate health insurance, a high cost of living, insecurity, death threats, poverty, and weak governance. Conversely, the pull variables



that support the findings include improved employment prospects, more incomes, greater wealth, better services, a desirable environment, less crime, political stability, and security. These supported the study's theoretical framework and were consistent with the research conducted by Nanzip (2020). Similarly, overseas migration has been made worse by governmental instability, ethnic sensationalism, corruption, and general poverty (Akanle and Olutayo 2022).

The study reveals that international migration has a significant impact on the educational attainment of those left behind, a finding consistent with previous research (Beine et al., 2008; Mountford & Rapoport, 2016; Bedasso, Gebru, Weldesenbet & Obikili, 2020). The potential benefits of migration extend beyond the welfare of the household, as it may encourage more people to invest in education than emigrate, increasing the stock of human capital in the country of origin. However, the absence of family members from home may negatively affect the education of the left behind by depriving them of proper guidance and role models, or burdening them with extra household responsibilities. This finding aligns with previous research (Beine et al., 2008; Mountford, 1997; Vidal, 1998; Bedasso, Gebru, Weldesenbet & Obikili, 2020).

Participants expressed dissatisfaction with their family member who migrated, hoping to receive something in exchange for their younger family members' migration to improve their economic situation. They supported their young mechanic relative with resources for the journey. The study revealed that families may sell property and take out loans to mobilize financial resources for their children's journey to Europe, hoping the returns will compensate for any difficulties they may have encountered (Effeovottu, 2021).

The study found that young mechanics' overseas migration had significant social repercussions on their families, causing significant health and well-being issues. The high death rates, mental pain, and disease experienced by these families were also noted. The findings support Ebimgbo and Okoye (2024) hypothesis that the migration of their primary provider causes behavioural, practical, and social difficulties for the remaining family members, particularly children and older adults. Research on the impact of migration on families left behind in Africa and other regions with historical male migration has often focused on the consequences of absent fathers (Ikulomola's ,2015). The study found that most women left behind faced discrimination and stigma, which led to sociocultural issues for the wives. This is in agreement with (Ikulomola's ,2015). International migration also causes family division, isolation, and insecurity, as seen in remittances sent home. The decision to send a family member abroad is a household decision, and many households depend on remittances from their families, as they constitute a major source of income. This highlights the sociocultural limitations and sociocultural issues faced by women who are left behind and in consonance with (Osezua, 2011).

The study highlights the negative impact of husband migration on wives, leading to extra marital affairs and broken marriages. This is consistent with Uddin et al (2023) findings that wives face double burdens in both public and private spheres, often due to patriarchal society's stigmatized attitude. The study also revealed that the remittances, often used by family members left behind, are used to meet daily needs and affect migrants' family interactions, obligations, kinship networks, and expectations. This finding supports the views of (Akanle & Adesina, 2017; Akhigbe & Effeovottu, 2023) that families often attach meaning to remittances and construct values from them, contributing to their insecurities.

The study suggests that family members are not surprised when their young mechanic family member migrates due to the poor economy, as they have also migrated during their productive years. This highlights according to Ogwo and Ezekoye (2021) the need for career guidance, planning skills, and education for left-behind communities and families to cope with migration. The study also acknowledges the push and pull factors of international migration, such as poverty, overpopulation, and unemployment. Vocational education is crucial for strengthening the sense of belonging and facilitating social and labor market integration (Canton, 202; Landau, & Achiume, 2017).

The study highlights the potential of vocational education in promoting a more inclusive society and economic growth by enhancing skills, providing real-world training, and promoting lifelong learning. This approach corroborate the study by Arnold, Davids, & Reiser, (2024) who posited that it will promotes labor insertion, social mobility, and reduces inequalities. Successful vocational education systems can lead to successful

school-to-work transitions and labor market access, fostering social and professional integration for left-behind families and communities, including refugees (Arnold, Davids, & Reiser, 2024).

The study reveals that the absence of a primary caregiver can negatively affect family members' health due to reallocation of household time, leading to increased psychological pressure and poorer eating habits, especially for children. It supports Raphta et al (2011) recommendation for social policy options in developing countries, including improving labor markets, strengthening insurance and credit markets, facilitating remittance transmission, and increasing access to education and healthcare. Démurger (2015) suggests alternative solutions include providing better education locally, additional tutoring for children, and building social safety nets for pensions and affordable healthcare.

The study suggests that social work policies should be tailored to migrants and their families, considering their unique situations and enhancing support systems in education and healthcare. This is in line with Shier, Engstrom, and Graham (2011) recommendation. If migration leads to lower education, health status, or more child labor, the long-term costs of migration should be mitigated through appropriate home country policies, facilitated by social workers (Shier, Engstrom, & Graham, 2011).

## CONCLUSION

The study examines the impact of international migration of informal motor vehicle mechanics in Nigeria, revealing the challenges and opportunities faced by these families as a result of the mechanics migration. It emphasizes the need for targeted interventions in vocational education and social work practices to support these migrated mechanics left behind families' members. The study reveals that international migration significantly impacts the economic, social, and emotional well-being of these left behind families members. While remittances from migrant mechanics can improve the livelihoods of the left behind, they also create new challenges like increased dependence on external financial support and a lack of investment in local economic development. The absence of skilled mechanics due to migration can lead to a shortage in the industry, exacerbating existing issues in the informal sector. Social work practices should also address the social and emotional challenges faced by these left behind families members, such as isolation, anxiety, and depression, particularly among women, children and the elderly.

### Implications for the study

Vocational education programs should focus on training informal sector workers like motor vehicle mechanics to improve their career prospects and address the skills gap thereby combating the need for the international migration. It could also assist in the training of the left behind family members towards acquiring one sets of skills or the other as a means of earning their livelihood. Programs should provide certification and accreditation, offering flexible and accessible training options. Community-based interventions, including counseling and therapy, should be provided to support left behind families, particularly women and children, who are left behind by migration. Social workers should advocate for policies and programs that support the rights and interests of these workers and their families.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for policymakers, educators, social workers, and other stakeholders:

Governments should assist the unorganized sector, which includes motor vehicle mechanics, by providing the mechanics with resources, loans, and training. Acknowledging their abilities and, if required, providing certification and accreditation. Families left behind should get support services like counseling and therapy to assist them deal with the difficulties of relocation. Governments should provide jobs and economic possibilities in the formal sector to lessen the incentives for people in the informal sector to move. Vocational educators should provide flexible and easily available vocational training programs to meet the demands of mechanics in the informal sector and their left behind family members who needs it. Opportunities for job placement and hands-on training should be harnessed through partnerships with industry partners through the

public-private partnership initiatives. Social workers ought to offer left-behind families support services as well. The social and economic difficulties that motor vehicle mechanics in the informal sector experience should be addressed via community-based initiatives. Social work should advocate for policy change that supports their rights and interests of the mechanics and the families left behind. Social work can assist in building partnerships with community organizations in providing support services and resources. International organizations should provide funding and resources for vocational training programs and social services for lifelong learning. Vocational training should be made flexible in promoting labour mobility and developing global standards for vocational training which will ensure high-quality training and certification.

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