MIGRATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Essays in Honour of Professor Olufemi Ayinde Peters

Vice-Chancellor

National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)

Edited by

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and

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Centre of Excellence in Migration and Global Studies (CEMGS)

National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)

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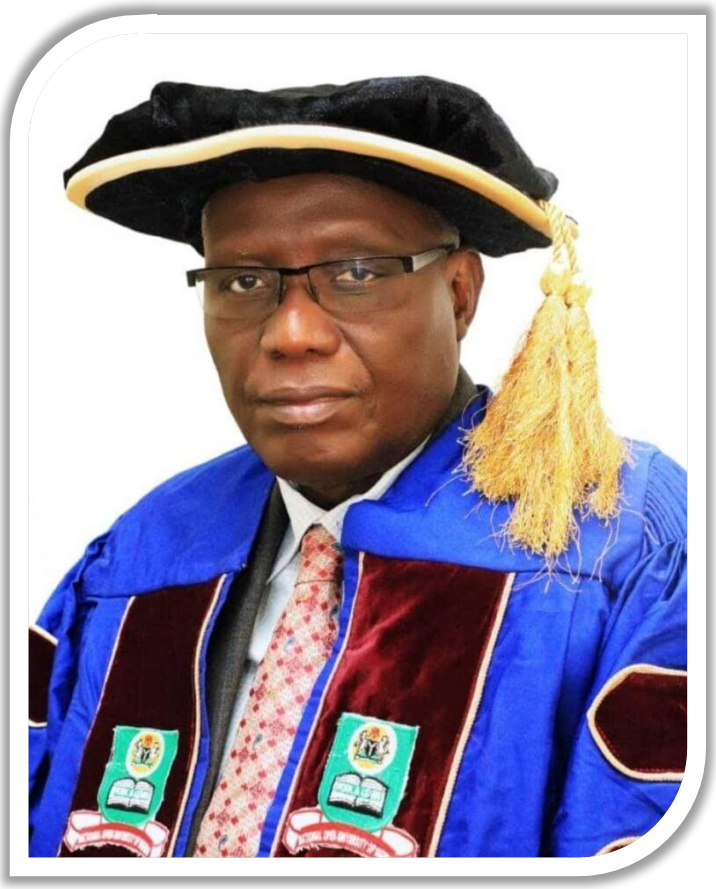

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Vice-Chancellor
National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)
February 10, 2021 – February 10, 2026

Dedication

Putting these chapters together took much hard work and dedication, but we managed to finish the project on time. This book is dedicated to Professor Olufemi Ayinde Peters, the honouree and to "time".

"To the past that shaped me, the present that nurtures me, and the future that awaits me."

Gloria O. Anetor
Director, CEMGS

Preface

This book is written to honour Professor Olufemi Ayinde Peters, Vice-Chancellor of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) - February 2021 to February 2026, the fifth Vice-Chancellor of the institution. In this period, he has brought Open and Distance Learning (ODL) to a higher level with passion. His tenure was marked by numerous sponsorships for local and international workshops, conferences, and seminars at the university. An outstanding and remarkable achievement during his impressive tenure is his promotion of the organisation of numerous scholarly activities, including national and international conferences, as well his support of faculty attendance at these events. Of special note is that he supported the Director of the Centre of Excellence in Migration and Global Studies (CEMGS) in the struggle to ensure that the Centre assumed a beneficiary status under the sponsorship of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund). Professor Olufemi Peters has remained consistently supportive of core academic and transformative projects within NOUN. This book, therefore, is specially written to honour him for these laudable contributions.

The title of this book, "Migration and Sustainable Development: Problems and Prospects", underscores the important role of migration in sustainable development. It also examines, from different perspectives, the problems and prospects associated with migration. The chapters in the book were carefully selected and blindly peer-reviewed.

The book consists of eighteen chapters divided into six distinct parts as follows:

Part One: Language and Communication
This part consists of two chapters. Chapter 1 is *on Language Shift and Maintenance Among Migrant Communities: Implications for Sustainable Cultural Integration*, while Chapter 2 is on *Strategic Communication as a Development Pathway to Curtailing Illegal Migration: Issues in Select Nigerian Literary Texts*.

Part Two: Insecurity
Part two of this book consists of three chapters. Chapter 3 is on *Banditry, Forced Migration and Northern Nigeria's Economic Development Challenges (2010-2024).* Chapter 4 is on *Migration Trend and Border*

Security in North-East Nigeria (2010-2023), and Chapter 5 is on *Security in Insecurity: The Experience of Non-Migrant Youths in Nigeria.*

Part Three: Rural-Urban Contexts

This part consists of one chapter. This is Chapter 6, which addresses *Return Migration and the Emergence of Entrepreneurial Ventures in Post SAP Nigeria (1986-2000): A Stimulus for Economic Recovery.*

Part Four: Economic Development

Part four of this book consists of six chapters. Chapter 7 addresses the *Role of Diaspora Networks in Economic Development: An ARDL Approach.* Chapter 8 is on *Trade and Migration in Nigeria: Examining the Linkage Between Labour Mobility and Economic Growth.* Chapter 9 addresses the Investigation *of the Immigrants' Contributions to Agro-Economic Development of Uhonmora-Ora Community, Owan-West Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria.* Chapter 10 examines *Empowering Irregular Return Migrants in Benin City through Entrepreneurship for Successful Reintegration.* Chapter 11 investigates *Sustainable Entrepreneurship, Environmental Migration, and Corporate Social Responsibility: A Systematic Review in the Nigerian Context,* while Chapter 12 examines the *Contributions of Nigeria's Diaspora Networks to Economic Growth and National Security for Sustainable Development: A Synthesis of Evidence.*

Part Five: Family and Adaptation

The fifth part of this book consists of five chapters. Chapter 13 addresses *Migration and Family Values*; Chapter 14 examines the *Role of Local Adaptation Initiatives in Mitigating Climate-induced Migration: Evidence and Lessons from the Global South.* Chapter 15 is *Voices of Displacement: Exploring Migration and Family Values* in Uwem Akpan's *Say Youare One of Them.* Chapter 16 investigates *Assessing Local Peacebuilding Strategies as a Means of Mitigating Forced Displacement in Host Communities in Nigeria,* and Chapter 17 examines *Social Dimensions of Human Trafficking in Nigeria: Theories and Perspectives.*

Part Six: Human Health

Part 6 of this book, which deals with health matters, consists of one chapter. This is Chapter 18, which addresses *Islands of Care in a Sea of Exclusion: Examining Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Access for Internally Displaced Females in Abuja, Nigeria.*

I sincerely thank all the contributors to the chapters in this book for a job well done!

I also especially appreciate Professor Fidelis Chike Okolocha for working tirelessly to co-edit this book. I must say that writing and editing this book has been a labour of love. The contents will surely increase your knowledge on migration issues and also help you to contribute to migration discourse nationally and globally.

Gloria O. Anetor

A Brief on CEMGS

The **Centre of Excellence in Migration and Global Studies (CEMGS)** at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), Abuja, has established itself as a pioneering research hub dedicated to field-based scholarship that informs policy formulation and implementation. Its vision is to provide evidence-driven solutions to both internal and global migration challenges. Since its establishment in February 2020, with a seed fund from the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), CEMGS has grown into a vibrant centre of academic inquiry, dialogue, and collaboration. The Centre organises teleseminar series that bring together a diverse and global convergence of intellectuals. These gatherings serve as platforms for knowledge exchange, constructive critique, and solution-focused dialogue.

Its seminars and webinars have provided opportunities for scholars to present their research and receive feedback from distinguished professors and practitioners, thus refining ideas and strengthening the knowledge base on migration. CEMGS acknowledges the unwavering support of the management of NOUN, particularly the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Olufemi Ayinde Peters, whose leadership has been instrumental in sustaining the Centre's activities. Under the directorship of Professor Gloria O. Anetor, the Centre continues to deliver on its mandates, which include:

- Providing leverage for feedback and solution-driven research
- Serving as an agent of national policy for migration studies
- Seeking grants to support academic activities and outreach for sustainability
- Publishing and sustaining peer-reviewed academic journals and monograph series
- Collaborating with stakeholders, practitioners, and policymakers in migration fields
- Organising occasional seminars, conferences, and public lectures.

CEMGS has also positioned itself as a global actor in migration discourse through strategic partnerships, especially with the Munich Forum for Dialogue (MFD). This programme, following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between both institutions, highlights CEMGS's commitment to international collaboration, capacity building, and evidence-based engagement.

Looking ahead, the Centre, under the approval of NOUN's Vice-Chancellor and in collaboration with the Munich Forum for Dialogue, is spearheading the establishment of a Migration Resource Centre. The Observatory aims to provide a comprehensive and accessible database on migration trends, making reliable information available to policymakers, researchers, and the public. Lately, due to the impressive output of the Centre, it has been endorsed by TETFund as one of the centres of excellent being sponsored in Nigeria, which is beyond seed fund sponsorship.

Through its initiatives, the Centre of Excellence in Migration and Global Studies continues to reinforce its role as a bridge between research, policy, and practice, amplifying Nigeria's voice in the global migration conversation.

Finally, we express our gratitude to Prof Abdalla Uba Adamu, NOUN's former Vice – Chancellor, who initiated the establishment of the Centre and the pioneer Director, Prof. Hakeem Ibikunle Tijani, for their visionary initiative.

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CONTENTS

Dedication iv
Preface v
A Brief on CEMGS viii

PART ONE: LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION 1

Chapter 1
Language Shift and Maintenance among Migrant Communities: Implications for Sustainable Cultural Integration
Julius Ademola Oyewole & Peter Alani Oluwafunminiyi Ayomide 1

Chapter 2
Strategic Communication as a Development Pathway to Curtailing Illegal Migration: Issues in Select Nigerian Literary Texts
Ngozi Dora Ulogu 21

PART TWO: INSECURITY 37

Chapter 3
Banditry and Forced Migration in Northern Nigeria: Economic Development Challenges (2010-2024)
Nura Muhammad Hassan 37

Chapter 4
Migration Trends and Border Security in North-East Nigeria (2010-2023)
Bidda Jacob Anto & David Nduka Utah 59

Chapter 5
Security in Insecurity: The Experience of Non-Migrant Youth in Nigeria
Joyce A. M. Ejukonemu, Agnes Enang Ubana & Bayo T. Asala 85

PART THREE: RURAL-URBAN CONTEXTS 105

Chapter 6
Return Migration and the Emergence of Entrepreneurial Ventures in Post-SAP Nigeria (1986-2000): A Stimulus for Economic Recovery
Shola Ahmed Akanbi & Mojeed Oyetunji Oyedokun 105

PART FOUR: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT **125**

Chapter 7
Role of Diaspora Networks in Economic Development: An ARDL Approach
Adeniyi Jamiu Yusuf 125

Chapter 8
Trade and Migration in Nigeria: Examining the Linkage Between Labour Mobility and Economic Growth
Idris Ahmed Sani, Ngbede John Adah,
Anselm Ejinwa Okere & Achema Atogala 141

Chapter 9
Investigation of the Immigrants' Contributions to Agro-Economic Development of Uhonmora-Ora Community, Owan-West Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria
Henry Usiobaifo Agbebaku, Titus Oluwafemi Ojo,
& Abdulmumin Alamin Saiki 165

Chapter 10
Empowering Irregular Return Migrants in Benin City through Entrepreneurship for Successful Reintegration
Kelechi Uwa-Robinson & Ezebunwa E. Nwokocha 191

Chapter 11
Sustainable Entrepreneurship, Environmental Migration, and Corporate Social Responsibility: A Systematic Review in the Nigerian Context
Oforbuike F. Nwachukwu, Udoka S. Otika, & Nancy U. Chidiebere 211

Chapter 12
Contributions of Nigeria's Diaspora Networks to Economic Growth and National Security: A Synthesis of Evidence
Isma'il Husiain Mshelia 235

PART FIVE: FAMILY AND ADAPTATION **259**

Chapter 13
Migration and Family Values
Olivia Joseph-Aluko 259

Chapter 14
Role of Local Adaptation Initiatives in Mitigating Climate-induced Migration: Evidence and Lessons from the Global South
Peter Sanjo Adewale 281

Chapter 15
Voices of Displacement: Exploring Migration and Family Values in Uwem Akpan's *Say You're One of Them*
Adegbite O. Tobalase 301

Chapter 16
Local Peacebuilding Strategies as Means of Mitigating Forced Displacement in Host Communities in Nigeria
Heman Johnson 325

Chapter 17
Social Dimensions of Human Trafficking in Nigeria: Theories and Perspectives
Olanrewaju Basil Akanle, John Lekan Oyefara, & Kennedy Eborka 339

PART SIX: HEALTH **363**

Chapter 18
Islands of Care in a Sea of Exclusion: Sexual and Reproductive Health Access for Internally Displaced Females in Abuja, Nigeria
Uguru Wisdom Ibor & Duke Ibietin 363

About the Authors

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PART ONE: LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Chapter 1
Language Shift and Maintenance among Migrant Communities: Implications for Sustainable Cultural Integration

by

Julius Ademola Oyewole & Peter Alani Oluwafunminiyi Ayomide

Abstract

This study investigates the complex dynamics of language shift and maintenance among migrant communities, addressing the tension between language adaptation and cultural preservation. The research examines primary drivers of language shift, its impact on cultural integration, effective maintenance strategies, and policy implications for sustainable multicultural societies. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews and focus groups. Data collection focuses on first and second-generation migrants in urban settings across multiple geographical contexts, emphasising youth and young adults from diverse linguistic backgrounds. This comparative analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of language shift patterns and their variations among different migrant groups. Preliminary findings indicate that economic factors, education systems, and social pressures are key drivers of language shift, varying in influence across different migrant communities. The research reveals that rapid language shift often correlates with accelerated cultural integration but may lead to intergenerational conflicts and identity crises. Effective language maintenance strategies identified include community-led language programmes, bilingual education initiatives, and cultural heritage celebration events. The study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on linguistic diversity in multicultural societies and offers practical insights for policymakers and community leaders. It proposes a framework for creating supportive environments that balance linguistic integration with cultural preservation, potentially mitigating the negative impacts of language shift while fostering sustainable cultural integration.

Keywords: Cultural Integration, Language Maintenance, Linguistic Diversity, Migrant Communities, Sociolinguistics

Introduction

This introduction explores the complex dynamics of language shift and maintenance among migrant communities, highlighting the challenges and opportunities for sustainable cultural integration. In today's globalised world, the movement of people across borders has led to increasingly diverse linguistic landscapes in many countries (Duizenberg, 2020). Migrant communities face the dual challenge of adapting to a new linguistic environment while striving to maintain their native languages. This phenomenon, known as language shift, occurs when a community gradually transitions from using its native language to adopting the dominant language of its new home.

Language shift and its counterpart, language maintenance, play a crucial role in shaping the cultural identities of migrant communities and their integration into host societies. The interplay between these processes has significant implications for social cohesion, cultural preservation, and the development of multicultural societies.

Several key objectives guide this research. The research identifies and analyses the main factors that influence language shift and language maintenance within migrant communities, uncovering the social, economic, and cultural dynamics at play. It also aims to examine how language shift affects cultural identity and the broader process of social integration, particularly how changes in language use can shape individuals' sense of self and belonging. Furthermore, the study will evaluate existing strategies designed to promote language maintenance, assessing their effectiveness across different contexts and communities. Ultimately, the goal is to develop sustainable models of cultural integration that strike a balance between the need for linguistic adaptation in the host society and the preservation of migrants' linguistic and cultural heritage.

This study aims to explore several key questions central to understanding the relationship between language and cultural integration in migrant communities. First, it seeks to identify the primary drivers behind language shift within these communities and examine how these factors differ across various cultural and social groups. Second, it investigates the impact of language shift on the cultural integration of migrants into host societies, considering how language changes influence identity, belonging, and social cohesion. Third, the study will evaluate the effectiveness of existing

strategies aimed at promoting language maintenance, with the goal of understanding how these approaches can be adapted to suit diverse contexts. Finally, it will explore how policymakers and community leaders can foster environments that support both linguistic integration into the broader society and the preservation of migrants' cultural and linguistic heritage. Through these inquiries, the research aims to provide a comprehensive framework for balancing the dual goals of inclusion and cultural continuity.

At the heart of this study lies a critical issue: the tension between the need for linguistic adaptation to facilitate social and economic integration and the desire to preserve cultural heritage through the maintenance of native languages. This complex dynamic often gives rise to a range of challenges. Within migrant families, it can lead to intergenerational conflicts, as younger members may gravitate toward the dominant language of the host society while older generations strive to retain their native tongue. Among second and third-generation migrants, this tension can contribute to identity crises, as they navigate between multiple cultural and linguistic affiliations. It also presents barriers to accessing education and employment opportunities, particularly when language proficiency becomes a prerequisite for success. Furthermore, the gradual decline in native language use may result in the loss of cultural knowledge and traditional practices, weakening the intergenerational transmission of heritage. This study explores and illuminates these issues, offering insights into how societies can better balance integration with cultural preservation.

While this research considers a broad spectrum of migrant communities, it will specifically focus on first- and second-generation migrants residing in urban areas. Particular attention will be given to communities representing diverse linguistic backgrounds, reflecting the variety of languages and cultures present in these settings. The study will also encompass a range of age groups, with a special emphasis on youth and young adults, who often play a crucial role in shaping cultural and linguistic integration. Additionally, the research will span multiple geographical locations, allowing for a comparative analysis that highlights both commonalities and differences across various contexts.

This research holds considerable significance for several reasons. Firstly, it enhances our understanding of linguistic dynamics within multicultural societies, shedding light on how language functions and evolves in diverse social settings. Secondly, it offers critical insights that can aid policymakers

in crafting more effective strategies for social integration, ensuring that policies are responsive to the linguistic realities of migrant and host communities. Thirdly, the study provides valuable information for educators who work with students from varied linguistic backgrounds, equipping them with knowledge that can support more inclusive and effective teaching practices. Additionally, it serves as a useful resource for both migrant communities and host societies as they navigate the complexities of cultural integration while striving to maintain linguistic diversity. By exploring these key areas, the research aims to contribute to the development of more inclusive and sustainable models for cultural integration in our increasingly diverse world.

Literature Review

Language shift and maintenance within migrant communities represent complex sociolinguistic phenomena that significantly impact cultural integration processes (Akintayo *et al.*, 2024). This review synthesises current research on these interrelated dynamics, examining how linguistic changes affect cultural preservation and integration outcomes. Drawing from seminal works and contemporary studies, this analysis explores the multifaceted nature of language shift, its implications for cultural identity, and effective strategies for sustainable linguistic and cultural preservation.

Drivers of Language Shift in Migrant Communities

Joshua Fishman's foundational work on language shift provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the primary drivers of linguistic change (Karnopp, 2023). In his seminal publication, *Reversing Language Shift* (1991), Fishman identifies intergenerational transmission as the crucial factor in language maintenance or loss (Alyami, 2023). Building on this foundation, Li Wei's (2013) research among Chinese communities in Britain demonstrates how socioeconomic pressures and educational policies can accelerate language shift, particularly among second-generation migrants (Wei, 2020).

Portes and Rumbaut's (2014) longitudinal studies of immigrant families in the United States reveal that economic integration often correlates with accelerated language shift, especially in contexts where the heritage language lacks prestige or practical utility (Yakushkina, 2020). Their research highlights how structural factors, including access to employment and

educational opportunities, significantly influence language choices within migrant families (Yang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2021).

García (2009) extends this analysis by examining how globalisation and digital communication technologies create new pressures for linguistic assimilation, while simultaneously offering novel opportunities for language maintenance (Lexande & Androutsopoulos, 2023). Her work demonstrates that the increasing dominance of global languages, particularly English, creates complex challenges for heritage language preservation.

Impact on Cultural Integration

The relationship between language shift and cultural integration emerges as a critical area of investigation in contemporary research (Khudayberdievich, 2025). Norton's (2013) influential work on language and identity reveals how linguistic choices fundamentally shape migrants' social positioning and cultural adaptation processes (Solhi, 2024). Her research demonstrates that language practices serve as both markers of identity and tools for negotiating belonging in host societies.

Berry's (2017) acculturation framework provides valuable insights into how language shift influences cultural integration outcomes (Karim, 2021). His research indicates that balanced bilingualism often correlates with successful integration, while rapid language loss can lead to cultural marginalisation. This finding is further supported by Canagarajah's (2013) studies of Tamil communities in the diaspora, which highlight how language maintenance contributes to positive cultural identity formation (Sankaran, 2022).

Effective Strategies for Language Maintenance

Recent research has identified several successful approaches to language maintenance within migrant communities. Extra and Yağmur's (2010) comprehensive study of Turkish communities in Western Europe highlights the effectiveness of community-based language schools and cultural programmes in supporting heritage language maintenance (Aslan, 2020). Their work emphasises the importance of institutional support and community engagement in successful language preservation efforts.

Guardado's (2018) research on Spanish-speaking communities in Canada demonstrates how family language policies and home literacy practices contribute to successful language maintenance (Brooksbank, 2022). His findings suggest that parental attitudes and consistent language use patterns

within the home environment play crucial roles in heritage language preservation.

King and Fogle (2016) examine how technology and social media platforms can support language maintenance efforts (Edyangu, 2021). Their research shows that digital tools and online communities provide valuable resources for heritage language learning and maintenance, particularly among younger generations (Guskaroska & Elliott, 2022).

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Research on policy frameworks supporting linguistic diversity and cultural integration has yielded important insights for practitioners and policymakers. May's (2014) analysis of language rights and educational policies demonstrates how institutional support for heritage languages can promote both linguistic maintenance and successful integration (Becerra-Lubies *et al.*, 2021). His work emphasises the importance of additive bilingualism approaches in educational settings.

Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson's (2017) research on linguistic human rights provides a framework for understanding how policy decisions affect language maintenance opportunities (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2022). Their work highlights the need for comprehensive language policies that recognise and support linguistic diversity while promoting integration into host societies (Imran & Natsir, 2024).

Emerging Trends and Future Directions

Recent scholarship has identified several emerging areas requiring further investigation. Blommaert's (2019) work on superdiversity and linguistic landscapes suggests that traditional models of language maintenance may need revision in increasingly complex urban environments (Atanassova, 2021). His research points to the emergence of new forms of multilingual practice that challenge conventional understanding of language shift and maintenance.

Additionally, Blackledge and Creese's (2018) studies of translanguaging practices in migrant communities indicate the need for more nuanced approaches to understanding language use patterns in contemporary contexts (Madaki 2024). Their work suggests that fluid language practices may offer new possibilities for maintaining linguistic and cultural connections while adapting to host society contexts.

This review illustrates the intricate interplay between language shift, cultural maintenance, and integration processes within migrant communities. The literature reveals that successful approaches to language maintenance must address both structural factors and community-level dynamics. Future research directions should focus on developing more sophisticated models for understanding language practices in increasingly diverse and technologically mediated contexts.

The findings suggest that policymakers and community leaders should adopt comprehensive approaches that recognise the value of heritage language maintenance while supporting integration into host societies. Such approaches should incorporate family-level support, institutional resources, and technological tools to create sustainable frameworks for linguistic and cultural preservation.

Methodology

The study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively examine language shift and maintenance patterns among migrant communities in Southwest Nigeria. This methodological triangulation enabled a thorough investigation of the complex interplay between linguistic adaptation and cultural preservation.

The research was conducted between July and December 2024 across major urban centres in Southwest Nigeria, including Lagos, Ibadan, and Abeokuta. These locations were selected for their significant migrant populations and diverse linguistic landscapes, providing rich contexts for examining language shift dynamics.

The study participants comprised first and second-generation migrants from various linguistic backgrounds residing in the selected urban areas. Purposive sampling was used to identify 300 participants for the quantitative phase, while theoretical sampling guided the selection of 45 participants for the qualitative phase. The selection criteria emphasised diversity in terms of age, socioeconomic status, and length of residence in the host community.

Multiple data collection methods were utilised to ensure comprehensive coverage of the research questions. Quantitative data were gathered through structured questionnaires administered via the Qualtrics survey platform to

300 participants, focusing on language use patterns, attitudes, and integration experiences. Qualitative data collection involved in-depth interviews with 30 participants conducted via Zoom and Microsoft Teams, and three focus group discussions with 15 participants, exploring personal experiences of language shift and maintenance strategies. All interviews and focus groups were recorded using OBS Studio for accurate transcription.

The quantitative instrument consisted of a structured questionnaire developed using Qualtrics, based on established language attitude scales and cultural integration metrics. The qualitative phase employed semi-structured interview guides created in Microsoft Word and focus group protocols, designed to elicit detailed narratives about language practices and cultural preservation efforts. All instruments were pilot tested using Google Forms and refined before implementation.

Quantitative data analysis utilised IBM SPSS Statistics 28.0 for descriptive and inferential analyses, examining patterns and correlations between variables. Microsoft Excel 2024 was employed for initial data cleaning and visualisation. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis using NVivo 15, identifying emerging themes and patterns related to language shift experiences and maintenance strategies. The transcription process was facilitated by Otter.ai, with manual verification for accuracy. The integration of both datasets in MAXQDA 2024 provided a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study.

To ensure research quality, several validation strategies were employed, including member checking, peer review, and triangulation of data sources. The quantitative instruments demonstrated high reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha > 0.85) calculated using SPSS, while qualitative trustworthiness was established through detailed audit trails in NVivo and prolonged engagement with participants. Inter-rater reliability was assessed using Cohen's Kappa coefficient through SPSS.

The research adhered to strict ethical guidelines, obtaining informed consent from all participants through secure digital forms created in Adobe Sign, and ensuring confidentiality through data anonymisation.

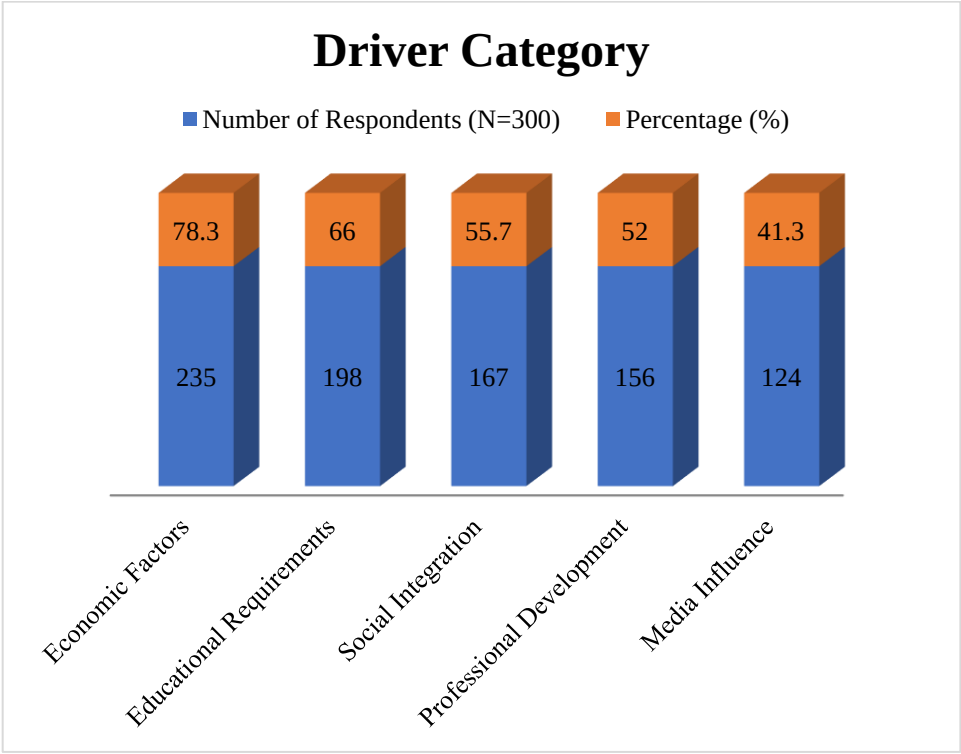
Results

The analysis of data collected from 300 participants across Southwest Nigeria revealed significant patterns in language shift and maintenance among migrant communities. The study population comprised 55% first-generation and 45% second-generation migrants, with ages ranging from 18 to 65 years (mean age = 32.4 years, SD = 8.7).

Analysis of the quantitative survey data revealed distinct patterns in the factors driving language shift across different migrant groups. Economic integration emerged as the most significant driver, with 78.3% of participants identifying it as a primary factor in their language choices.

Table 1: Primary Drivers of Language Shift Among Migrant Communities

Driver Category	Number of Respondents (N=300)	Percentage (%)
Economic Factors	235	78.3
Educational Requirements	198	66.0
Social Integration	167	55.7
Professional Development	156	52.0
Media Influence	124	41.3

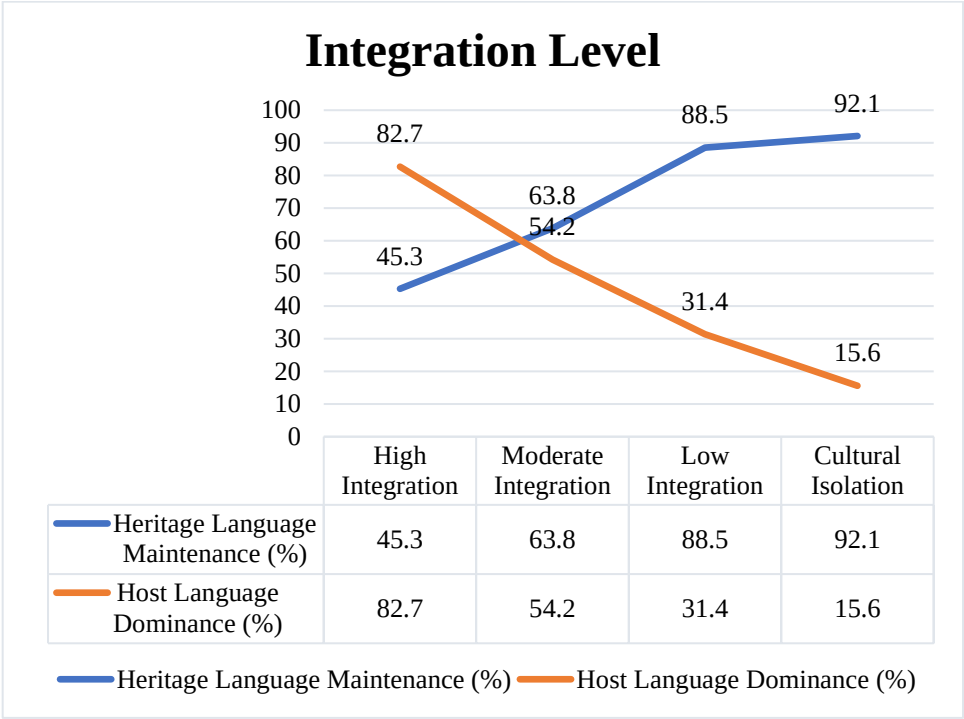


The qualitative data from interviews and focus groups corroborated these findings, with participants frequently citing workplace requirements and educational opportunities as key motivators for adopting the host language. One participant noted: "Speaking English fluently became essential for career advancement, even though we maintain our mother tongue at home."

The study revealed a complex relationship between language shift and cultural integration. Quantitative analysis showed varying degrees of cultural integration correlated with different patterns of language use.

Table 2: Cultural Integration Indicators in Relation to Language Use

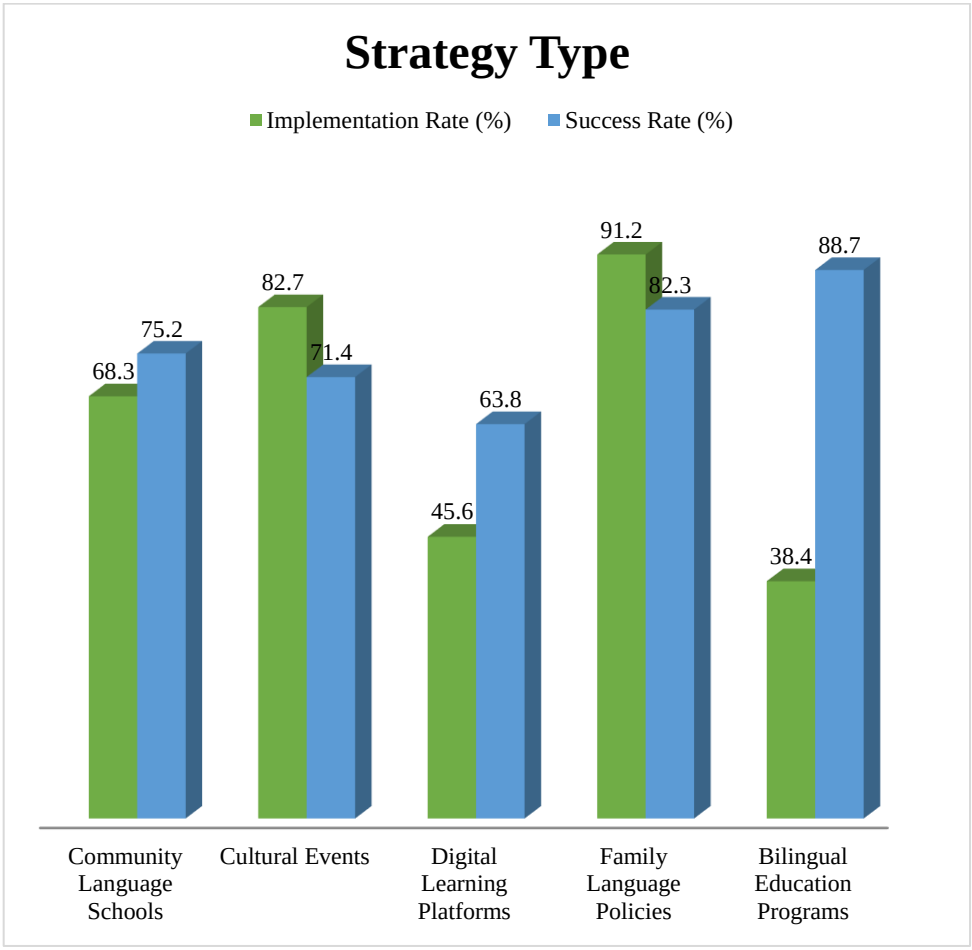
Integration Level	Heritage Language Maintenance (%)	Host Language Dominance (%)
High Integration	45.3	82.7
Moderate Integration	63.8	54.2
Low Integration	88.5	31.4
Cultural Isolation	92.1	15.6



The research identified several successful strategies for maintaining heritage languages while facilitating integration. Community-based initiatives showed particularly strong outcomes.

Table 3: Effectiveness of Language Maintenance Strategies

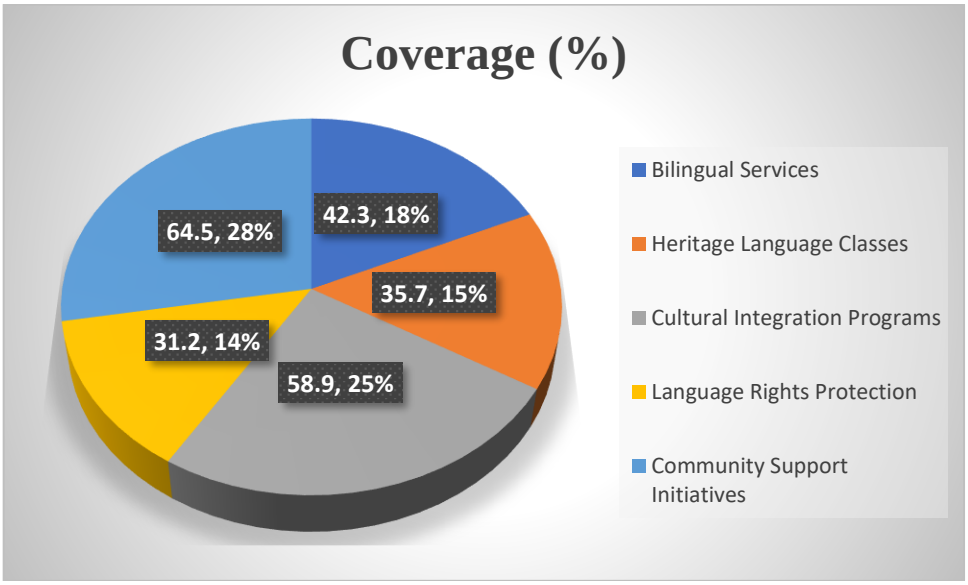
Strategy Type	Implementation Rate (%)	Success Rate (%)
Community Language Schools	68.3	75.2
Cultural Events	82.7	71.4
Digital Learning Platforms	45.6	63.8
Family Language Policies	91.2	82.3
Bilingual Education Programmes	38.4	88.7



Analysis of institutional support and policy implementation revealed varying levels of effectiveness in supporting language maintenance while promoting integration.

Table 4: Policy Implementation and Perceived Effectiveness

Policy Measure	Coverage (%)	Effectiveness Rating (1-5)
Bilingual Services	42.3	4.2
Heritage Language Classes	35.7	4.5
Cultural Integration Programmes	58.9	3.8
Language Rights Protection	31.2	3.9
Community Support Initiatives	64.5	4.3



Thematic analysis of interviews and focus group discussions uncovered several key patterns that illuminate the complex dynamics of language shift and maintenance among migrant communities in Southwest Nigeria.

One of the most prominent themes was **intergenerational dynamics**. Participants often described a tension between preserving their heritage languages and adapting to the linguistic demands of the host society. A second-generation participant captured this struggle succinctly, stating, *"While my parents insist on speaking our native language at home, I find myself naturally switching to English, especially when discussing complex topics."* This highlights the generational divide in language use, where younger individuals often gravitate toward the dominant societal language for convenience and social relevance.

Cultural identity formation also emerged as a significant concern. The data indicated a strong link between language maintenance and a sense of cultural identity. A notable 73% of participants expressed fear that shifting away from their native languages could lead to a weakening of cultural ties, particularly among the younger generation. This concern underscores the emotional and cultural stakes involved in language use decisions.

The role of **community support structures** was another key finding. Both formal and informal initiatives within these communities played essential roles in preserving heritage languages. Programmes led by community

members showed especially high levels of participation, with an engagement rate of 82.7%, and were associated with positive language retention outcomes. These grassroots efforts proved to be effective mechanisms for countering the forces of linguistic assimilation.

Significant **geographic variations** were also observed. In Lagos, for instance, the rate of language shift was highest at 72.3%, especially among young professionals. Ibadan, by contrast, demonstrated a stronger pattern of heritage language maintenance, with 68.5% of participants retaining their native language, particularly in community-oriented settings. Abeokuta presented a more balanced bilingualism pattern (58.4%), supported by robust community language programmes.

Age-related patterns further revealed generational differences in language use. First-generation migrants maintained their heritage language at a rate of 85.3%, demonstrating strong ties to their linguistic roots. However, second-generation participants showed a marked preference for the host language, with a 73.8% shift rate. The highest level of language shift was observed among youth aged 18–25, with 77.2% primarily using the dominant societal language.

The study also identified strong links between **socioeconomic factors** and language shift patterns. Higher levels of education were associated with faster language shift (correlation coefficient $r = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, individuals in professional employment displayed a dominant use of the host language ($\chi^2 = 24.3$, $p < 0.001$), and income levels showed a significant correlation with language choice ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$). These findings suggest that upward social mobility often comes at the cost of heritage language retention.

Finally, in terms of **integration outcomes**, the data revealed important trends. Individuals who maintained balanced bilingualism exhibited the highest levels of successful cultural integration (78.3%). On the other hand, rapid language shift was often linked to increased intergenerational conflict (65.4%), highlighting the emotional and relational costs of linguistic assimilation. Moreover, those who preserved their heritage language reported a stronger sense of cultural identity ($r = 0.75$, $p < 0.001$), reinforcing the role of language in personal and communal identity.

In summary, the findings provide a comprehensive view of the interplay between linguistic choices, cultural preservation, and integration outcomes among migrant communities in Southwest Nigeria. They underscore the need for balanced language policies and robust community support systems to ensure that cultural integration does not come at the expense of linguistic heritage.

Discussion

This study uncovers compelling patterns in language shift and maintenance among migrant communities in southwest Nigeria, revealing that economic integration is the primary driver of language shift, as identified by 78.3% of participants - a finding consistent with Akintayo *et al.*'s (2024) work on economic factors in linguistic adaptation. Generational differences in language retention also emerged, supporting Karnopp's (2023) theoretical framework on intergenerational language transmission. The study reinforces Wei's (2020) observations on the correlation between socioeconomic status and language shift, particularly the association between higher education and accelerated language transition ($r = 0.68$), aligning with Yakushkina's (2020) findings on education's role in language maintenance. The strong link between heritage language retention and cultural identity mirrors Sankaran's (2022) research on diasporic identity, while the high integration success of balanced bilinguals (78.3%) corroborates Karim's (2021) work on acculturation. Unexpected findings include notable geographic variations - Lagos recorded a high language shift rate (72.3%) in contrast to Ibadan's strong heritage language maintenance (68.5%) - which align with Duizenberg's (2020) suggestion of diverse urban linguistic ecologies. Additionally, digital learning platforms showed a relatively low success rate in promoting language maintenance (63.8%), contradicting Lexander and Androutsopoulos's (2023) optimistic projections and pointing to possible issues like limited tech access or cultural learning preferences.

Methodologically, the study's urban focus limits generalisability to rural contexts, and the six-month duration may not reflect long-term language trends, echoing Alyami's (2023) critique of temporal constraints in similar studies. Sampling limitations were also evident, with underrepresentation of certain migrant groups and socioeconomic segments, reflecting Atanassova's (2021) concerns about inclusivity in superdiverse research. Looking forward, future research should adopt longitudinal approaches, as Brooksbank (2022) recommends, to capture evolving language practices over time, and should

further explore the integration of digital tools, drawing on Edyangu's (2021) work on social media's role in language preservation, to identify more effective and equitable strategies for supporting language maintenance.

Implications

The findings of this study highlight the urgent need for comprehensive language policies that balance the demands of integration with the imperative of cultural preservation, echoing Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson's (2022) call for linguistic human rights. To achieve this balance, policy frameworks should promote environments that support balanced bilingualism, ensuring that individuals can acquire the host language without abandoning their heritage. In line with Becerra-Lubies *et al.*'s (2021) advocacy for bilingual education, the research supports the implementation of structured programmes that facilitate the learning of the dominant language while maintaining the use of heritage languages. The notable success rate of community-based initiatives (75.2%) further emphasises the importance of strengthening grassroots support structures, aligning with Madaki's (2024) findings on the value of translanguaging spaces in minority language communities. By offering practical insights into the factors driving language shift and the mechanisms that support maintenance, the study significantly advances our understanding of linguistic adaptation in migrant contexts, as affirmed by Solhi (2024). The effectiveness of community-led strategies and family language policies revealed in this study offers actionable guidance for policymakers and local leaders. Overall, the results underscore the critical role of integrated language policies and community support in achieving sustainable cultural integration while preserving linguistic heritage. As migration continues to shape the linguistic landscape of global societies, these findings become increasingly relevant for developing inclusive, equitable, and effective language strategies.

Conclusion

This research offers valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of language shift and maintenance among migrant communities in Southwest Nigeria, uncovering significant patterns in linguistic adaptation and cultural integration. It reveals that economic factors and educational demands are primary drivers of language shift, with 78.3% of participants citing economic integration as a major influence on their language choices. The study also identifies a strong correlation between balanced bilingualism and successful

cultural integration, with an equal percentage (78.3%) of balanced bilinguals demonstrating greater adaptability while maintaining deep connections to their cultural heritage. These findings have far-reaching implications, extending beyond the Nigerian context to inform global discourse on migration and language policy. For policymakers, educators, and community leaders, the results underscore the importance of creating comprehensive support systems that cater to both the linguistic and cultural needs of migrant populations. Particularly notable is the success of community-based initiatives, which achieved a 75.2% effectiveness rate in promoting heritage language maintenance, highlighting the power of grassroots efforts in fostering sustainable integration. Building on these findings, the study recommends a multi-dimensional approach to language maintenance and integration, including the implementation of bilingual support services, the establishment of community language centres, and the adoption of flexible educational policies. These empirically grounded strategies offer a practical framework for managing linguistic diversity in multicultural societies and ensuring that the preservation of linguistic heritage can coexist with the demands of integration. Overall, the research makes a significant contribution to our understanding of how urban communities can balance cultural preservation with social adaptation in an increasingly globalised world.

Recommendations

Based on a comprehensive analysis of language shift and maintenance patterns among migrant communities in southwest Nigeria, several key recommendations emerge for stakeholders across different sectors. Policymakers are urged to implement inclusive language policies that formally recognise both heritage and host languages, including mandatory bilingual services in public institutions and support for heritage language education in schools, thus addressing the critical need for institutional backing. Community leaders should prioritise the establishment and enhancement of community-based language centres that offer structured learning in both languages, integrating digital tools with traditional methods in response to the study's findings on the effectiveness of blended learning. Intergenerational mentorship programmes are also essential for bridging linguistic gaps between older and younger generations. Educational institutions should adopt flexible bilingual education policies tailored to varying language proficiencies and cultural backgrounds, including culturally responsive curricula and professional development for educators,

while incorporating cultural celebration events to strengthen the link between language and identity.

For families and individuals, the development of clear family language policies is recommended, supported by accessible resources and guidance from community organisations to encourage heritage language use at home alongside host language acquisition. Peer support networks can also play a vital role in addressing the emotional and social challenges associated with language shift and cultural integration. Future research should pursue longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of these strategies, particularly in diverse urban settings, while also exploring the impact of digital technologies and innovative methods for promoting balanced bilingualism within migrant communities.

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Chapter 2

Strategic Communication as a Development Pathway to Curtailing Illegal Migration: Issues in Select Nigerian Literary Texts

by

Ngozi Dora Ulogu

Abstract

Migration issues have taken centre stage in global discussion, as people of different colours, ages, sizes, and abilities move from one destination to another. Nigeria has not been left out, as here, individuals have different reasons to move to other countries. However, issues of mode and reasons for migration constitute a global challenge in what has become popularised as illegal migration, which global impact informed by its inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs, with goals 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 16, and 17 as direct and indirect correlation to migration. Governments of member countries of the United Nations are criticised for the widening gap in achieving the 2030 Agenda's objectives. Literary texts reflect the experiential impacts of illegal migration, exploring its modes, causes, and intentions of the migrants. George Ndubuisi's Woes of Ikenga and Chika Unigwe's on the Black Sister's Street highlight issues of neglect and consequences of failing to enforce the SDGS and the prevailing issues of illegal migration and debilitating futility of the efforts as represented in the texts. Using the Mass Communication concept of Strategic Communication that targets a specific audience and action, this paper makes a literary analysis of the challenges of illegal migration as exemplified by the experiences of the selected characters. It examines the level of implementation of the SDGs and government policies concerning migration. Strategic education, awareness creation, and a concerted campaign on the pros and cons of migration are advanced as a development pathway to curtail illegal migration.

Keywords: Communication, Illegal, Migration, Strategic Communication, Sustainable Development

Introduction

Strategic communication functions as a hands-on experience in managing communication and information sharing in government and organisations. It plays an important role in curtailing the illegal migration of Nigerian citizens. Communication is a powerful tool for education and awareness creation. Gelders and Ihlen (2010), quoted by Shadrack Idi (2020), define "Strategic Communication as the deliberate delivery of messages using the most appropriate media to the target audience at the proper time in a way that contributes to and achieves the anticipated long-term effect" (Okunna, 2020:594). This approach to communication is persuasive, enlightening, and informative, benefiting individuals and groups. It helps to shape public opinion. Sule (2023:91) writes that strategic communication "involves a range of activities, such as developing campaign slogans and messaging, creating advertisements and other promotional materials, and using social media and other digital platforms in telling the story, to reach and engage with the target audience."

Digital Storytelling is particularly appropriate for disseminating the required messages to the target audience. As it allows people to share their experiences, using media tools helps in education, communication, and personal expression, enabling individuals to share their experiences, perspectives, and ideas in a way that impacts the audience. "Digital storytelling breaks the fourth wall; characters may speak directly to the audience members, relating to them like old friends.… (Signes, 2008:2). Digital stories are often presented in compelling, emotionally engaging formats...." It focuses on one specific message and idea. Strategic communication works effectively in a town hall meeting where information is shared one-on-one with the people. A definition of Townhall by Grunfeld (2024) says, it provides an opportunity for employers and leadership to come as a team, engage in open conversation, and share updates, successes, and any queries that have cropped up along the way." This meeting provides the opportunity for open dialogue and feedback between the leadership and the people. The feedback from the meeting helps in the reinforcement of policy strategies.

Issues of migration continue to take centre stage in the world's affairs. In Nigeria, people, both old and young, travel abroad in their numbers for one reason or another. This movement persists although people are aware of the inherent dangers and risks involved in such an illegal adventure. The concept

and idea behind the definition of migration vary as much as the angle of approach, thus the International Organisation on Migration, IOM, sees migration as the movement of people away from their usual place of residence to a new place of residence, either across an international border or within a state. Nigerians are not left out, as here, individuals have different reasons to move to other countries, some within the country, as internal migration, while others move across the country on a transnational or transatlantic migration. Tsegay (2023) says migration is an integral part of human history because human beings have been moving from place to place for social, economic, or political reasons since their earliest days. He broadly explained migration in terms of time and space and defined migration as the movement of people that involves a change in usual residence across an administrative boundary, such as a village, town, district, or country. He further explains that Migration can be in the form of immigration, which is described as the number of people entering a receiving area, or emigration, which refers to the flow of people from a country over a given period (Tsegay, 2023:3).

The challenges of migration and its impact are globally acknowledged, informing its inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with Goals 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 16, and 17 having direct and indirect correlations to migration.

As noted by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA):

- Billions of our citizens continue to live in poverty and are denied a life of dignity.
- There are rising inequalities within and among countries.
- There are enormous disparities of opportunity, wealth and power.
- Gender inequality remains a key challenge.
- Unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, is a major concern.
- Global health threats, more frequent and intense natural disasters, spiralling conflict, violent extremism, terrorism and related humanitarian crises and forced displacement of people threaten to reverse much of the development progress made in recent decades.

The issue of extreme poverty is the first concern of the SDGs; other concerns, including extreme hunger, inequality, indecent work, economic instability, gap in global partnership, are concrete enablers to illegal migration.

However, reasons and modes or channels of migration constitute a global challenge, leading to illegal migration. In Nigeria, people migrate due to different reasons, such as conflict and economic insecurity, unemployment, crime and banditry, senseless killings by the Fulani cattle herders, and above all, the insensitivity and negligence of the ruling government in providing necessary and basic democratic and infrastructural amenities to the people. According to Tsegay (2023), migrants and refugees leave their country in pursuit of a better life. They seek a place that offers protection and economic opportunity. The push for migration enables irregular and risky movements among intending migrants.

Obi et al (2019), quoting Ambrosini (2017), argue that the number of young people engaging in irregular migration around the world is increasing due to activities of illegal migration brokers, including smugglers and human traffickers, who mostly operate in the shadows, deceiving vulnerable youths, recruiting and transporting them to other countries for profit reasons. These brokers and agents, who incidentally are more of traffickers in function, as seen in the texts: Chika Unigwe's *on Black Sisters Street,* and George Ndubuisi's *Woes of Ikenga.* succeed in swindling their victims through misinformation that creates a false hope in their victims concerning the reality of the adventure or intended journey. Misinformation is found at the root of the travails of migrants. This problem of misinformation, therefore, underscores the need for strategic communication in managing this ugly trend of illegal migration. Added to this problem is the lack of adequate preparedness to embrace the new environment.

Using the mass communication concept of Strategic Communication, which targets a specific audience and action, this paper makes a literary analysis of the challenges of illegal migration as exemplified by the experiences of the selected characters. It examines the level of implementation of the SDGs and the effectiveness of government policies on migration. Strategic education, awareness creation, and a concerted campaign using digital storytelling through a town hall meeting are advanced as a development pathway to curtailing illegal migration.

Literature Review

These issues of migration and its challenges are succinctly relayed in literary texts, especially the aforementioned George Ndubuisi's *Woes of Ikenga* (2014) and Chika Unigwe's *on Black Sisters Street* (2010), serving as the primary texts. Critical works already done on these texts indicate a robust array of thematic highlights. These include a study on the aesthetic beauty of (Igbo) African culture, as examined by Obiora and Mbakwe (2024) "Aesthetics of African Culture in Nigerian Fiction: A Study of Ndubuisi George's *Woes of Ikenga* The paper examines cultural aesthetics through the lens of cultural values, norms and beliefs, superstition, cultural practice, rituals, and ceremonies in Nigerian fiction. Using archetypal criticism domiciled in Jung's Theory of Collective Unconscious, it believes that "archetypal relationship with literature and the works of art seek to restore man, and his entire humanity, which values the primitive elements in human nature" (Obiora & Mbakwe, 2024). The study highlights the beauty and uniqueness of African culture and the proud cultural heritage of Africans, especially Nigerians. Similarly, Madu et al (2024) in "Culture Intricacies and Igbo Worldview in George Ndubuisi's *Woes of Ikenga"* explore aspects of Igbo cultural worldview using Sociological criticism. It maintains that *Woes of Ikenga* offers profound insights, revealing a rich, complex, and multifaceted culture that defies simplistic interpretation (Madu et al, 2024). Through this cultural repertoire, the relevance and resilience of Igbo heritage are protected and projected.

In addition to these researchers, Sam-Duru (2014), in a newspaper review, "The Arts: Chronicles of Ikenga", argues that *Woes of Ikenga* exposes the level at which Africans struggle for survival in foreign countries through engaging in demeaning jobs which they never bargained for. It says: "the book is a modest literary offering towards sensitising Nigerians and Africans in general on the need to avoid being lured into abandoning their home countries in search of illusive greener pastures in foreign countries". And so, a lot of other themes have emanated in the discussion of *Woes of Ikenga*.

Critical reviews on Chika Unigwe's *on Black Sisters Street*, include Akinpelu (2024) in a paper, "Gendering Sex Trafficking: A Study of Chika Unigwe's *on Black Sisters Street.*" It uses the Womanist Theory to account for the different shades of black woman's experiences The essay contends that "race, class and gender are intersections that propel the vulnerability of black women to sex trafficking. Poverty, unemployment, war, objectification of

black women's sexuality by patriarchy, 'sacrifice' of motherhood, and racial constructions are some of the catalysts identified as speeding up the rate at which women are trafficked." Issues and experiences of prostitution and sexual trafficking are factors that dehumanise women and advocate for partnership between men and women to engender a better black race. Ogbazi, and Awaraka, (2023), in "Prostitution and Human Rights Violation: A Study of Chika Unigwe's *on Black Sisters' Street* and Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked*, identified prostitution as a global phenomenon that encroaches on the human rights of women, exposing the socio-political condition of Nigerian women abroad. Using the framework of Radical Feminism, the paper reveals that women do not migrate overseas and engage in prostitution of their own volition but rather are pushed into it by the prevailing socio-economic factors. The paper observes that women are sexually exploited and states that the exploitation of women in the two novels is also expressed in the commodification of their bodies in Europe. Although prostitution is not uncommon in most societies, the dissipation of the act and the debasement of the prostitutes strip them of their dignity" (Ogbazi & Awaraka, 2023). The paper calls on the Nigerian government to alleviate poverty and fashion out a sustainable channel of sensitisation and education of the citizens, women, parents, and family members on the dangers of prostitution and sexual trafficking.

Umeh (2023) in "Migration and Identity Quest" in Chika Unigwe's *on Black Sisters Street*, using a postcolonial theory to analyse issues of alienation, nostalgia, cultural and social reality of a new environment, and compares the lives of the migrant girls both at home and in the diaspora. She observes that life in diaspora, despite the challenges, becomes preferable for the girls as they navigate through identity manipulation and change. She writes that:

Despite the challenges faced by exiled individuals, they experience a notable transformation and start planning for their future. Joyce, for instance, envisions opening a boutique called TOTT after Polycarp repays her debt. She aspires to become independent, hoping for the return of her passport and saving money…. This demonstrates that even in exile, migrants yearn for their homeland, highlighting the incomplete nature of migration without the possibility of return (Umeh, 2023).

Tsegay (2023) in "International Migration Definition, Causes, and Effects" observes that migration is an integral part of history and analyses the concept of migration with a particular focus on its definition, types, causes, and

effects. It highlights Everest Lee's (1966) push and pull migration theory, indicating that migration is caused by local and global factors. The paper argues that migration has socio-economic and psychological effects on the individual migrants and their origin and host destinations.

While several issues have been raised by researchers based on these texts under review, gaps still exist, prompting this research on finding a developmental pathway to curbing illegal migration. These literary texts represent the existential impacts of illegal migration, ventilating its modes, causes, and impacts on illegal migrants. Experiences of fictional characters, including Ikenga and Stella in *Woes of Ikenga,* and Sisi, Amah, and Efe in *On Black Sisters Street*, manifest a lack of knowledge of the challenges ahead in their new destinations. It also relays the negative roles of government and some of its agencies in perpetuating hardship on migrants.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach of literary analysis of the select fictional texts, namely: George Ndubuisi's *Woes of Ikenga* and Chika Unigwe's *on the Black Sister's Street,* which serve as the primary sources of data. A close reading of the texts reveals the experiences of the characters who are migrants in foreign lands and the challenges they encounter in navigating the dangers inherent in their relocation to a new destination country. A close study of the SDG charter reveals the extent of commitment and achievements of the goals relating to migration by African member countries, especially the Nigerian State. Secondary sources of data are published journals, books, reports, policy documents on Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs, and the International Organisation on Migration, IOM, and other reports and documents relevant to the study.

Representation of Challenges of Illegal Migration in the texts: *Woes of Ikenga* and *On Black Sisters Street*

The challenges of illegal migration and its ugly parts are relayed in the texts: *Woes of Ikenga* and *On Black Sisters Street*. Focus is on the key characters of the select texts, Ikenga and Stella, in Ndubuisi's *Woes of Ikenga*, and Sisi and Ama, in Unigwe's *on the Black Sisters Street*. These characters have different thrusts for embarking on their journey. Ikenga is pushed by the desire to belong and to escape the crippling economic situation that has kept his family in poverty. His desire to lift his family out of hardship and provide a better life for them is his major push. He desires to be like Ogbonna,

baptised as Raymond Ubanese, the headmaster's son, who travelled to Germany for study through the instrumentality of Reverend Klaus, the white missionary in Umuofor, at the time. Seeing that Raymond has improved the fortune of his father and family by procuring a television and a Mercedes-Benz car within six months of his travel, Ikenga ‘s urge to travel increases. This urge is accentuated by the erroneous belief of the villagers that cars are littered on the streets in white man’s country. Ikenga dreams of finding greener pastures in Germany. He tells the headmaster, Mr Ubanese, his intentions to seek recourse in a foreign land, saying, “I would like to travel overseas one day .... Can you help me talk to my father?” (Ndubuisi 2014:43). Mr Ubanese agreed to help him talk to his father but told him he had to finish his education first. It is important to note that Ikenga does not have any valuable information concerning the pre- and post-migration preparation and challenges. The nearest guide comes from Mr Ubanese, telling him to finish his education as the criteria for oversee travel, so that he does not end up in the white man’s kitchen as a dish washer.” Unfortunately, Reverend Klaus who should have known better only said casually that “the white men already have enough machines to wash their dishes” (Ndubuisi, 2014:45). This suggests that Ikenga lacked proper knowledge about transnational mobility and so he fell into dangerous adventure. However, Ikenga’s father, Chukwuma, heartily gives his blessings to him because of the seeming hopelessness around Umufor and his concealed wishes to drive around the village in a Mercedes-Benz car. “He had always hoped that the yoke of poverty that had tormented his family since the end of the war would one day be broken, and if it would take his only son leaving Umufor to achieve that goal, then so be it” (Ndubuisi, 2014:74). The factor of improving the family fortune is all hinged to the SDGs targets of eradicating extreme poverty, hunger, lack of decent work and poor economic growth. Ikenga eventually, after his futile sojourn, comes back empty.

Stella, among others, dared the dangers and risks on the way to advance her journey. Stella, who dropped out of school due to poverty, has the consent of her mother, a widow, to travel abroad. They envisage a better life for their family, and so her mother helps her to join her mates to explore the elusive better life outside. And so, Stella “had been overexcited when her mother told her that all necessary arrangements for her travel had been concluded as her mother had vended the only piece of land that her husband had been able to buy, after twenty- five years of working as a coal miner, to be able to raise the money” (Ndubuisi, 2014:76-7) Family hardship, lack of education and the fear of a future drive the mother and child to embark on the journey.

The journey to their destination was very risky, including travelling on dangerous paths. In one scenario, the migrants boarded a truck with a rickety headlamp, overloaded with sixteen migrants, consisting, a five-woman and eleven-man team, and rode for about seven hundred and fifty kilometres to the Libyan border. It took off in the night with the passengers, squeezed, dangling through the dusty and rough paths of the desert. It was a very rough journey, with a lot of checkpoints by agents who collected fees and defrauded travellers. The environment had ugly sights of dead people's bones that litter the ground. "It was obvious that something tragic had happened to a group of immigrants recently…. Decomposing lifeless bodies of people who had tried to walk or run to safety could be seen as far as fifteen miles away, slumped near their belongings. Also in sight were bodies of children half-buried by sand, lying face down near their parents or their empty water cans (Ndubuisi, 2014:83). Outside the risky movement across the desert, there were issues of theft, physical injuries, harassment, brutality, exploitation, and loss of money in the hands of thugs and hoodlums operating in the desert. Female migrants such as Stella were raped, and some were forced into prostitution by their travel agents. The journey was so precarious that:

> *Whatever path these migrants choose, they explore the heights of extremism. Not all who choose to be liberators in their families end up achieving their goals. Some end up despondent at the other end of the extreme divide; others die trying. After Ikenga's childhood experiences of dire lack, he makes up his mind that obstacles must be cast aside to get to the other side, where greener pastures lie. He is sure that the most challenging feat is getting there. He hopes that, once there, destiny will reward his resilience and quickly fall into place for him. Ikenga struggles to rise above his birth ranks. Whether he succeeds or not, it does not matter; what counts is that he dared even death to try, explores as many options as life thrusts his way, and did not simply resign himself to fate* (Oyewole 2025:29).

Chika Unigwe's *on Black Sisters Street* presents the experiences of four Nigerian girls and the frustration that engulfs their adventure in Belgium. The narrative indicates that the girls were cajoled into travelling, expecting to have their immediate financial problems solved. Incidents of exploitation of migrants are relayed in Unigwe's novel where the girls, Sisi, Ama, Efe, and Joyce, embarked on the journey abroad without a proper understanding of the challenges awaiting them. They fell prey to Dele, the trafficker, who sent them to another woman collaborator in Belgium. Looking at the several

situations that pushed them out, frustration with the economy, lack of decent work, and a source of livelihood, come as the common denominators, all hinging on the global challenges and gaps captured in the SDGs, 1, 2, 8, 10, and 17. Each of the girls desired an elusive better future outside Nigeria. Sisi, with a graduate certificate, could not get a decent job to assuage her father's hope of her helping to take care of the family after her university education. It is observed that two years after graduation, there was no job for Chisom as she kept on writing job application letters without any success or even an invitation to an interview. This highlights the level of youth unemployment in the country, and probably because she did not know any politician or a highly connected individual in government to help her secure a job. The level of nepotism in the Nigerian civil service comes to the fore here. "Still, Chisom scanned the newspapers, sending off arbitrary applications for jobs, finding satisfaction in the recklessness of her random choices, watching with anger as life laughed at the grandiosity of her dreams. So, when she got the offer that she did, she was determined to get her own back on life, to grab it by the ankles and scoff in its face. There was no way she was going to turn it down" (Unigwe, 2010:23). Sisi, out of desperation, accepted Dele's offer, demeaning as it was for her decent upbringing. Her dilemma is captured in this observation:

> *It is on account of this push factor that she quickly and firmly jumped at Dele's offer of being ferried abroad to become a commercial sex worker since she had the physical asset that could fetch her money, as against the intellectual asset she had banked on all through her life, following her dad's admonitions. She even had to accept this offer despite her decent family background, her relationship with her boyfriend, Peter (who tried to dissuade her from travelling in the vain hope that things would turn out better for them) and the stringent conditions of the offer, thereby perfectly demonstrating how desperate her push factors had made her become* (Igwedibia & Ezeonu, 2023:69).

The corruption and hardship in the country play a great role in thrusting young people out to the wide world with a false promise of a better future, hence, Haruna-Banker and Gogo (2022) observe that, "What the girls do there to survive is a secret though it is partially hinted for the fact that Dele only deals with beautiful girls and appreciates their physical qualities erotically which he often says will have them something reasonable to do" (p. 36). It is obvious too that the girls are not very clear about what to embrace

outside the shores of their fatherland, thereby increasing their vulnerability, and therefore, portending so much danger for them. “They leave with only one mindset– the quest to survive and make it big….” (Igwedibia & Ezeonu, 2023:65).

In the case of Ama, who suffered a traumatised childhood in the hands of her father, she long harboured the dreams of living abroad, where people walked around freely, doing nothing more strenuous. For her, travelling abroad would be an escape from her mental disorientation caused by a prolonged childhood sexual violation by her father and the neglect of her mother. However, Amah fell prey to Dele, the sexual trafficker, who, even without giving her detailsr of the travel process and the nature of work over there, exploited her sexually before sending her abroad. Amah sets out on her journey without a proper guide and orientation concerning her travel plans, nor was she properly briefed on the nature, specification, and agreement of the job and the living conditions in Belgium. Likewise, the other two girls, Efe and Joyce, did not have a full understanding of what the sojourn abroad portended. A cursory observation indicates that the four girls did not fully understand the description of their prospective job abroad and the implications of the contract with their agents. So, the kind of challenges they faced posed a great problem, leading to their exploitation, disillusionment, loss of identity, and even death, as Sisi met her untimely death in the process, leaving the remaining three girls in fear.

Strategic Communication as a Pathway to Curtailing Illegal Migration

The government and its agencies have employed different approaches, including policy implementation guidelines and regulations, and all manner of talks and reprimands as a deterrent to illegal migration; unfortunately, people do not seem willing to abide by them, hence the continuation of illegal migration. The IOM, Nigeria has previously addressed the complex factors driving irregular migration, and taken specific actions, such as implementing the “promoting Better Management of Migration in Nigeria” PBMM program, launching awareness campaigns using various platforms, including the “Blue Bus” project and television series, providing pre-consular support and document verification, and working with law enforcement agencies to enhance border security. It says, “the campaign emphasises the importance of victim support, identification, reporting and family tracing, free movement and skills and labour, and the importance of valid travel documents” (IOM, 2019). These interventions utilised various channels, including the mass media, school curriculum, community engagement, informal gatherings, and

safe migration messages to irregular or potential irregular migrants. Unfortunately, the volume of illegal migrants continues to increase. To effectively curtail irregular migration from Africa, particularly Nigeria, to Europe, there is a need to properly implement a deliberate, complete migration message through the appropriate channel of Strategic communication, using a digital storytelling tool, in a town hall scenario.

The discussion uses a multidisciplinary framework of Digital Storytelling and Strategic communication, a Mass Communication concept that ensures an effective, purposeful, and deliberate approach to communication with a target audience in a town hall meeting. This approach is best used by the government and its relevant national and international agencies to persuade the people and shape public opinion on specific issues and policies. The specialised process of strategic communication helps to communicate the best messages to the right people using feedback from the process to stay focused and build reinforcement. Information campaigns offer an opportunity to communicate not only the dangers of irregular migration but also the realities of life in host countries.

Issues in the texts under study: *Woes of Ikenga* and *On Black Sisters Street* reflect the naivety of some of the key actors who incidentally fell victim to trafficking, exploitation, and abuse on the way to their expected dream destinations due to a lack of effective communication. Ikenga erroneously started with an illusion of the greenness of his expected pasture, thinking and believing that merely stepping into Germany would solve his problem. He lived on the false hope and defied genuine advice from home. Oyewole (2022) argues that Ikenga's movement away from his homeland fulfils his desire to leave behind a life of corruption, failure, *ofeke*, and poverty for what he believes would be a life of comfort and fulfilment in Germany; but his hope crashes as he faces racial subjugation in his dreamland. This underscores the fact that some of the migrants really are intentional in following the illegal and dangerous route to reaching their new destination. Despite the risks associated with this undocumented journey, they held on to the myth that success was guaranteed once outside their home countries and, more importantly, that this success would be emulated regardless of those "who had returned with nothing or worse still had ended up being beaten, diseased, or dead" (Ndubuisi, 2014:76). The girls in *On the Black Sisters Street*, in their different ways, intentionally signed into their fate in accepting the offer from Dele to ferry them abroad. Sisi, who has convinced herself of an escape from the country, found opportunity in Dele's offer, telling her, "if

you want to comot from this our nonsense country, come see me make we talk" (Unigwe 2010:32). And for Ama, he tells her, "if you wan make easy money, if you wan go abroad, come my office on Randle make we talk. But only if you dey serious o. If you no dey serious make you no waste my time and yours" (Unigwe 2010:163). It becomes evident that victims of illegal migration are not taken unawares, thereby leaving a huge question to be answered, as to what specific action needs to be taken to curtail this trend.

Obi, Fabio, and Marijke (2019), in a randomised control experiment on the impact of information technology in curbing migration among youths in Edo State, observed that the campaign helped the students in understanding the dangers of irregular migration and reduced the level of desire to engage in irregular migration, and reduced the risk of being victims of human trafficking by 50%." This shows that the problem is only half solved, thereby leaving a significant void to fill. It, therefore, reveals that merely giving information does not have any effective measure. Finding an efficient pathway to stopping illegal migration seems to have eluded the government and the international agencies, such as the International Organisation for Migration, IOM, UN Nigeria, which, in their policy paper, noted the difficulty in the implementation of the guidelines on advocacy and sensitisation, stating that:

> *Intensive public education and sensitisation is required to appropriately educate all spectrums of the society – policymakers, politicians, parents, youths and indeed all stakeholders– on the rules and regulations governing entry, residence and work, as well as the rights and obligations of migrants abroad. In particular, sustained advocacy is required to ensure that the content of this draft policy, the opportunities and challenges facing the country in respect of irregular migration, brain drain, remittances, female migration, diaspora engagement, and so on, are well-articulated and understood by all stakeholders, especially members of the FEC and their advisers, to facilitate smooth and timely adoption of the policy* (70).

Unfortunately, these travellers often are not adequately prepared for the possible challenges they will face in their host land. Ikenga, after years of sojourn in Germany, addresses his kinsmen, including young men who were not yet born at the time he left, on his experience. In a gathering of elders and youths inside his father's *obi*, who come to welcome him back from a long sojourn. They came expecting gifts, according to the custom of the people

but were disappointed. Ikenga addresses them, saying "I have held on to life just to tell you, my story… I have not come back empty-handed… Losers are those who perish in the battle or lose the effrontery to tell their own story. I lost my target... *Ani* will not allow me to keep the informative adventure to myself" (Ndubuisi, 2014:331). And after narrating his experiences abroad, his story travelled far and wide among the people. "They realised that milk and honey flowed in their village, Umuafor, while they went into the wilderness in search of an elusive greener pasture" (332). Ikenga's firsthand story and narration of his experience made a great impact on the people, making the youth think twice before embarking on a blind adventure, hence the efficacy of strategic and purposeful communication.

Conclusion and Recommendation

George Ndubuisi's *Woes of Ikenga* and Chika Unigwe's *on the Black Sister's Street* highlight issues of neglect and the consequences of failing to enforce the SDGS, and the prevailing issues of illegal migration and the debilitating futility of the efforts of victims as represented in the texts. To curtail the scourge of dangerous migration, Strategic Communication should be deployed in migration studies to sensitise targeted citizens in communities on the proper disposition and behaviours expected of travellers. Findings indicate that irregular migration requires proper orientation in engaging Nigerian youth on the risks of embarking on a perilous journey outside Nigeria through the deserts or deep seas. In this period of Japa syndrome, the government and its agencies responsible for migration are expected to adjust their economic policies to be more citizen-centred, create job opportunities for the youth. Africans, especially the Nigerian government, should implement the SDGs charter to a reasonable percentage before the 2030 deadline to curb the growing and dangerous loss of lives of the young population in migration-related deaths. Strategic town hall meetings and orientation on the requirements and expected behaviours in the destination countries should be strategically communicated to all intending migrants by political and community leaders as a constituency project.

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest.

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PART TWO: INSECURITY

Chapter 3
Banditry and Forced Migration in Northern Nigeria: Economic Development Challenges (2010-2024)

by

Nura Muhammad Hassan

Abstract

In northern Nigeria, banditry and the activities of bandits in the rural areas have forced rural people to migrate to the urban areas for the sake of the security of their lives and property. This has, however, jeopardised the economy and economic development of the rural areas that are predominantly agrarian (agriculture-based). This has consequently led to economic challenges such as a decline in agricultural output, food insecurity, poverty, unemployment, and labour scarcity, among others. These challenges have, in multifaceted ways, affected the economic development of northern Nigeria. Therefore, this paper interrogates the trends and connectivity between banditry, forced migration and the experience of northern Nigeria with regard to the challenges of economic development. The methodology relies on secondary data - that is, extracts from National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reports, National Emergency Management (NEMA) reports, International Organisation for Migrants (IOM) reports, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports, World Bank reports, among others. A documentary analysis technique was employed. The findings of the study reveal that banditry vis-à-vis forced migration led to the decline in agricultural productivity and worsened unemployment and poverty levels in northern Nigeria, specifically in north-western Nigeria. The paper therefore recommended that the root of the problem, which is banditry, should be addressed. Doing this will also be an effort towards addressing forced migration as well as economic development, including a decline in agricultural productivity, unemployment and poverty in northern Nigeria. Conclusively, banditry drives forced migration, which consequently leads to the challenges of economic development in northern Nigeria.

Keywords: Banditry, Economic Challenges, Forced Migration, Northern Nigeria, Poverty

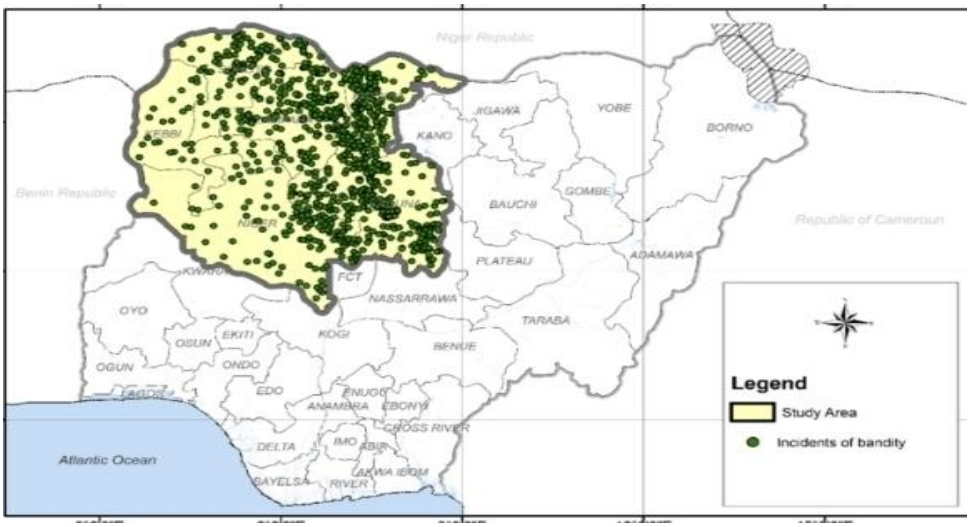
Introduction

Northern Nigeria, consisting of nine states, has for a long period of time been considered a centre of agriculture, which remains central to the economy as well as the main source of livelihood for most of the people in the region. Agriculture has heavily contributed to the northern region's economy as well as the country's economy, as it provides raw materials for industries that include food processing companies, textile companies, and leather processing companies, among others. Northern Nigeria has been known for farming and cultivating cereals such as maize, rice, sorghum, millet, etc.; cash crops such as groundnut, cotton, sesame, among others; and vegetables such as tomato, onion, pepper, etc. It has also been known for the rearing of livestock such as cattle, sheep, and goats, among others. The agricultural productivity of the northern region was relatively vibrant in the sense that the land was fertile, and the weather was good for the cultivation of all sorts of crops.

In recent years, agriculture and agricultural activities were severely disrupted by banditry vis-à-vis forced migration which led to widespread violence, kidnapping, cattle rustling, assault, which created many economic challenges such as abandoned farmlands in conflict zones, reduced livestock production due to displacement, decline in fishing activities in affected areas, soil degradation in overexploited host areas, disruption of agricultural supply chains, scarcity of farming inputs for displaced farmers, loss of traditional farming knowledge and practices, limited access to agricultural extension services, increased competition for agricultural land among others which have created serious economic challenges such as destruction of agricultural productivity, high level of unemployment and poverty, food insecurity and starvation, among others.

Banditry and the activities of bandits in the rural areas of northern Nigeria have forced rural people to migrate to the urban areas for the sake of the security of their lives and properties. This has, however, jeopardised the economy and economic development of the rural areas that are predominantly agrarian (agriculture-based). The northern states with a high challenge of banditry and forced migration include Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Niger, and Sokoto States, as the following map clearly indicates.

Map of Northern Nigeria and Bandit-Affected Areas/States



Source: Adopted from IPI Global Observatory 2024

This has consequently led to economic challenges such as a decrease in agricultural outputs, food insecurity, poverty, unemployment, and scarcity of labour, among others. These challenges have affected in multifaceted ways the economic development of northern Nigeria.

This paper is, therefore, an attempt to explore the synergy and interplay between banditry, forced migration and northern Nigeria's economic development challenges from the onset of banditry and forced migration in northern Nigeria to the present period (2010-2024). In essence, this paper therefore interrogates the trends and connectivity between banditry, forced migration and the experience of northern Nigeria concerning the challenges of economic development. Emphasis is given to the north-western states of Nigeria, specifically Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina and Sokoto States, where the incidents of banditry and forced migration have been encountered. Nevertheless, some states of the north-central, such as Niger, Benue and Nasarawa States, were also included. This was done by reviewing different reports by different concerned authorities such as the National Population Commission (NPC), National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), National Emergency Management (NEMA), Ministry of Agriculture, Nigerian Security Agencies (Police, Army, Joint Task Force, etc.), Nigerian Economic Group (NEG), International Organisation for Migrants (IOM), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Bank, Food and

Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and World Food Programme (NFP), among others, on the phenomena.

Conceptual Elucidation

Banditry

Audu (2023), Audu and Orebiyi (2024), Brigid *et al.* (2022), Dangiwa (2022), Global Initiative (2022), Saminu *et al.* (2023), Kitabu (2022), Ogar (2023) and Twin-Evils and Osasona (2023) conceptualised banditry from different perspectives but converging on a common point. Synthesising the different perspectives about the concept of banditry, it simply refers to the acts of armed robbery, theft and violence committed by individuals or groups typically for personal gain or financial motives. Bandits often target civilians, businesses and transportation routes, seeking to exploit vulnerable civilians. Therefore, banditry is characterised by financial motives, opportunistic attacks, and limited scope in the sense that it is typically localised and focused on specific target areas, with an absence of ideological goals, among others. It can also be conceptualised as the act of engaging in violent, opportunistic or organised crime, typically characterised by robbery, kidnapping, massacre, rape, cattle rustling, illegal possession of firearms, extortion, or acts of violence committed by individuals or groups, often in a lawless or ungoverned context. Historically, banditry has been associated with regions where state authority is weak, absent, or actively contested.

Forced Migration

The concept of forced migration has attracted the attention of scholars, and it has been conceptualised differently but shares similar meanings. Brigid (2022), Shittu and Adebayo (2022) and Targba (2022) were among them. Forced migration simply and summarily refers to the involuntary displacement of individuals, families or communities from their homes or usual places of residence, often because of persecution, natural disasters such as environmental degradation, socio-economic factors such as violence and other reasons. Forced migration can be categorised into refugees, internally displaced persons, asylum seekers and stateless persons, etc.

Economic Development Challenges

This refers to complex and multifaceted challenges bedevilling the economy of a country. It commonly includes disrupted and reduced agricultural activities and productivity, unemployment, underemployment, poverty, food insecurity, low living standards, limited access to education, starvation, trade

and investment decline, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) decline, closure of local industries, revenue generation decline, poor infrastructure, such as roads, electricity, and healthcare, strain on urban resources and infrastructure, loss of skilled labour and workforce, disrupted local businesses, and reduced access to markets for local goods, among others. (Adedokumand & Karzonova, 2019; Aliyu & Abubakar, 2022; Arndt *et al.*, 2016; Charles & Francis, 2023; Dauda, 2014).

Literature Review

Nigeria is fighting banditry with all its efforts and resources because it threatens the peace, politics and economy of the country. Kidnapping is all over the country; it is not peculiar to one region or particular people, but in most cases, it has been associated with Fulani herdsmen and Boko Haram. On this point, the origin of this crisis in northern Nigeria can be traced firstly to the activities of Boko Haram in the north-east, and secondly, to cattle rustling in the North-West and North-Central, which pushed the disempowered and impoverished Fulani herders into the struggle for a source of living. In search of a living, these people found themselves in the hands of the enemies of the country and consequently involved in their pursuit.

According to Global Observatory (2024), bandit and banditry activities started manifesting in Northern Nigeria around 2010 in Zamfara, Katsina and Kaduna States. The situation has continued to escalate to its current state. According to the Global Observatory (2024), there are about 30,000 bandits spread across numerous groups in north-western Nigeria, with group members ranging from 10 to over 1,000 fighters. This, however, forced the residents of the affected areas to flee or migrate to places, mostly urban areas, for the utmost security of their lives. According to Oyaniran (2020), 53% of the people of Nigeria are living in rural areas. A survey conducted in 2019 indicated a greater over-dependency on agriculture for survival in northern Nigeria than the rest of the country, with 84 per cent of households in the northeast engaging in crop production and 69 per cent rearing livestock. Nationally, 70 per cent of the households produce crops. In the same vein, UNHCR Africa (2024) argued that as of June 2022, there were 3.1 million internally displaced persons in Nigeria, forced to flee their homes in the north-east due to over a decade of insurgency. Others fled their homes due to the farmer-herder crisis as well as banditry in the north-west and north-central regions, respectively. This has consequently led to large areas of agricultural land remaining uncultivated.

Audu (2021) argued that banditry has caused a lot of challenges, ranging from cattle rustling, kidnapping, rape, assassinations, destruction of lives and properties, increased poverty, youth unemployment and under-employment, drug abuse, and limited security presence, among others. These, however, pose threats not only to national security but also to the food security in the country in the sense that the destruction of the farming activities due to the banditry affects agricultural productivity with serious implications on food security, accessibility, sustainability and utilisation. In the same vein, Ogar *et al.* (2023) argued that banditry has created forced migration, which consequently affected socio-economic activities such as farming, livestock rearing, and fisheries, among others. In the same vein, Mustapha (2019) investigated the cause and consequences of banditry in some selected local governments in Zamfara State. The findings of the study revealed that the causes of banditry in Zamfara State include changes of land ownership, encroachment and sales of grazing lands to farmers, and environmental factors such as drought, desertification, erosion and increased cross-border flow of arms because of the bunkering of arms warehouses in Libya that followed the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime, etc.

Obikaeze *et al.* (2023) argued that the main cause of banditry in Nigeria can be attributed to the ECOWAS protocol on migration and porous border, which led to the movement of arms and bandits across the African member states. Conversely, Dangiwa (2020) argued that banditry, which has led to the forced migration in Nigeria, can be attributed to so many factors, which include poverty, unemployment, injustice, among others. He further maintained that banditry has resulted in a significant decline in the socio-economic conditions, unwanted migration, loss of lives and loss of valuable properties. Furthermore, he recommended that the government and all authorities concerned address unemployment as the root cause of banditry and forced migration. Moreover, Kitabu (2022) maintained that the challenges of banditry in northern Nigeria can be associated with intense unemployment, which has consequently affected the socio-economic activities, such as farming, the mainstay of the economic activities in Niger State.

Duchy and Orebiyi (2024) argued that banditry is one of the major threats to national security, which has led to the forced migration of rural communities from their habitual place of residence. Forced migration, according to them, affects children's education by necessitating the closure of schools and consequent replacement of internally displaced person camps (IDPs). Saminu

et al. (2023) maintained that banditry has created a lot of humanitarian crises or challenges, such as killing, kidnapping, destruction of properties, poverty, and unemployment, among others, as in the case of Zamfara State.

The damage caused by this crisis to Nigeria cannot be estimated. Indeed, the crisis is still claiming innocent lives and properties worth billions of naira. The findings of research titled "Trends and Dynamics of Conflict between Farmers and Pastoralists in Nigeria's Benue Valley" revealed that between 2017 and May 2020, 645 attacks were carried out, 2,539 people were killed, and 254 kidnappings were recorded in various states in Nigeria. (*Premium Times* Nigeria, March 25, 2021). The crisis remains unsolved despite all efforts to tackle it, largely because both the perpetrators and some of those tasked with stopping them profit from the situation, making it difficult for them to disengage. On this basis, this crisis will continue to bedevil the country.

In the same vein, different studies assessed the impacts of banditry in Nigeria and indicated that banditry affected almost every sphere of human life, such as education, business, agriculture, economy, politics, social life, etc., in Nigeria, specifically northern Nigeria. (Ibrahim & Mukhtar, 2017; Okoli & Ugwu, 2019; Ojo, 2020; Ejiofor, 2022; Okoli & Okpalake, 2023; Saminu *et al.*, 2023; Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016; Tahir & Bernard, 2022; Bello & Suleiman, 2023; Ojo *et al.*, 2023; Saminu *et al.*, 2022; Ladan & Matawalle, 2020; Sanchi *et al.*, 2022; Okoli & Agada, 2014; Kuna & Ibrahim, 2016; Aina *et al.*, 2023; Inyang & Abraham, 2013).

Sanchi *et al.* (2022) investigated the implications of rural banditry on educational development in Nigeria and their findings reveal that "rural banditry has harmed Nigeria's whole educational system. As a result of insecurity in the administration of the Nigerian educational system, the paper identified loss of manpower in educational institutions, poor quality of education, destruction of infrastructural facilities, brain drain, closure of educational institutions, discouragement of educational pursuit by children, internal displacement of learners, reduction of private investment in education, and inadequate funding of education." In the same vein, Bello and Suleiman's (2023) findings of their study revealed that banditry to a large extent implicated schooling in the Funtua area of Katsina State.

On the other hand, Ladan and Matawalle's (2020) investigation of the impacts of banditry on food security in Katsina State reveals "that banditry

has negatively affected food security in Katsina State. These negative impacts include the killing and kidnapping of farmers, chasing of farmers out of their farmlands, seizing of farmlands, theft of cattle, burning and raiding of grain silos, and blocking of local trade routes." Inyang and Abraham's (2013) investigation of the implications of banditry on socio-economic activities in Nigeria shows that the prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria greatly affected the socio-economic activities, and the study attributed it to the laxity in the law implementation process to prosecute offenders.

The African Development Bank (2023) enlisted some challenges bedevilling agriculture in Nigeria, which include inadequate policy and private sector funding, policy inconsistency, domestic food production gap, infrastructural deficit, low technical know-how, climate change, gender inequality, inadequate quality data, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine conflict and other armed conflicts and crises as ongoing and emerging challenges. The African Development Bank stresses that many parts of Nigeria are under siege from conflicts, banditry, farmer-herder clashes, robbery, kidnapping, and general insecurity. This represents a major disturbance to the food security of the people, which makes farmers flee in large numbers and presents an unprecedented challenge to agriculture in Nigeria. However, forced migration in northern Nigeria, which was preconditioned by banditry, led to challenges in the economy of the northern region, which is agriculture.

On the relationship between banditry, forced migration and Nigeria's economic challenges, Adedokun and Karzonova (2019) assessed the impact of migration on the economy of Nigeria. They, however, maintained that migration has a significant impact, both positive and negative, on the economy of Nigeria. This is in the sense that it alleviates the high level of unemployment that has been bedevilling Nigeria. It also helps the economy by increasing the net flow of income in the country. In the same vein, Charles and Francis argued that migration has an impact on the economy of Nigeria, as it increases the remittance flow from Nigerians abroad. It also promoted the flow of trades, capital and technology, labour, etc. It also, according to him, negatively affected the economy of the country in the sense that it reduced the availability of the labour force.

Idris and Umar (2024) argued that forced migration has triggered poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and diseases as well as crises. It has also created psychological trauma that has prevented them from reintegrating into society.

They also recommended that the government and other relevant stakeholders should take measures that will guarantee the protection of the rights of forced migrants, as well as intensify efforts towards fighting banditry for the security of the areas. Targba (2022), in his own view, argued that many factors were behind forced migration, which include the activities of non-state actors such as the Islamic State of West Africa (ISWAP), Boko Haram, insurgency, Tuareg armed groups, bandits, separatists and other local tribal militias. According to him, social injustice, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, poverty, illiteracy, and bad governance were the factors responsible for the armed conflict in Nigeria and Mali. Furthermore, he maintained that the activities of these groups not only proliferated armed conflict but also forced migration.

Aliyu and Abubakar (2022) explore the implications of forced displacement on the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria from the lived experience of the internally displaced persons in Maiduguri, Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that the common implications include an unstable food supply to the internally displaced persons' camps and a lack of a dignity kit for women in the internally displaced persons' camps in Maiduguri. These, according to them, were some of the implications of the forced displacement towards achieving sustainable development goals in Nigeria. On this ground, Hassan and Megan (2024) investigated the challenge of food insecurity bedevilling forced migrants as well as Nigerians. According to them, the challenge of food insecurity bedevilling Nigeria can be categorised into short-term and long-term. However, the most devastating one is the short one, as it does not allow them to feed themselves.

Izuakor (2022) maintained that the challenges of internal displacement remain one of the challenges bedevilling Nigeria. He, therefore, maintained that forecasting the figures of internal displacement in the coming decade is of paramount importance, as it allows for better preparation and response to the crisis. His assertion highlighted that in the coming decade, precisely from 2024 to 2031, there will be neither a decrease nor an increase in the number of internally displaced people in Nigeria.

The common economic development challenges, which were repercussions of the banditry as well as forced migration, include poverty and unemployment. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2017) report, Kano has the highest unemployment rate in Q4 at 28.1%, surpassing Kaduna from previous quarters. Kaduna follows with 23.8%, slightly down from

28.0% in Q3. Borno has a significant 27.1% unemployment rate, which is an increase from 24.6% in Q3. Plateau reports 26.6%, up from 24.1% in Q3. Yobe also has a relatively high unemployment rate at 25.6%. On the other hand, states with the lowest unemployment rate, including Katsina State, show a significantly lower unemployment rate of 12.4% compared to other states (though this is still a high rate by broader standards); Zamfara follows with 15.1%, which is an increase from 7.5% in Q3. Taraba has an unemployment rate of 16.3%, slightly down from 7.3% in Q3, indicating a rise in unemployment. Comparing the trends from Q1 to Q4 shows a rise in the unemployment rates across most states, like Kaduna, Borno and Kano States, which have seen significant increases. States like Katsina and Zamfara continue to have the lowest unemployment rates, although Zamfara has experienced a sharp increase in Q4. Overall, northern Nigeria faces increasing unemployment levels, especially in the second half of 2017. (NBS 2017).

Moreover, the trend continues escalating as the NBS (2020) report indicated a significant increase in unemployment from 2017 to 2020. Notably, Kaduna, Taraba, Gombe, Plateau and Kogi have seen sharp rises in unemployment rates. States with Consistent Low Unemployment: Sokoto and Zamfara still have the lowest rates in 2020, though there has been an increase compared to 2017. Kaduna continues to lead with the highest unemployment rate of 39.8% (a sharp increase from 28.0% in Q3 2017). Taraba follows closely with 39.4%, also a significant rise from 7.3% in Q3 2017. Gombe reports a rate of 33.3%, up from 9.3% in Q2 2017. Niger also shows a relatively high rate of 33.8%, up from 10.8% in Q3 2017. Plateau has an unemployment rate of 35.2%, up from 24.1% in Q3 2017. Kogi reports 36%, up from 17.6% in Q4 2017. States with the lowest unemployment rate include Zamfara State, which maintains the lowest unemployment rate at 14%, though it has increased from 7.5% in Q3 2017. Sokoto follows with 13.9%, slightly up from 15.8% in Q2 2017. Kwara shows a 13.8% unemployment rate, up from 11.4% in Q2 2017.

Theoretical Framework

Lee's (1966:49) Pull-Push theory of migration is used in this article as a guiding framework. Lee broadly sees migration as "a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence. No restriction is placed upon the distance of the move or upon the voluntary or involuntary nature of the act, and no distinction is made between external and internal migration." Lee's theory

emphasises that migration is always determined by push and pull factors – push factors being the challenges that compel individuals or communities to relocate, and pull factors being the attractions that draw them to a new location. Push factors include insecurity, such as banditry and insurgency, and environmental challenges like drought, erosion, and desertification, among others. The pull factors, on the other hand, include security of lives and properties, peace and stability, favourable climatic conditions such as consistent rainfall, and availability of resources.

This theory is particularly relevant to this study, as banditry is considered a key push factor that triggers migration, while the desire for safety, food, and security represents the pull factors in northern Nigeria.

The theory has been criticised because its assumptions make it difficult for demographers to identify the exact factors influencing specific migrations. Secondly, the theory offers little guidance to policymakers, especially in developing countries.

Methodology

This study relies on secondary data, including extracts from publications by the National Population Commission (NPC), National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Ministry of Agriculture, Nigerian Security Agencies (Police, Army, Joint Task Force), Nigerian Economic Group (NEG), International Organisation for Migration (IOM), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and the World Food Programme (WFP), among others. A documentary analysis technique was employed.

Findings

The findings revealed the interplay between banditry, forced migration and the economic development challenges, specifically the decline in agricultural productivity as well as rising unemployment and poverty rates.

Decline in Agricultural Output

Agriculture has traditionally served as the backbone of Nigeria's economy, employing a substantial proportion of the labour force and contributing significantly to GDP (Adeniran, 2020). The northern region plays a central

role in Nigeria's agricultural productivity. However, the rise of armed banditry and the consequent displacement of rural populations between 2010 and 2024 have critically undermined agricultural activities in the region.

The escalation of insecurity has led to widespread disruptions in both subsistence and commercial farming. In high-risk zones, farmers have been unable to access their farmlands due to the threat of violence, kidnappings, and ransom-driven abductions. These security challenges have not only curtailed crop production but also severely impacted livestock herding. Pastoralists have frequently lost animals to theft or have been restricted in their mobility due to fear of attacks or military operations, further diminishing output in the livestock sector. This dual disruption of crop and animal farming has exacerbated food insecurity and rural poverty.

The extent of this decline is evident in the widening disparity between national food production and demand. As shown in Table 1, Nigeria faces significant shortfalls in the supply of staple food items. For example, while national rice production stands at approximately 7.9 million metric tons, demand is estimated at 10.7 million metric tons, leaving a deficit of 2.8 million metric tons. Similar production-demand gaps exist for maize, wheat, and fish. The total shortfall across the selected crops amounts to 15.7 million metric tons.

Table 1: Nigeria's Agricultural Productivity of Selected Major Crops (Estimated, 2023)

SN	Crop	Estimated National Production	Estimated National Demand	Estimated Gap
1	Rice	~7.9 million metric tons	~10.7 million metric tons	~2.8 million metric tons
2	Maize	~12.5 million metric tons	~18.0 million metric tons	~5.5 million metric tons
3	Wheat	~0.78 million metric tons	~5.78 million metric tons	~5.0 million metric tons
4	Fish	~1.1 million tons	~3.5 million tons	~2.4 million tons

Total Estimated Production: ~22.28 million metric tons
Total Estimated Demand: ~38.0 million metric tons
Total Estimated Gap: ~15.7 million metric tons

Source: Compiled by the author using data from the African Development Bank (2023), FAO, and USDA Foreign Agricultural Service.

The decline in agricultural output in Northern Nigeria cannot be understood in isolation from the broader socio-political context. Persistent insecurity underpinned by systemic governance failures and inadequate security responses has rendered many agrarian communities unproductive or led to their complete abandonment by farming populations. The displacement of farming populations has not only disrupted food systems but has also placed additional burdens on urban centres and host communities, compounding socio-economic pressures across the region. Overall, the agricultural downturn driven by banditry and forced migration represents a critical barrier to Nigeria's food security and long-term economic development.

Increasing Unemployment and Poverty Levels

The growing unemployment and poverty rates have been attributed to the combined effects of banditry and forced migration that prevented the agricultural activities, which remain the main aspect economy in the areas. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2020) reports indicated the rise in unemployment from 2017 to 2020 in almost all northern states, particularly Kaduna, Taraba, Gombe, Plateau, and Kogi. These states were among the affected states of banditry, which has consequently led to forced migration that created the present economic challenges of a decline in agriculture and an escalation of unemployment and poverty in northern Nigeria.

Wherever there is the presence of unemployment, poverty will also be present. In essence, the level of unemployment always correlates with the level of poverty. Indeed, the duo is conjugated twins (Ferguson, 1975). Indeed, unemployment and poverty are always interconnected and inseparable because unemployment leads to poverty. In 2019, the National Bureau of Statistics reported that 40 per cent of the total population or almost 83 million people in Nigeria, live below the country's poverty line of 137,430 Naira ($381.75) per year. (National Bureau of Statistics 2019). Moreover, the Nigerian Multidimensional Poverty Index (2022) which was released in November 2022, shows that out of Nigeria's 200 million population, 38.6%, or 77.2 million citizens, face food insecurity, while 28.7%, which is 57.4 million people, face nutrition insecurity and 50.6%, or 101.2 million citizens, lack access to cooking fuel which contributes to climate change and health issues. In 2020, 6.5 percent of children under five living in Nigeria were underweight; this was due to food shortages, often accompanied by diseases. Furthermore, the prevalence of stunting among Nigerian children reached 35.3 per cent in the same year (African Development Bank 2023).

Discussion

The contribution of agriculture to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has historically been substantial, positioning the sector as a critical driver of national economic development. Before the escalation of banditry and the subsequent wave of forced migration in northern Nigeria, agriculture played a central role in the country's economic architecture, particularly in terms of employment generation, food security, and raw material supply for local industries.

Evidence from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the African Development Bank affirms agriculture's foundational role. According to the NBS (2022), agriculture contributed 23.3 per cent to the nation's GDP in the first half of 2022, while the African Development Bank (2023) reported that the sector generated approximately 24 percent of Nigeria's GDP in 2021. In a similar vein, former Minister of Agriculture Dr. Mohammed Abubakar (2021–2023) emphasised that agriculture outperformed six of the seven major sectors of the Nigerian economy, trailing only behind the oil and gas sector in GDP contribution. Otiti (1978) historically reinforced this view, noting that agriculture, comprising crop farming, livestock, forestry, and fishing, had once constituted the most important sector of Nigeria's economy before the rise of the petroleum industry.

Furthermore, agriculture remains vital in terms of employment. The sector is estimated to employ nearly 70 per cent of Nigeria's labour force, with 90 per cent of the rural population relying on it for livelihood (Otiti, 1978). This reflects the sector's integral connection to the broader economic and social stability of the country. Nigeria possesses an estimated 70.8 million hectares of arable land, with major staples including maize, beans, cassava, yams, millet, and rice. In 2017 and 2018, rice production was reported at 3.7 and 4.0 million metric tons, respectively. Of the 67 million metric tons of rice consumed in the country annually, approximately 57 million metric tons were locally produced, leaving a deficit of about 3 million metric tons, which was met through importation or smuggling (Food and Agriculture Organisation & Adeniran, 2020).

Despite this potential, banditry and forced migration have severely undermined agricultural productivity in Northern Nigeria. Smallholder farmers, who make up over 80 percent of the country's farming population, have been disproportionately affected. Increasing levels of insecurity have

forced many to abandon their farmlands or relocate to internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. The result is a substantial reduction in the cultivation of farmland. As the then Minister of Agriculture, Mohammed Abubakar, revealed, Nigeria has 79 million hectares of agricultural land, yet only 44 per cent is currently under cultivation. The remaining 56 percent remain unused - an alarming statistic that cannot be dissociated from the prevailing insecurity and displacement, particularly in Northern Nigeria, where the intensity of conflict is highest.

Otiti (1978) asserted that Nigeria has the capacity not only to meet its food demand but to produce more than its needs. However, current realities challenge this assertion. The systemic decline in farming activity due to conflict-driven displacement has weakened national food production, elevated food inflation, and increased reliance on imports. Additionally, the sector's role as a labour-absorbing sector is increasingly threatened. The displacement of rural dwellers and the destruction of productive assets have disrupted the agrarian economy, contributing to rising unemployment and poverty levels in conflict-affected regions.

The socio-economic implications are evident. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics (2020) indicate that states such as Kaduna, Taraba, Gombe, Plateau, and Kogi - many of which are directly affected by banditry and displacement have experienced sharp increases in unemployment between 2017 and 2020. Even in relatively stable northern states like Zamfara and Sokoto, unemployment rates have shown upward trends. The decline in agricultural productivity due to insecurity has not only deepened food insecurity but also undermined job creation and income generation opportunities, thereby compounding the economic fragility of the region.

In summary, the intersection of banditry and forced migration has disrupted the agricultural sector-once a pillar of Northern Nigeria's economic strength. This disruption has led to declining GDP contributions, underutilisation of arable land, a spike in food imports, and worsening employment outcomes. Any comprehensive strategy for economic development in northern Nigeria must therefore place agricultural revitalisation, peace building, and resettlement of displaced populations at the core of recovery and policy interventions.

Recommendations

The paper offers the following recommendations:
Firstly, the paper recommends that the root cause, which is banditry, should be addressed through engaging local communities in security matters and processes that will involve community policing, vigilante groups, etc. Intelligence gathering should be enhanced among security agencies which will help in identifying as well as tracking the hideouts of the bandits. The security of the borders of the country should be strengthened to tackle the influx of weapons and bandits. The security of areas valuable to the bandits should be intensified through establishing outposts to provide rapid response to bandit attacks; increasing the number of security personnel to the level that can satisfy the security needs of the country, among others.

Secondly, after considering the above recommendations, which will greatly assist towards addressing banditry, the farmers should be provided with support by providing quality seeds and fertiliser, agricultural extension services, mechanised farming equipment, irrigation systems, effective access to markets, and agricultural insurance, among others. These will greatly revive the declining agricultural activities in the affected areas in north-western Nigeria.

Lastly, the economic challenges bedevilling northern Nigeria, such as the destruction of agriculture, unemployment, poverty, food insecurity and insufficiency, etc. which have been the consequences of banditry and forced migration, the government and other concerned authorities should focus on policies such as empowerment, skill acquisition, job creation, vocational training, diversification, etc.

Conclusion

Banditry and forced migration have significantly undermined economic development in Northern Nigeria, manifesting in rising unemployment, deepening poverty, widespread food insecurity, and the systemic collapse of agricultural activities. The displacement of farming populations and the disruption of agrarian livelihoods have not only led to food insufficiency but also weakened rural economies and heightened socioeconomic vulnerability across the region. These dynamics have collectively contributed to a deteriorating human development outlook in northern Nigeria. In essence, the decline in agricultural productivity serves as both a direct consequence

and a catalyst for broader economic stagnation. Collectively, the interlinked challenges of poverty, unemployment, and food insecurity reflect the far-reaching implications of prolonged insecurity and forced displacement.

Future research should expand the analytical scope by exploring the impacts of banditry and forced migration on other critical sectors, including trade, investment flows, infrastructure development, education, and the erosion of cultural and social institutions. Such multidimensional analyses are essential to inform comprehensive policy responses aimed at restoring stability and promoting sustainable development in the region.

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Chapter 4
Migration Trends and Border Security in North-East Nigeria (2010-2023)

by

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Abstract

Border security constitutes a fundamental component of national development and public safety in advanced societies, serving primarily to safeguard lives and property. In Nigeria, however, border security has been severely compromised by a combination of insecurity, illicit cross-border activities, human trafficking, and systemic corruption. These challenges have significantly hindered smooth cross-border mobility and the socio-economic stability of communities situated along border regions. Building on routine activity theory which explains issues related to border security and migration trends and adopting the qualitative method of data collection relying basically on secondary data such as academic literature, government reports, and policy documents this study identifies key factors contributing to border insecurity in Nigeria (2010-2023), including ineffective border management, entrenched corruption, and a lack of political will. The consequences of these vulnerabilities are far-reaching, manifesting in persistent transnational crimes, border disputes, loss of lives and economic prospects, displacement of populations, and diminished foreign direct investment and international cooperation. The findings highlight that effective border security is indispensable to national development; however, this remains undermined by institutional weaknesses and governance failures. The study recommends enhanced collaboration between security agencies and local border communities, the establishment of a specialised border guard force to coordinate and monitor existing agencies, and strengthened partnerships between the government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and civil society. These partnerships should focus on community rebuilding, public sensitisation, and intelligence sharing. Addressing these challenges requires immediate and sustained attention.

Keywords: Border, Border Security, Insecurity, Migration, Security

Introduction

Since time immemorial, migration has been an essential part of human history, as people have been moving from one location to another for various reasons, varying from sociopolitical, economic, religious and cultural affinity (Koser, 2016). Historically speaking, the word, ‘migration’ has its origin in the noun Latin word, “migration", derived from the verb "migrare" meaning “to move from one place to another, to change abode or residence (Vesna, 2024). From a spatial and temporal perspective, migration is frequently conceptualised as the movement of individuals involving a change in their habitual place of residence across administrative boundaries such as villages, towns, districts, or countries (Kok, 1999). Migration manifests in two principal forms: immigration, which refers to the inflow of individuals into a specific or receiving territory; and emigration, which denotes the outflow of individuals from a country within a specified timeframe. Furthermore, migration is generally categorised into two types: internal migration, which occurs within the borders of a given country; and international migration, which involves individuals residing outside their country of birth for a minimum duration of one year (Poulain & Perrin, 2001). As individuals migrate, they often cross international borders, thereby underscoring the imperative for regulated and secure migration pathways, which can only be effectively maintained through robust border management mechanisms.

Border security is a critical element in the protection of lives and property within any sovereign territory. Ademola (2019) opines that a nation’s border represents the first line of defence against external threats to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. In Nigeria, however, the borders have increasingly become unregulated points of entry and exit for various forms of contraband and illicit activities. This is so because Nigeria’s economic dominance in West Africa, coupled with its relative political stability compared to several neighbouring states, has positioned it as a major destination for forced migrants within the region. The recurring socio-political crises in countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger have triggered mass displacement, pushing populations across porous borders into Nigeria, becoming obvious from 2010-2023 (Afolayan, 2021; Adepoju, 2020). This influx, while reinforcing Nigeria’s role as a regional hub, has simultaneously intensified domestic pressures on governance, border management, and security infrastructures. Consequently, Nigeria’s internal migration policies increasingly reflect a securitised approach to managing these transnational movements (Alumona, Oshita & Onuoha, 2019).

Nigeria serves as a source, transit, and destination country for migrants. As such, many Nigerians emigrate in search of better economic opportunities, education, and safety. As a transit country, it facilitates the movement of migrants from other parts of West and Central Africa en route to North Africa or Europe. As a destination, Nigeria receives migrants from neighbouring countries due to its relative economic affluence and regional significance within West Africa (Afolayan, 2021; IOM, 2022; UNHCR, 2023). This threefold migratory identity highlights the complex and dynamic role Nigeria plays in the West African migration system, making it a crucial node for understanding border security from 2010-2023 and even to date.

Porosity is a defining feature of Nigerian borders, regardless of geographical location, and this issue has persisted since the colonial era (Abayomi, 2024). In recent years, administrative and managerial shortcomings have increasingly undermined the effectiveness of Nigeria's border governance, with far-reaching implications for both migration management and national security. A defining characteristic of the current border regime is the limited presence of well-coordinated and adequately resourced security and law enforcement agencies. Where such institutions are operational, they frequently suffer from chronic underfunding, inadequate training, and dependence on obsolete surveillance and communication equipment. Furthermore, personnel often operate under precarious working conditions, including irregular remuneration and insufficient institutional support. These systemic weaknesses not only compromise state capacity to monitor and regulate cross-border mobility but also create opportunities for irregular migration, transnational crime, and insecurity in borderland regions (Liman, Odeyemi, & Clement, 2024).

The gravity of the situation was underscored by former Minister of Interior, Senator Abba Moro, who disclosed that as of 2013, Nigeria had over 1,499 irregular and 84 officially recognised entry points (Ojeme & Odiniya 2013). In the north-east part of Nigeria, there were 261 entry points out of which only 124 were manned, leaving the remaining 137 unmanned by security agencies (Irabor, 2022). This overwhelming number of poorly regulated access routes illustrates the extensive vulnerability of Nigeria's borders, facilitating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and contributing significantly to border insecurity and patterns of irregular migration. Hence, this paper investigates migration trends and border security in north-east Nigeria (2010-2023), with emphasis on the repercussions of inadequate

border management on national security in Nigeria due to irregular migration.

Materials and Methods

This study adopts the content analysis method of research. The data for this study are qualitative, and information was retrieved from secondary sources, newspapers, journals, books and other print materials. This study relied on the review of the works by other scholars; as such, the approach used is a qualitative technique. The data for this study will focus keenly on various border security challenges from 2010-2023; these periods project the electoral and political transitional periods, which came with their own security challenges and political tension, especially within the Northern States of Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework: Routine Activity Theory

The Routine Activity Theory (RAT) was propounded by Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson (1979). It was later advanced by Felson. The main assumption of this theory, centred on the study is on crime as an act, relates it to space and time and emphasises the ecological nature and the implications of such acts. RAT, as proposed by Felson and Clarke (1998), asserts that crime occurs when a suitable target, a motivated offender, and the absence of a capable guardian converge in time and space. A target, whether a person, property, or place, becomes vulnerable based on its attractiveness and lack of protection (Cullen & Wilcox, 2010). The absence of capable guardianship, such as police, neighbours, friends, or security measures like lighting and alarms, increases the likelihood of crime (Hollis-Peels *et al.*, 2011). The theory emphasises that criminal opportunities are shaped by daily routines and situational conditions, not just offender motivations.

RAT situates crime within the convergence of three elements, not merely the offender, but also suitable targets and their guardians. It posits that criminal events emerge as routine aspects of daily life whenever a motivated offender encounters an attractive target unprotected by a capable guardian (Cohen & Felson, 1979). For us to understand border security and the spate of migration, using this theory can be seen from the three points: our borders are porous with small communities that cannot be well managed, and this makes us vulnerable; also, because there is poor border security it has become

so easy for the potential criminals to carry out their acts without traces and threats.

Migration Trends in West Africa (2010-2023)

Over the years, Africa has been known as a continent that is rooted in mobility. However, the trends and patterns of such reveal that most majority of Africans only migrate within the African continent (Scalabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa, 2025). Also, the Centre for Strategic Studies (2023; 2024) revealed that the intra-African migration has witnessed an increase of about 44% since 2010, having 80% of African migrants showing no intentions of emigrating outside of the African continent. Despite such trends, migration within the African continent has faced several securitisation issues, based on the principles of nation-state security enhancement and protection that limit the actual free movement of people, goods and services. However, the 1963 Charter of the Organisation of African Unity was born out of other things, due to the aspiration to see that Africa is united (Scalabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa, 2025). Emanating from the Lagos Plan Action, the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community, the African Continental Free Trade Area, and the constructive Act of the African Union, such desired unity can only be achieved through the establishment of the Protocol of Free Movement, within the shores of African continent which will help integrate people and give them room to move freely across various member states.

The Protocol on Free Movement is anchored on three fundamental principles. The first is the right of entry**,** which guarantees nationals of member states the liberty to enter other member states in accordance with the legal provisions of the host country. The second is the right of establishment**,** allowing citizens of member states to engage in economic activities within the legal and policy frameworks of the host nation. The third is the right of residence**,** which permits individuals from member states to live and seek employment in another member state, subject to the regulatory conditions of the host jurisdiction (Chime, Nwosu, Onyeabor, Ajibo, Richards & Nwodo, 2023). To operationalise these provisions, the African Union has sought to actualise its goals through the existing Regional Economic Communities (RECs)**,** which already possess regional-level frameworks governing the mobility of persons, goods, and services. While some RECs have made considerable progress in implementing the free movement protocols, others are still in preliminary phases. Notably, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has made significant strides by facilitating visa-

free entry for citizens bearing an ECOWAS passport, thereby advancing the objectives of the protocol (Chime *et al.*, 2023). Similarly, the East African Community (EAC) enables the unhindered movement of people, goods, and services among its member states.

Conversely, regions such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have made efforts to eliminate barriers to mobility but have yet to fully implement the necessary frameworks for seamless intra-regional movement. The Arab Maghreb Union has also adopted the protocol, though only three member states have ratified it, and full implementation remains pending. A comparable situation exists within the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa**,** where the protocol has not yet been fully enforced (Chime *et al.*, 2023). Despite the varying levels of implementation across regional blocs, RECs continue to offer the most viable platform for realising the objectives of continental integration, serving as critical building blocks toward achieving the African Union's broader vision for intra-continental mobility and cooperation.

The aspiration to advance the Protocol on the Free Movement of People is regarded as a matter of strategic importance, with significant implications for shaping the developmental trajectory of many African states. It constitutes one of the eleven flagship projects outlined in the African Union's Agenda 2063 (Hirsch, 2021). Among the numerous benefits associated with the protocol are the promotion of scientific, technological, commercial, educational, and research advancements; the stimulation of tourism; and the facilitation of intra-African trade and investment. Furthermore, it aims to enhance revenue generation across the continent, promote the free movement of labour, create employment opportunities, improve living standards, and support the effective harnessing, mobilisation, and utilisation of Africa's human, material, and financial resources in pursuit of an economically self-reliant and integrated continent (Chime, Nwosu, Onyeabor, Ajibo, Richards & Nwodo, 2023). This means that proper and effective border control and management can increase the possibilities of more employment opportunities for both Nigerians and other nationals resident in Nigeria.

However, despite the several advantages listed above that will be possible due to the implementations of the protocol, Adeola, (2019) and Chime, Nwosu, Onyeabor, Ajibo, Richards & Nwodo (2023), outline some critical challenges that still stand in the gap between the achievement and implementation which include, sovereignty, ideological differences, and lack

of political passion for success by African leaders; the lack of harmonised social policy direction and legal framework that will outline the rights and benefits of migrants (such as bad governance, terrorism, internal conflicts and political instability that is an integral part of most African states); weak economic policies that are likely to create economic imbalance in the direction of migration flow with developed economies receiving the highest flow of migrants; porous and poor border control mechanism; lack of civil society involvement and poor public awareness on the contribution and economic importance of migrants.

Migration trends have contributed to insecurity in northeast Nigeria due to strain on resources because there is high competition for basic amenities like food, shelter and water due to high influx of displaced persons into the border communities, hence the proliferation of internally displaced persons camps. This migration shifts demographics, sometimes leading to clashes between host communities and newcomers. Also, the displaced people, especially the youth who are facing economic hardship, are more vulnerable to being recruited by insurgent groups like Boko Haram. On the other hand, migrants, especially women and children, face increased risks of trafficking and forced labour. Hence, addressing insecurity requires tackling poverty, inequality, and resource scarcity, alongside strengthening security measures and social integration programmes (Ezeabasili, 2024).

Similarly, UN DESA (2020), as referenced in Migration Data Portal, (2025) reported that migration in Western Africa is still high today. The number of emigrants has more than doubled in the previous five years, although the population has remained relatively steady at roughly 2.6% between the mid-1990s and 2.6% in the mid-year of 2020. However, these percentages vary by country, ranging from 0.8% in Nigeria and 1.7% in Niger to 7.758% in Burkina Faso and 33.7% in Cape Verde (UN DESA, 2020). According to UN DESA (2020), the majority of Western African emigrants travel to nearby countries; however, the proportion of extra-regional migration has grown. As of mid-year 2020, 64% of Western African migrants live in other countries within the area, a decrease from 80% in mid-1990. Lower-income or landlocked nations have the greatest intra-regional migration rates. Over 97% of Burkina Faso migrants live in other Western African nations, as do over 90% of Niger migrants and 75% of migrants from Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Togo (UN DESA, 2020). Migrants from more prosperous coastal areas increasingly emigrate outside the region, including Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal. The percentage of Western African migrants in Europe grew from

12 percent at mid-1990 to 19 percent at mid-2020, and the share in North America increased from 3 percent to 10 percent over the same period (UN DESA, 2020).

Although most migration occurs inside nations and regions, academic research focuses on transcontinental migrant flows, resulting in a misleading picture of West African migration reality (Ungruhe, Steinbrink, & Teye, 2023, cited in Klopf, Scheven, Vorhold, & Ungruhe, 2025). There is currently relatively minimal data available on internal and intra-regional West African migration. However, studies in northern Ghana show that 65-76% of rural families have at least one member who has moved, typically to urban areas and sending remittances to sustain the rural home (Awumbila, 2017; Wehner, Steinbrink, Narh, & Ungruhe, 2025). According to UN data, two out of every three West African migrants travel within the area, and almost 90% of the 7.4 million international migrants in West Africa are from West African nations (UN DESA 2020). Migration lanes that lead to translocal and intra-regional economic, social, and cultural ties are still little understood, making them an ideal research environment. The importance of migration research is evident in both the volume of movement and the findings of our study.

According to UN estimates, West and North African nations welcomed 10.4 million immigrants in mid-2019, accounting for barely 1.6% of the total population in these regions. This is far below the global average of 3.5%. On average, outbound emigrants account for 3.4% of these nations' total population (IOM, 2020). A prevalent misperception about the direction of outward migration is that it mostly transports people outside of the region. "Intraregional migration is by far the predominant migration pattern in West Africa," said Frank Laczko, Director of the IOM's GMDAC. "Most migrants from countries in West Africa migrate to other countries in the region, and these are often short-term movements."

Most West African nations reported remittance inflows of more than 5% of their total GDP in 2019, with Nigeria being the region's largest receiver. Remittances to that nation climbed by over 47%, from 19.7 billion USD in 2010 to 23.8 billion USD in 2019 (IOM, 2020). Similarly, Senegal's remittances received increased by 67%, from 1.5 billion USD in 2010 to 2.5 billion USD in 2019, according to World Bank data. Total regional remittances climbed by 43% between 2010 and 2019, from 23.6 billion USD to 33.7 billion. Migrants questioned in West and North African nations claim

that they are relocating mostly to seek better employment possibilities, join family members, or further their education. This contrasts strongly with the reasons cited by migrants questioned in Italy after crossing the Mediterranean, which frequently include fleeing violence and political insecurity and seeking international protection (IOM, 2020). Mobility limitations have left many migrants stranded at international borders, as well as in quarantine and transit centres across these regions, with an anticipated 50,000 stuck by the end of June 2020, according to statistics from the IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). Despite COVID-19, migration via the Central Mediterranean Route has more than quadrupled in 2020. Arrivals to Italy climbed by 150 percent in the first half of 2020 compared to the same time in 2019, from 2,779 to 6,950; however, total numbers remain relatively low compared to prior years. Arrivals to Malta grew by 33%, from 1,276 in the first half of 2019 to 1,699 in the same period of 2020.

Border Insecurity in Nigeria

The insecurity plaguing Nigeria's borders was brought to the fore during the 2019 land border closure directive issued by then-President Muhammadu Buhari. This policy was ostensibly motivated by the need to curtail the increasing inflow of illicit arms, foreign combatants, narcotics, and other transnational criminal activities facilitated by Nigeria's porous border infrastructure, which remains beset by insecurity and human rights violations (Ogbonna, Lenshie, & Nwangwu, 2023). While the administration justified the closure on economic and security grounds, it is evident that a broader objective was to regulate and securitise migration through the profiling and documentation of immigrants. This was aimed at reinforcing border governance and mitigating insecurity along Nigeria's frontiers.

Rather than representing a comprehensive security strategy, the border closure reflected the Nigerian state's fragility and its inability to safeguard its internal territorial integrity effectively, as well as the lives and property of its citizens. In the absence of robust internal security governance, state actors have resorted to securitising border management and migration as a coping mechanism (Alumona, Oshita, & Onuoha, 2019). Former President Buhari attributed many of the country's security challenges - such as banditry, kidnapping, farmer-herder conflicts, and insurgency - to the spillover effects of the Libyan crisis. He claimed that the proliferation of foreign mercenaries trained and armed by the late Muammar Gaddafi had contributed to Nigeria's deteriorating security landscape (Nwangwu, Mbah, Ike, Otu, & Ezugworie, 2020). This assertion was echoed by the Department of State Services (DSS),

Nigeria's domestic intelligence agency, which linked rising insecurity to the activities of the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP), a breakaway faction of Boko Haram that had expanded its presence into central Nigeria (Wakili, 2018).

Within the framework of Nigerian state discourse, a prevailing narrative suggests that some of the armed non-state actors wreaking havoc across the country were originally trained and equipped by the late Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. Following his assassination, it is believed that these operatives fled Libya with their weapons and later infiltrated Nigeria (Ogundipe, 2018). Supporting this view, several state actors argue that Nigeria's expansive and inadequately secured northern borders have enabled the unregulated entry of foreign mercenaries who contribute to the country's persistent insecurity (Sahara Reporters, 2022). This perception significantly influenced the Nigerian government's decision to temporarily close its land borders with Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger between August 2019 and December 2020 (Kwakye & Matongbada, 2021). Despite its intention to stem the influx of illegal arms and external combatants, the extended border closure failed to achieve its security objectives. Instead, Nigerian citizens continued to experience severe insecurity and socio-economic hardship. Nonetheless, the border closure policy remains a central component of Nigeria's broader efforts to reinforce national security. Border management and the profiling of migrants fall under the sovereign responsibilities of any state, and Nigeria is no exception. It is within this context that the Nigerian government justified its border closure strategy as a sovereign mechanism for strengthening border control, protecting lives and property, and enhancing the overall security architecture of the state.

The securitisation of migration has become a political imperative, as national borders represent both the first line of defence against terrorism and the final safeguard of a country's territorial sovereignty. As such, enhancing border security has become a critical objective for many nations (Adekunle & Adisa, 2010). Since 2009, Nigeria has been confronted with evolving security threats, including terrorist attacks on government institutions, public infrastructure, and civilians. These threats are exacerbated by the activities of criminal networks engaged in the trafficking of small arms and light weapons, human trafficking, and the operations of terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in the Sahel, alongside the rise of Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria. These developments have raised serious national and international concerns about illegal cross-border movements

through Nigeria's northern frontiers and their implications for regional security. The most pressing border-related challenges include drug trafficking, money laundering, illicit arms trade, smuggling of contraband goods and stolen vehicles, kidnapping, and other transnational crimes. These activities pose significant threats to both national and global security, undermining socio-economic development and damaging Nigeria's international reputation due to its persistent association with financial fraud and organised crime.

The insurgent activities of Boko Haram have further intensified security concerns, extending from border regions into the interior of the country. For several years, Nigeria's national security has faced persistent threats, largely attributable to inadequate border surveillance and enforcement mechanisms. Effective border control is essential to safeguarding a nation's territorial integrity, irrespective of geographical context. Borders serve as critical checkpoints where illegal arms, ammunition, and prohibited goods can be intercepted. In the absence of robust enforcement, these porous entry points become channels for insecurity and criminality (Adewoyin, 2019).

On the factors responsible for border insecurity and migration trends, Goddy, John, Clement and Oyindamola (2017) posited that the key constraints leading to border insecurity are not far-fetched from ineffective border management due to insufficient political will and limited resources, which is preceded by a lack of synergy among government establishments and other African nations. These factors are not just limited to the aforementioned, but rather followed by insufficient manpower, low motivation among border personnel, poor intelligence sharing, little or no adequate office space, and outdated communication gadgets. Also, managing cross-border communities has been challenging due to uncooperative behaviours of the community members, which is often followed by corruption, which has become the order of the day.

These systemic weaknesses have significantly undermined Nigeria's capacity to monitor and regulate its borders, thereby creating opportunities for smuggling, human trafficking, and irregular migration. This aligns with Adewumi and Olayiwola (2019), who noted that the absence of a coordinated and integrated border governance system hampers effective surveillance and facilitates illicit transnational activities. Moreover, managing cross-border communities, which often share ethnic, linguistic, and kinship ties across national lines, presents additional complexities. Many community members

exhibit uncooperative behaviour towards state authorities, often prioritising cultural affiliations over national loyalties (Aluko, 2012; Asiwaju, 2005). Furthermore, corruption among border personnel has become deeply entrenched, with security operatives often complicit in facilitating unauthorised crossings in exchange for bribes. This phenomenon is documented by Ibrahim and Akinyemi (2020), who argue that corruption, rather than just weakening border control, has institutionalised insecurity by creating parallel governance structures at the margins of the state. In such an environment, migration flows, both voluntary and forced, become increasingly difficult to track, control, or channel through formal mechanisms.

Implications of Migration Trends and Border Insecurity in North-East Nigeria

Hamidu (2022) highlights the multifaceted consequences of border insecurity for communities in North-East Nigeria. These consequences include the emergence and persistence of transnational terrorism, which originated in the region but has since spread across the country. One of the critical implications is the decline in foreign direct investment in the northeastern states of Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, and Taraba, largely due to persistent insecurity. This has stunted economic growth and disrupted major trade and transport routes, such as the Maiduguri–Gamboru/Ngala–Cameroon corridor, the Bama–Banki route into Cameroon, and trade routes along the Lake Chad basin. These corridors have witnessed repeated attacks on commuters and traders, resulting in deaths, abductions, and loss of goods, thereby forcing the military to shut down several of these roads for security reasons. Additionally, several Nigerian villages situated along the border, often referred to as frontline communities, have experienced violent attacks. These communities have suffered confiscation of their goods by both foreign military personnel, particularly members of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF), who accuse them of aiding terrorist groups, and by terrorist factions themselves, who suspect the villagers of providing intelligence to government forces. These communities are also vulnerable to collateral damage during crossfire, including injury or death from stray bullets, further exacerbating the humanitarian and security crisis in the region.

The Lake Chad region has become a highly contested and volatile zone, exploited by insurgent groups for strategic advantage. Military authorities in Nigeria and neighbouring countries have claimed that terrorist groups, particularly Boko Haram and its affiliates, utilise the porous and difficult

terrain around Lake Chad to reinforce their ranks with fighters and weapons sourced from conflict zones such as Libya, Mali, and beyond (International Crisis Group, 2020; Onuoha, 2013). In response, military operations have intensified in the region, leading to the suspension of agricultural, fishing, and pastoral activities for security reasons. As a result, farmers, fishermen and women, and herders operating along the borders were forcibly displaced (Human Rights Watch, 2021). This militarised approach has produced unintended consequences. Civilians living in frontline communities have found themselves trapped between state forces and insurgent actors, both of whom often accuse local populations of collaborating with the other side (Zenn, 2020). This situation has not only heightened mistrust and fear but also driven some formerly uninvolved individuals, especially vulnerable youth, to either flee for safety or become recruited into armed groups as a means of survival (Mustapha & Ehrhardt, 2020). The erosion of trust, combined with the economic disruption caused by insecurity and military restrictions, has further destabilised border communities and increased migratory pressures both within and outside Nigeria.

Ibrahim (2014) observes that border insecurity has had both constructive and adverse implications for Nigeria's diplomatic relations and foreign policy. On the positive side, the shared threat of transnational terrorism has fostered increased collaboration among countries such as Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria. This has resulted in diplomatic engagements and the establishment of the MJTF, a regional security coalition operating along the Lake Chad basin, aimed at countering the spread of Boko Haram and other extremist groups. However, this regional cooperation has been accompanied by negative diplomatic repercussions. Notably, Nigerian refugees fleeing violence into neighbouring countries have frequently faced discrimination, mistreatment, and wrongful profiling. Many host communities and security personnel in francophone states have reportedly accused these refugees of complicity with terrorist groups, viewing them as social burdens and security threats. This perception has led to the forced repatriation of several refugees back to Nigeria under inhumane conditions (Nurudeen & Adekola, 2014). Moreover, Boko Haram's prolonged insurgency has damaged Nigeria's international image, with the country increasingly perceived as a theatre of terrorism - serving either as a base for recruiting and training militants or as contested territory for terrorist domination, particularly in the northern and eastern regions. Boko Haram remains one of the most recognised terrorist organisations in the Sahel and has been linked to global jihadist networks such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

(Ibrahim, 2014). According to Ajayi (2019), the insurgency has claimed the lives of at least 27,000 people in northeast Nigeria, further emphasising the profound human and geopolitical toll of border insecurity.

Studies by Mershakka, Goladi, and Mohammed (2024) revealed that the impact of rural banditry has hampered the development of rural communities and has also triggered rural-urban migration, this has resulted in untold hardship and increasing the burden on government and host communities. This can be traced to the incidents where many rural dwellers abandoned their homes and properties in search of security and safety. In many rural regions of Northern Nigeria, bandits have set up alternative state institutions, exacting fines and taxes on people and communities. In others, women are raped, children are orphaned, wives are widowed, traditional, educational, and religious institutions are uprooted, and able-bodied men are slain or forced to migrate to safer locations. These have resulted in widespread poverty, instability, rising unemployment, escalating ethno-religious tensions between areas, and a near breakdown of socio-communal and interreligious links and bonds, and have impacted on the community stability and development within the context of Nigerian states, now resulting in most persons living in fear of the unknown because of arms smuggling due to porous borders.

Adeleke and Oluwaseun (2024) question whether Nigeria's governance structure is collapsing. They found out that the main motivator triggering the activities of the bandits in rural areas is mostly linked to the issue of weak and poor governance witnessed in the Nigerian political system. Other causes include political and economic considerations, a high unemployment rate, and a high degree of poverty. The study found that if bandit activities were not stopped soon, they would continue to impede the country's political, social, and economic growth, though the activities of the bandits have already revealed the fragility and weakness that is in existence within the context of the Nigerian state, as revealed in the findings of the study.

Mayowa (2024) examined the problems connected with intergovernmental collaboration on security management using empirical evidence from Southwestern Nigeria. The findings of this study revealed that the identified challenges associated with intergovernmental collaboration on security management in the study area included insufficient synergy among security agencies, insufficient funds to procure security equipment, and insufficient collaboration among government levels and security agencies, among other

things. The research found that the state's responsibility for protecting lives and property is critical to ensuring long-term development and progress. To fight security concerns in Nigeria, the research proposes effective coordination at all levels of government as well as enough synergy among security services.

Ezeabasili's (2025) study on 'Navigating Insecurity and Migration Trends in Nigeria (2019-2023)' reveals that insecurity has far-reaching effects on migratory patterns, including increased displacement. The disturbance of livelihoods and economic activity, the burden on public services and infrastructure in host communities, and the risk of human trafficking and exploitation. Thus, the study indicated that tackling the root causes of insecurity, such as poverty, inequality, and ethnic/religious conflicts, will be critical in reducing the humanitarian crisis and supporting long-term solutions for displaced communities. Although all respondents in the study identified the conflict-induced insecurity resulting from clashes between Boko Haram insurgents and government forces as the primary catalyst for migration, the study maintains that the decision to migrate was also influenced by a range of other context-specific factors that varied across communities. These determinants include the community's geographical position, property ownership, migrant socioeconomic level, availability of water and land, and wealth. It was discovered that in certain areas, individuals could live with violence provided they could continue to farm or have other means of income, such as small enterprises. The choice to relocate was made only after such activities were no longer possible and there was nothing left to hang on to (Frederic, Janpeter, & Jürgen, 2020).

Boko Haram has unquestionably harmed the Northern Nigerian economy. The operations of this terrorist organisation have resulted in a large movement of Nigerians to places unaffected by the violence. As a result, children have dropped out of school, adults have lost their employment, commerce has been disrupted, and foreign direct investment (FDI) flows have decreased, hurting lives (Eze, 2016). Boko Haram's debut four years ago is projected to have resulted in a 21% reduction in FDI between 2011 and 2012. The negative consequences have mostly been determined by geography, with the Northern states bearing the brunt of the burden. Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe have suffered the brunt of the insurgency, prompting the declaration of a state of emergency in 2013 and its continuation until November 2014. The conflict killed an estimated 3,000 individuals in 2015, and another 3 million people have been internally displaced since then. Boko

Haram and ISIL are collectively responsible for 51% of all claimed worldwide fatalities in the previous year (2014), with a total of 32,658 people murdered by terrorism in 2014, including 7,512 in Nigeria alone, accounting for 23% of all terrorism-related deaths that year (Eze, 2016). Despite government attempts, northern Nigeria's economy is not as robust as it should be. According to reports, Nigeria's north is poorer than the south, and the situation has been aggravated by Boko Haram warfare. The gross state products (GSP) of various areas demonstrate that northern states, while containing the bulk of Nigeria's population, accounted for just 38% (15.4 billion naira) of the country's GDP in 2012 (before the intensification of the Boko Haram conflict). Of this amount, 8.3 billion naira (55%) and 5.7 billion naira (37%) were attributable to the north-west and north-central states, respectively. Comparatively, the north-east states where Boko Haram are most active, contributed only 8% of this GSP at a paltry 1.3 billion naira in 2012 (Eze, 2016).

The north's economic development potential has remained intact, with agriculture leading the way. Agriculture and agro-allied industries contribute significantly to GDP and manpower, have experienced recent expansion, and have a rich agroecology in northern Nigeria, making them one of the most competitive sectors for northern state development. Since its independence, northern Nigeria has supplied a substantial portion of the food consumed in the south. Before the Boko Haram insurgency, northern states provided about 50% of the south's food and 47% of its cattle. Kano and Jigawa, two of the region's most powerful economic states, have emphasised the importance of agricultural investments in food crops (sorghum, millet), horticulture (mango, guava, cashew), industrial crops (gum Arabic, sugarcane), cattle, and fisheries for regional growth. Agriculture is the sector with the largest job prospects in the major northern states of Kano, Jigawa, and Borno, accounting for 32%, 33.4%, and 52.9%, respectively (Eze, 2016).

According to NBS data (2022 cited in Ejechi, 2023), 27 Nigerian states were snubbed by investors, including Abia, Adamawa, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Benue, Borno, Cross River, Delta, Ebonyi, Edo, Enugu, Gombe, Imo, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kebbi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Ogun, Osun, Rivers, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe, and Zamfara. Out of 52 nations that invested in Nigeria, the United Kingdom was the largest source of capital investment in 2022, with $2.76 billion, followed by South Africa ($428.73 million), Singapore ($420.97 million), and the United States. Meanwhile, eight of the 27 states that were neglected by international investors failed to attract

foreign investment over the previous four years (2019-2022). The states are Bayelsa, Ebonyi, Gombe, Jigawa, Kebbi, Taraba, Yobe, and Zamfara. According to NBS (2022), the Debt Management Office (DMO) indicated that all states except Kebbi had increased their domestic debt in the past seven years. Yobe State saw a domestic debt rise of +2,247 percent, followed by Taraba at +218 percent, Gombe at +161 percent, and Zamfara at +142 percent (Ejechi, 2023). All these states have had their debt index surge within these periods, with little or no direct foreign investments.

Conclusion

Border security is an integral part of every nation's national security, which countries around the globe don't take for granted, and Nigeria is no exception. However, within the past years, Nigerian and other Sub-Saharan states have been enmeshed in several border insecurity crises, which have impacted both the economic and human security of the Sahel. This impact is today being felt by all and sundry. Economic of most Sahel States today have been affected by border insecurity; many families have deserted their ancestral homes, forcing rural-urban migration, with no end in sight. The problem of border insecurity, particularly in Nigeria, is often associated with a limited number of security personnel and corruption among the few. This has also impacted the border securitisation situation currently facing the region. The impact of border insecurity over the years has also birthed the new term which is now referred to as rural banditry, this being the present state of security within the shores of the north-east region, with people now abandoning their respective sources of income in a quest for safety in urban areas, this situation has assumed a pathetic dimension with diverse criminal networks now using the border communities as their institutional base for operation and transaction, with the traditional owners compelled to migrates and now residing in Internally Displaced Persons Camps, causing economic pressure on the host communities.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested from the foregoing discussion:

i. There is need for synergy between government agencies of control and the border communities, assuring the locals that their identity won't be divulged in the eventuality of their cooperating and releasing pieces of information to the state, similarly, the Nigerian Custom

Service and the Nigerian Immigration Service who are in charge of border security must work as a team and see themselves not as rivals, but partners, beyond the partnership there is the need for proper mounting of checkpoints within the border entry points to enhance the security of the borders.

ii. There is a need for the Nigerian government to establish border guards who are solidly saddled with the responsibility of protecting the borders as border police, while immigration should focus more on profiling migrants and immigrants, and customs should focus on preventing the entry of contraband items, the border guards should be empowered to oversee the other two sister agencies and recruitment into this body should be a selection of qualified persons from the various security bodies in the country more like a secondment.

iii. Finally, this study recommends the need for government, NGOs and civil societies to partner together for community sensitisation and rebuilding of communities affected by border insecurity doing it will go a long way to enhance the confidence of the people, thereby increasing the possibility of them revealing information to security organisations.

Conflict of Interest

The study has no conflict of interest.

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Chapter 5
Security in Insecurity: The Experience of Non-Migrant Youth in Nigeria

by

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Abstract

This chapter critically examines the paradox of "security in insecurity" as experienced by non-migrant youth in Nigeria, particularly in the context of ongoing protests and government responses under President Bola Tinubu's administration. Drawing on reports of widespread youth-led demonstrations, such as the #EndBadGovernance protests and other grassroots initiatives, this analysis explores how state security measures ostensibly aimed at maintaining order often exacerbate insecurity for young people. The chapter highlights the contradiction between government promises of reform and the continued repression of dissent, including arbitrary arrests, use of force, and restrictions on civic space. It argues that the marginalisation of non-migrant youth within their nation reflects a deeper failure of the social contract, wherein state institutions prioritise regime security over human security. The analysis calls for a reevaluation of national security frameworks to ensure the protection of democratic rights and to incorporate the voices of youth in governance.

Keywords: Insecurity, Marginalisation, Non-migrant Youth, Security

Introduction

Across the globe, the intersection of youth experiences, national security, and political promises remains a critical concern, particularly in developing democracies where political instability and unmet governance expectations often fuel social unrest (UNDP, 2023). In Nigeria, the era of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has been marked by bold campaign promises centred on economic revival, youth empowerment, and national security (Adebayo, 2024). However, despite these commitments, widespread insecurity, including terrorism, banditry, kidnappings, and violent suppression of dissent, continues to define the lived experiences of many Nigerian youths, especially those who remain within their communities (non-migrant youth) and face these challenges daily (International Crisis Group, 2024).

In developed countries, non-migrant youth are often seen as a stabilising force when adequately engaged; yet, in Nigeria, they are increasingly caught between the state's failure to provide security and rising frustrations over unfulfilled campaign promises. The government's inability to deliver on its security agenda exacerbates a climate of distrust, pushing young people toward protests, activism, or, in some cases, violent retaliation (Ezeador, 2024; Human Rights Watch, 2024).

In recent years, the dynamics of youth-led protests in Nigeria have increasingly drawn global attention, particularly against the backdrop of socio-political instability and state repression. The paradox of *security in insecurity* vividly captures the experiences of non-migrant Nigerian youth, those who remain in their local communities and urban centres despite escalating insecurity, unemployment, and systemic marginalisation. Under President Bola Tinubu's administration, youth protests, including the #EndBadGovernance and other civic movements, have underscored both the resilience and vulnerability of these young populations. Instead of addressing their grievances, the state's response has often involved tactics of suppression, criminalisation of dissent, and the strategic use of security forces to "fight the aggrieved" (Suraj, 2024). Such measures have created a precarious environment where non-migrant youth seek forms of security, community solidarity, digital activism, and informal networks within a broader context of systemic insecurity.

This chapter explores the life experiences of these youth, examining how they navigate and resist the structural violence they face. It contributes to a growing body of literature that interrogates state-society relations in fragile democracies (Adebayo, 2023; Ihonvbere, 2024) and expands the discourse on youth agency in post-colonial African states. By situating Nigeria's contemporary protest movements within a global conversation on human rights and democratic governance, this chapter highlights how the struggle for security amid repression resonates with similar youth-led movements worldwide (Honwana, 2019). Also, it examines the complex dynamics of "security in insecurity" among non-migrant youth in Nigeria within the broader context of Tinubu's campaign rhetoric and ongoing governance, contributing to global debates on youth agency, state accountability, and peacebuilding in fragile democracies.

Articulation of Issues

Globally, contemporary youth protests have increasingly become visible actors in the socio-political landscape, particularly in contexts marked by widespread insecurity. In many developing countries, including Nigeria, persistent insecurity, characterised by violent extremism, armed banditry, kidnappings, police brutality, and economic marginalisation, has heightened the sense of vulnerability among young people (Iwilade, 2013; Okafor *et al.*, 2022). Ironically, in these environments, youth-led protests emerge not only as a response to insecurity but also as a quest for social security, justice, and human dignity. This paradox, here described as "security in insecurity," captures the tension between young people's pursuit of safer, more inclusive societies and the structural violence they confront while exercising their right to protest (Akinbobola, 2021).

In Nigeria, non-migrant youth - those who stay within their communities despite insecurity and socio-economic pressures - have led major protests, such as the #EndSARS demonstrations against police brutality (Abati, 2020). Evidence confirms that thousands of Nigerian youth actively participated in the #EndBadGovernance protests held from 1 to 10 August 2024 across multiple states, including Lagos, Abuja, Kano, Kaduna, and Port Harcourt. These protests, driven by widespread dissatisfaction with poor governance, economic hardship, and insecurity, attracted large youth crowds at key sites like Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos and Unity Fountain in Abuja. Reports from Amnesty International and the National Human Rights Commission indicate that over 1,200 protesters were arrested nationwide, many of whom were young people demonstrating in person. The Youth Rights Campaign also

stated that more than 2,000 youth protesters remained in detention weeks after the protests concluded. Additionally, Amnesty International documented at least 24 deaths related to the protests, most of whom were youth, particularly in states such as Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, and Borno (Amnesty International, 2024; National Human Rights Commission, 2024; Youth Rights Campaign, 2024).

These protests reflect broader frustrations with governance failures, human rights abuses, and the shrinking civic space in which young people operate (Iwilade & Ikuteyijo, 2019). Yet, participation in these protests often exposes youths to further risks, including state repression, surveillance, and physical violence, thus reinforcing the cycle of insecurity (Akinbobola, 2021). Understanding these dynamics is critical for illuminating how non-migrant youths navigate the intersections of activism, security, and vulnerability in Nigeria's fraught political environment.

The chapter, therefore, explores the experiences of non-migrant youths engaged in protest movements in Nigeria, with particular attention to the concept of "security in insecurity." By doing so, it contributes to the broader global discourse on youth agency in contexts of instability and the contested terrain of protest politics in the Global South (Honwana, 2012; Branch & Mampilly, 2015).

Theoretical Underpinning: The Social Contract Theory

The social contract theory, rooted in the works of philosophers like Hobbes (1651), Locke (1689), and Rousseau (1762), posits that individual's consent, either explicitly or implicitly, to surrender certain freedoms to the state in exchange for protection of their remaining rights and the maintenance of social order. The state, in turn, holds a moral and political obligation to safeguard the welfare and rights of its citizens. When this contract is perceived as broken through systemic injustice, corruption, repression, or neglect, citizens may feel justified in challenging state authority, often through protest (Pateman, 1970).

In contemporary Nigeria, particularly under President Bola Tinubu's administration, non-migrant youth protests provide a vivid illustration of the social contract theory in practice. The #EndBadGovernance protests and other youth-led demonstrations represent a reaction to perceived breaches of this contract. Nigerian youths, many of whom face high unemployment,

systemic corruption, poor public services, and frequent human rights abuses, have increasingly expressed their disillusionment with the state's failure to uphold its side of the contract (Adebayo & Olanrewaju, 2023).

Despite the constitutional guarantee of the right to protest, the Tinubu government's response has often involved repression, ranging from police brutality to the arrest of protest leaders and restrictions on public assembly (Suraj, 2024). Such actions further erode the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of protesting youths, who interpret them as evidence that the government prioritises the preservation of elite power over fulfilling its contractual responsibilities to the populace (Olorunfemi, 2024).

Instead of meeting campaign promises, President Tinubu's government has been fighting the aggrieved youths through violent crackdowns and curtailment of civil liberties. This runs contrary to the very essence of the social contract, which assumes mutual responsibility and accountability between rulers and the ruled. Rather than restoring order, such state violence often exacerbates tensions, leading to cycles of protest and repression. In this context, Tinubu's government appears to be undermining its legitimacy by prioritising control over constructive engagement (Suraj, 2024).

Thus, the persistence of non-migrant youth protests reflects a collective demand for the restoration of a broken social contract. The youths are not merely calling for immediate policy changes but are asserting their fundamental rights as citizens within a social contract that should guarantee justice, participation, and respect for human dignity (Chukwuemeka & Onuoha, 2024). Thus, within the framework of social contract theory, the Nigerian state's failure to uphold its end of the bargain while simultaneously punishing those who demand accountability reveals a deep crisis of governance that fuels the ongoing youth-led resistance.

Approach

This chapter employed a desk-based approach to explore the experiences of non-migrant youths within the context of Nigeria's ongoing security challenges. The study utilised extensive secondary data sources instead of relying on primary data collection methods such as interviews or focus group discussions. The main data collection procedure involved a systematic review of existing literature, including peer-reviewed journal articles, government

reports, policy briefs, newspaper articles, and reports from non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The literature review strategy followed guidelines for systematic desk-based studies (Snyder, 2019), beginning with the identification of key search terms such as *#EndBadGovernance, youth insecurity in Nigeria*, *non-migrant youth experiences*, *Nigeria security governance*, and *protests and youth in Nigeria*. Electronic academic databases such as JSTOR, Scopus, Google Scholar, and African Journals Online (AJOL) were searched to locate relevant scholarly publications. Furthermore, grey literature such as reports from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Nigerian government agencies was included to capture the most up-to-date accounts of the current security climate affecting youth populations.

To ensure the reliability of the sources, only materials published a few years before and in 2025 were considered, with priority given to peer-reviewed works and reports from reputable organisations. Content analysis was conducted to identify recurring themes and narratives around non-migrant youth experiences, their perceptions of state protection, and responses to perceived insecurity. This secondary data approach provided a broad and critical perspective on the topic, aligning to generate informed opinions grounded in current knowledge and documented experiences (Bowen, 2009). By relying on published evidence and documented cases, the study maintains scholarly rigour while circumventing the logistical and ethical challenges of field-based data collection in sensitive and potentially volatile security contexts. The puzzle is: What specific strategies are being proposed and implemented to address the underlying issues that led to the protests? The chapter, to solve the above puzzle, specifically focuses on highlighting the reasons for the protest by non- migrant citizens and offers viable solutions to address the issues being addressed.

Protest Schedules, Timeline, and Trend

The trend of events in the #EndBadGovernance protest mirrors trends observed in recent times on Nigerian civic protests, especially those involving youth-led movements. The movement's demands directed at the government included:

a) Lowering food prices
b) Tackling the surging cost of living
c) Reducing insecurity nationwide
d) Halving governance costs permanently

e) Releasing all #EndSars protesters
f) Ensuring the safety of farmers across the country
g) Increasing budget allocations for education and healthcare by 20%
h) Signing the new electoral act by December 2024
i) Generating immediate employment opportunities for youth
j) Settling all outstanding pensions, and
k) Amending the constitution to allow for a referendum on constitutional and judicial reform (Suraj 2024).

The initial peaceful character of the protests witnessed across states such as Lagos, Kaduna, Kano, and Abuja follow a common trajectory where Nigerian youth first adopt non-violent approaches to voice dissent (Iwilade, 2019; Uadiale, 2021). The escalation into violence after state repression, particularly using tear gas and live bullets, is consistent with prior findings showing that state response is a key trigger for protest radicalisation (Abah & Okwori, 2022). The extension of protests beyond initial urban centres, as seen with the blockade of the Abuja-Kaduna Highway and marches into Niger State, reflects a trend noted during the 2020 #EndSARS movement, where youth utilised both physical and digital mobilisation to extend their geographic reach (Adebayo, 2020; Olumide, 2021). The strategic occupation of vital infrastructure and transportation routes signals a shift toward more organised and disruptive tactics by protesters (Nwankwor, 2023).

The imposition of curfews in northern states like Kano, Jigawa, Yobe, and Borno, as well as in the South (Lagos, Port Harcourt), aligns with prior governmental patterns of using curfews to quell dissent (Amnesty International, 2021). However, as with the #EndSARS protests, the defiance of such curfews by protesters suggests a growing disillusionment with government directives and an emboldened civil society (Adebajo, 2022). Finally, the high level of youth organisation by August 2nd, despite state suppression, echoes findings from previous analyses that Nigerian youth movements have increasingly leveraged social media, horizontal leadership structures, and rapid communication to maintain momentum even under state crackdown (Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2015; Adebanwi, 2020).

The described timeline of the EndBadGovernance protest events highlights both continuities and evolutions when compared with earlier movements such as #EndSARS (Okafor, 2021; Adebayo & Ogunyemi, 2022) and the initial phases of the #EndBadGovernanceProtest documented in 2023 (Nwafor & Ibrahim, 2024). Several key themes have emerged. It is pertinent

to note that the EndBadGovernance protest, like most protests in Nigeria are strong agitation against the historical pattern of governance in Nigeria, characterised by loss of lives and properties.

As with earlier protests, the sequence shows a pattern where initial peaceful demonstrations in Abuja triggered heavy-handed police responses, tear gas and suppression tactics that paradoxically broadened participation and radicalised the protest in Kano and Port Harcourt. Studies of the #EndSARS movement also noted that indiscriminate police violence often powered rather than contained protest momentum (Olumide, 2021; Chiluwa & David, 2022). The protest showed signs of more decentralised but coordinated leadership. The role of Simon Ekpa and the Take It Back Movement, along with actions such as the three-day mourning period and the scheduled One-Million-Man March, suggest greater tactical sophistication compared to early #EndSARS protests, which were sometimes criticised for lacking clear leadership or structured demands (Nwachukwu *et al.*, 2022). This is consistent with findings by Osaghae (2024), who noted that more recent protest waves in Nigeria have incorporated digital leadership and hybrid online-offline mobilisation.

Another striking continuity with prior studies is the centrality of youth. As with #EndSARS (Adebayo & Ogunyemi, 2022), youth-driven mobilisation was visible, but this time extended beyond university-age populations to include children specifically in Katsina state, underscoring widening generational disillusionment with governance. Moreover, despite regional variations (notably the non-participation in South-East Nigeria), the use of social media led to trans-regional solidarity, with the hashtag #EndBadGovernance becoming a global trending topic. This mirrors the findings of Egbunike (2023), who argued that viral hashtags serve as connective tissue for geographically dispersed protest actors.

The Russian flags displayed during the protest in Katsina State exemplify a growing trend among Nigerian protesters of appropriating global symbols to express anti-Western or anti-establishment sentiments. This phenomenon is also evident in recent anti-French demonstrations across West Africa (Akinyemi, 2024). It indicates an evolving protest culture, increasingly shaped by transnational political narratives. Moreover, the protesters' insistence on the right to protest and calls for justice for victims echo themes from previous studies (Chiluwa & David, 2022), where framing state repression as illegal violence helped rally both domestic and international

support. Instead of engaging in dialogue with the youth to address their grievances, the Nigerian government opted for an unacceptable approach by deploying security personnel to attack the grieving youth.

Fighting the Aggrieved

This result highlights a complex dynamic between the Nigerian state and the aggrieved youths seeking change through organised protest. Initially, the youths acted within the legal framework by seeking police approval, demonstrating their awareness of civic rights and an intention to follow lawful processes. However, the strict conditions imposed, limiting protests to designated areas and demanding accountability, reflect an underlying government attempt to control and contain dissent, potentially undermining the spirit of free expression. This heightened tensions between the protesters and law enforcement, especially as the demonstrators ignored police requests despite a court injunction in place (Suraj, 2024).

The protesters' decision to proceed despite a court injunction, presidential appeals, and police threats signals deep-seated frustration and mistrust towards the government. This defiance also indicates a broader context of disillusionment with institutional responses to public grievances. The mobilisation through social media further empowered the movement, allowing youths to bypass traditional state-controlled channels and build solidarity, which amplified their collective voice.

Crucially, the transition of the protest's framing from *#EndBadGovernance* to *#OperationTinubuMustGo* marked a significant escalation, shifting from a general critique of governance to a direct challenge against the sitting president. This reframing intensified the confrontational nature of the movement and likely contributed to the violent police responses, leading to casualties. In the broader context of fighting the aggrieved**,** the state's handling of this protest can be seen as counterproductive. By imposing restrictive measures and reacting violently, the authorities reinforced the protesters' perception of repression and illegitimacy, rather than addressing their underlying grievances. This cycle of state resistance and youth defiance risks further radicalisation and alienation of young citizens, making peaceful resolution more difficult.

The data reflects a disturbing pattern of state violence and repression during the initial phase of the #EndBadGovernance protests in Nigeria. The recorded minimum of 14 deaths spread across Borno (4), Niger (4), Kaduna (3),

Jigawa (2), along with critical injuries in Kano State and the arrest of a journalist in Abuja, highlights a widespread and disproportionate use of force by security agencies. These actions echo findings from earlier protests, such as the #EndSARS movement in 2020, where Amnesty International (2020) documented extrajudicial killings and excessive force against peaceful demonstrators. A critical dimension here is the targeting of both protesters and the press. The arrest of Jide Oyekunle, a credentialed journalist, suggests an attempt to control the narrative and suppress media coverage of state abuses, consistent with observations by Okunola and Oludayo (2021), who noted increased censorship and intimidation of media during civic unrest in Nigeria.

Moreover, the geographical spread of violence - from Borno in the northeast to Kano in the northwest and Abuja in the centre - indicates that state repression was neither isolated nor accidental but systemic, reinforcing the views of scholars like Akinlabi (2023), who argue that Nigeria's security apparatus is often mobilised as an instrument of political control rather than public safety. Finally, the killing of a protester during the march from MKO Abiola Stadium to Eagle Square underlines the heightened tensions when demonstrators seek to symbolically reclaim public spaces associated with democracy and civic expression. Similar dynamics were observed during the 2020 #EndSARS protests, where protesters' presence in strategic urban centres provoked violent crackdowns (Amnesty International, 2020; Ibrahim & Adesina, 2022). This report underscores that the #EndBadGovernance protest follows an established pattern of state intolerance for dissent, marked by lethal force, suppression of the press, and criminalisation of protest. It also highlights the urgent need for systemic reforms in how protests are policed in Nigeria.

The report highlights a sharp escalation of violence and state repression during the protests in Nigeria. By the fourth day, 19 protesters had been killed. In the northern region, the protests were hijacked by criminal elements, leading to widespread vandalism, looting, and property destruction. Rather than addressing the protesters' demands or working to calm the situation, the government responded with force, arresting demonstrators, including key organisers, and targeting perceived symbols of dissent, such as in the case of the Russian flag incident. These actions reflected a government stance of confronting, rather than engaging with, the aggrieved, opting for retaliation instead of dialogue.

The state's decision to "fight" rather than address the protesters' grievances exacerbated the crisis. *G*overnment retaliation led to further deaths and chaos. By disregarding the protesters' pleas and opting for suppression, the state lost legitimacy in the eyes of the aggrieved, deepening the conflict. The arrest of over 40 people for merely displaying a foreign flag (Russian flag), an act the Russian embassy itself distanced from, demonstrates an overreach by law enforcement, criminalising symbolic protest and feeding a narrative of state paranoia. Previous studies on protest dynamics (e.g., Tilly, 2003; Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011) show that harsh repression without addressing root causes tends to radicalise protest movements, invite opportunistic actors (like hoodlums in this case), and erode public trust. This explains what was experienced during the movement. The report suggests that the government lost control of both the narrative and the situation on the ground. Rather than isolating violent elements, state repression allowed them to thrive, and peaceful protesters were alienated further.

A critical view of the nationwide protest that erupted across Nigeria in early March 2024, triggered by widespread dissatisfaction with economic hardship, fuel subsidy removal, and increasing cost of living under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration, revealed that, during these protests, the State Security Service (SSS) detained two key organisers in Katsina State. In a separate incident, seven Polish students and faculty members from the University of Warsaw were arrested in Kano State on suspicion of displaying Russian flags. In Kaduna, police reportedly killed three protesters, while over 25 others were arrested after security forces used tear gas to disperse crowds. In Abuja, more than five protesters were arrested at Eagle Square as police enforced restrictions, even deploying a helicopter to intimidate demonstrators. In Kano State, protesters waved Russian flags and appealed to President Vladimir Putin for intervention, signalling deep dissatisfaction with President Tinubu's leadership. A report by the United Action Front of Civil Society documented at least 21 protester deaths, over 1,100 arrests, and 175 injuries. Similarly, *Business Day* reported more than 1,000 arrests nationwide along with multiple fatalities (Abdullah, 2024; Abdullahi, 2024).

This data on the EndBadGovernance protest reveals a troubling pattern of escalating repression and violence against aggrieved protesters during these demonstrations, underlining a clear dynamic of *fighting the aggrieved* rather than addressing their grievances through dialogue or institutional channels. The detentions and arrests of protest organisers by the State Security Service in Katsina State reflect a strategy aimed at pre-emptively neutralising

leadership and disrupting protest coordination. Over 1,100 arrests were recorded on just the first day of protests, with over 1,000 additional arrests reported later, suggesting mass criminalisation of dissent. The 21 protesters killed on the first day of the protest is an alarming figure and shows disproportionate use of force. The killing of three protesters blocking a key expressway in Kaduna and the use of tear gas at the Kaduna State Government House further illustrate aggressive tactics. The deployment of a police helicopter to intimidate protesters in Abuja demonstrates an intent to psychologically suppress public gatherings. Despite these tactics, the study notes that *protesters remained defiant*, pointing to a resilience born of deep-seated grievances.

The arrest of Polish students and faculty for waving Russian flags suggests heightened sensitivity to perceived foreign interference or subversive symbolism. In Kano, waving Russian flags and appealing to Putin shows how local frustrations are becoming radicalised, with protesters seeking alternative international allies, highlighting a dangerous breakdown in state-citizen relations. The bizarre incident of an immigration officer accidentally shooting himself while trying to barricade protesters symbolises disorganisation and a lack of professionalism among some security forces.

Instead of viewing these protests as legitimate expressions of societal discontent, the state's approach seems based on militarised suppression: The pre-emptive targeting of organisers, mass detentions, and excessive use of force convey a policy of confrontation rather than engagement. The effort to intimidate (helicopter deployment), disrupt leadership (SSS detentions), and silence protesters violently escalates tensions and risks radicalising otherwise peaceful dissenters. Arresting foreigners and reacting strongly to symbolic gestures like flag-waving further emphasise a defensive, siege mentality within the state machinery. Importantly, the resilience and defiance of protesters even amid violence show that state repression fails to address the core grievances. This aligns with previous protest studies (such as Tilly, 2004; Della Porta, 2013), which indicate that when authorities treat dissent as a security threat instead of a political issue, cycles of violence often follow. The Nigerian context exemplifies this pattern, fighting the aggrieved rather than engaging constructively, thus perpetuating instability and public mistrust.

The Nigerian military's effort to restrict media coverage of the #EndBadGovernance protests reflects a deliberate strategy to control the narrative and weaken the protesters' visibility and influence. By framing the protesters as attention-seekers, military leadership, through Chief of Defence Staff Christopher Gwabin Musa, aims to delegitimise the movement in public opinion and discourage both local and international solidarity. The reported throttling of telecom networks is a tactical measure to hinder the protesters' ability to coordinate, mobilise supporters, and broadcast their message through social media and online platforms. This digital repression mirrors common state tactics globally when facing popular unrest.

The mention of arrests, especially of a Nigerian-based British national, underscores an effort to criminalise the protests by linking them to alleged subversive or anti-government plots. At the same time, the looming organisation of new protests on a highly symbolic day, Independence Day, illustrates the determination and resilience of the aggrieved youth. The data suggests that while state repression is escalating (via censorship, legal action, and physical crackdowns), the movement is adapting and considering new strategies to sustain pressure. This scenario typifies how state apparatuses "fight the aggrieved" by attacking their ability to communicate and shape public discourse, rather than directly addressing the root causes of discontent. Suppressing media coverage and throttling telecom networks serve not only to demobilise protest activity but also to isolate protesters from the broader population, thus preventing the formation of a larger movement.

Although in response to the #EndBadGovernance protests, the Nigerian government, through President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's national broadcast on August 4, 2024, expressed regret over the loss of lives and property, condemned the destruction and looting associated with the demonstrations, and called on citizens to suspend protests in favour of dialogue. Also, the government reaffirmed its commitment to protecting lives, maintaining public order, and promoting inclusive, democratic governance and national unity. These are mere rhetorical statements because in the same vein, the government's narrative attempts to blacklist the protests (e.g., characterising them as media-seeking or foreign-influenced) rather than acknowledging legitimate grievances such as poor governance, unemployment, and police brutality, issues that fuel youth frustration. The state's strong-arm tactics may achieve short-term control but risk exacerbating the conflict by deepening the divide between government and youth. The anticipation of continued protests signals that suppression alone will not quell the movement. Instead, the

protesters are being forced to evolve their strategies, perhaps adopting more decentralised, covert, or digital forms of resistance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The current climate of insecurity in Nigeria has revealed the fragile nature of the state's social contract, especially concerning the non-migrant youth population. Under President Bola Tinubu's administration, a combination of unfulfilled campaign promises, rising unemployment, and state violence has intensified tensions between the government and disaffected youth. The non-migrant youth, rooted in their local communities and with limited opportunities for socio-economic advancement, have become increasingly marginalised and vulnerable to both state repression and opportunistic violence (Adebayo, 2024). The government's militarised response to peaceful protests further alienates this group, eroding trust in state institutions and fuelling cycles of unrest.

To address these issues, several recommendations are proposed:

1. *Reform of Security Forces:* The government should prioritise comprehensive reforms of policing and security agencies to emphasise human rights, accountability, and community-based approaches to law enforcement (Ibrahim & Nwankwo, 2023).
2. *Youth-Centric Economic Programmes:* Implement targeted economic empowerment programmes that focus on skill development, entrepreneurship, and job creation specifically for non-migrant youth in urban and rural communities (Okafor, 2024).
3. *Genuine Dialogue and Inclusion:* Foster open channels of communication between the government and youth organisations. Building trust requires genuine consultation and the involvement of youth in decision-making processes, not tokenistic gestures (Adeoye, 2024).
4. *Fulfilment of Campaign Promises:* The Tinubu administration must take immediate and visible steps to honour the socio-economic commitments made during the campaign, especially those aimed at addressing youth unemployment and insecurity (Suraj, 2024).
5. *Monitoring and Evaluation:* Establish independent monitoring bodies to track progress on reforms and youth development initiatives, ensuring transparency and accountability in implementation (Eze & Bello, 2023).

6. To effectively address the insecurity faced by non-migrant youth in Nigeria, the government should adopt a holistic strategy that goes beyond a purely securitised response. This approach must be rooted in justice, equitable economic opportunities, and inclusive governance. Without these structural reforms, the cycle of youth-led protests and state repression will likely continue, posing a serious threat to Nigeria's already fragile social cohesion and long-term stability.

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PART THREE: RURAL-URBAN CONTEXTS

Chapter 6

Return Migration and the Emergence of Entrepreneurial Ventures in Post-SAP Nigeria (1986-2000): A Stimulus for Economic Recovery

by

Shola Ahmed Akanbi & Mojeed Oyetunji Oyedokun

Abstract

The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), adopted in Nigeria in 1986, spurred significant economic measures aimed at stabilising the country's economy during a severe recession. While the strategy had long-term ramifications for Nigeria's socio-economic landscape, one unanticipated consequence was the surge in outward migration it triggered. Many Nigerians sought opportunities overseas in response to domestic hardship. However, in the late 1980s and 1990s, there was a noticeable trend of return migration, notably among highly qualified professionals and entrepreneurs who had gained skills, experiences and financial wealth elsewhere. This article investigates the role of return migration in the creation of entrepreneurial initiatives in post-SAP Nigeria, weighing its impact on economic recovery and long-term development. Using historical data, case studies, and contemporary research, this study investigates how returnees fuelled innovation and investment, particularly in technology, trade, industry, and agriculture. These returnee entrepreneurs carried with them foreign experience, access to worldwide markets, and a strong entrepreneurial spirit, resulting in the formation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that produced jobs and encouraged local economies. Also, the study dives into specific obstacles they encountered, such as navigating a recovery but uncertain economic environment, obtaining financial resources, and dealing with infrastructure shortfalls, among others. With rising unemployment and economic insecurity today, lessons from the post-SAP era show how policies that promote skill transfer, investment, and reintegration of return migrants can catalyse economic diversification and recovery. The study, therefore, concludes that return migration during the post-SAP era was a crucial engine of Nigeria's economic recovery, providing significant insights into how modern Nigeria might use the experiences and resources of its diaspora to boost entrepreneurial growth and long-term development in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Development, Economy, Entrepreneurs, Migration, Nigeria

Introduction

Under General Ibrahim Babangida's leadership, Nigeria implemented the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in July 1986 to handle Nigeria's worsening economic crisis (Anyanwu, 1992; Musa, 2013; Afolayan *et al*., 2008; Ogujiuba, 2013). SAP was meant to effectively alter and restructure the consumption and production patterns of the Nigerian economy, and to eliminate price distortions and heavy dependence on the export of crude oil and imports of consumer and producer goods. It is a programme which combines a nexus of measures to promote economic efficiency and long-term growth, with stabilisation policies designed to restore balance of payments equilibrium and price stability. In essence, it was meant to fix Nigeria's economic woes (Anyawu, 1992; Musa, 2013). However, while the strategy had long-term ramifications for Nigeria's socio-economic landscape, one unanticipated consequence was the surge in outward migration it triggered. Many Nigerians sought opportunities overseas in response to domestic hardship. This created a greater tendency for persons to emigrate. Evidence includes the relatively large number of women traders who shuttle between Lagos and Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire and in a few other coastal West African countries (Afolayan, 1991). Also, the unfortunate scenario it created was the migration of professionals, resulting in brain drain. Although brain drain in Nigeria was becoming prominent as from the 1960s, it took a dramatic turn after the structural adjustment programme (SAP) (Afolayan, 1988; Adegbola, 1991; Adepoju, 1991).

The top ten countries that Nigerian immigrants moved to around this period were Sudan, followed by the United States, Great Britain, Cameroon, Ghana, Niger, Germany, Benin, Burkina Faso, Libya, and Guinea (Afolayan *et al*., 2008). However, there were indications of return migration by the late 1980s and early 1990s, especially when the world economy changed and some immigrants saw opportunities in their home countries. The restrictive immigration laws in host nations, job stagnation overseas, and a sense of duty to support national development were some of the causes that contributed to the return migration. Improved networks, capital, and skills were frequently brought back by returning migrants and were used to launch new businesses. Among those who returned were Fatimah Abdullahi, an Agro-prospecting pioneer, Emeka Okonkwo, a real estate developer, Dr Ayodele Johnson, a healthcare entrepreneur, among others. Many of these returnees stimulated investment and creativity, especially in the fields of trade, technology, industry, and agriculture.

Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) were established because of their strong entrepreneurial spirit, access to international markets, and foreign experience. Coupled with this was the large sum of dollars sent home from Nigeria abroad during these periods. For instance, Nigeria in Diasporas remitted home $168 million in 1997 through Western Union alone (Afolayan, et al, 2008). This remittance formed part of GDP as well as money used to develop entrepreneurial skills in the late 1980s and 1990s. Against this backdrop, this study examines return migration and the emergence of entrepreneurial ventures in post-SAP Nigeria. To this end, the paper will examine migrant returnees, the structural adjustment programme (SAP) and its impact on Nigeria, Profiles of Returnees after SAP, Entrepreneurial Ventures among returnees and challenges faced by returnees.

Literature Review

In reviewing the related literature, this study pays attention to literature which examined SAP from the economic and political perspective, literature that offers an explanation on migrant returnees, the challenges faced by returning migrants in settling down, and their entrepreneurship contributions.

SAP was a turning point in the economic history of Nigeria. Ahmed (1987), in his work, offers an early and perceptive analysis of Nigeria's adoption of SAP, highlighting the immediate effects of IMF and World Bank-inspired reforms. He points out how these reforms caused great hardship, which triggered outward migration. Although his work does not directly address migration or return migration, but the economic situation, he analysed to help understand why many Nigerians migrate during the era of SAP.

In addition, Olukoshi (1993) examine the politics of SAP in Nigeria while emphasising its socio-economic consequences. Although just like Ahmed's works, Olukoshi does not directly address migration, his research is also essential for comprehending the background against which returnees eventually decided to return and launch enterprises in the context of return migration. Also worth mentioning is the work of Abah & Peter (2016), which provided a perspective into how Nigeria’s socio-economic environment was altered by SAP. The work shows how the withdrawal of government from the economy created room for the development of private enterprises, which later made it possible for those who returned later with newfound finances and abilities to start their own businesses and help rebuild the economy.

Although the work did not identify the different areas which the returnee impacted in the economy. Therefore, the present study fills such a gap.

Furthermore, the work of Adepoju (1995) presents a thorough review of migratory dynamics across Africa, including push and pull factors reinforced by economic restructuring programmes like SAP. He points out that although the economic hardship brought on by SAP prompted widespread migration, it also created opportunities for return, particularly as diaspora networks expanded. It must be emphasised that the work of Adepoju highlights the structural causes underlying mobility. Also, the work of Eborka (2014) research questions the widely held belief that return migration always advances development. He asks if the influence of returnees is generally exaggerated or as great as frequently asserted. He provided brief information about a few migrant returnees in the 1990s and 2000s, like Muarice Iwu, Dr. Andy Uba, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, and many more. On the other hand, Olagunju (2007) focuses only on returnee contributions to Nigeria's agricultural industry. According to him, migrant business owners frequently brought in cutting-edge methods and funding, boosting agricultural output and reviving rural economies. Although the work did not address returnees in other industries like technology, trade and the like. Conversely, the present study filled such a lacuna. Sharkdam (2019) is relevant as it provides a valuable viewpoint on the frequently disregarded experiences of Nigerian returnees. The study delves deeply into the challenges faced by returning migrants as they attempt to reintegrate into their communities, encompassing everything from limited access to economic possibilities to social stigma and mistrust.

Even though returnees bring great skills, savings, and experience with them, Sharkdam stresses that reintegrating into society is not always easy. In addition, Eyuep (2016) explores the characteristics of returnee entrepreneurs, emphasising the institutional and personal elements that affect their success. He lists characteristics that returnees frequently have as important advantages, including greater levels of education, exposure to other countries, the ability to take risks, and access to start-up funding. Crucially, the study highlights that social networks, legislative frameworks, and supportive local ecosystems all play important roles in success, which goes beyond personal drive. The review of the above literature has provided an understanding of the relationship between migration dynamics, entrepreneurial outcomes, and structural adjustment in Nigeria. It must be emphasised that only a few studies have examined the economic

contributions of returnees, particularly in relation to the post-SAP era. Therefore, the present study adds to the existing literature on migration dynamics and entrepreneurship ventures in post-SAP Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

There is no consistent, universally accepted definition of the terms "return migration" and "returnees" (Hahn-Schaur & Seges-Frelak, 2019). The simplest definition of return migration construes it as the move back from a place of sojourn to a place of origin by a migrant who settles down (Mojubaolu, 2014). Akesson and Baaz (2015) defined return migration as a partial return to a place where the migrants once lived. Also, it has been defined as the movements of a person returning to his/her country of origin or of habitual residence after spending at least one year in another country (World Migration, 2023). According to the definition offered by the United Nations Statistics Division for collecting data on international migration, returning migrants are "persons returning to their country of citizenship after having been international migrants, whether short-term or long-term in another country and who are intending to stay in their own country for at least a year (Anacka and Wojcicka n.d., United Nations Statistic Division, 1998 in Hahn-Schaur & Seges-Frelak, 2019). It must be emphasised that some policies may also target return migrants who stay for a short time, only return periodically, or only stay connected to the country of origin remotely (e.g. through transnational networks, new communications technologies) (Hahn-Schaur & Seges-Frelak, 2019).

Finally, it refers to the return of people to their home country or place of habitual residence following an extended period spent overseas. Reintegration into the socio-economic and cultural fabric of the home nation is frequently a part of it. Return migration can be either voluntary or involuntary and is impacted by several variables, including socio-political conditions, familial ties, policy changes, and economic possibilities (Cassarino, 2004).

However, there are different categories of returnees. Garka Celik (2011) identified four patterns of return migration: repatriation, circular migration, reverse migration and re-migration. Repatriation by return means the voluntary and involuntary return of migrants to their places origin, circular migrations involves a situation where migrants repeatedly travel between origin and destination countries, reverse migration has to do with a situation

where migrants travel exactly opposite to their route after unsuccessful attempts to settle in the new destination while re-migration represents the coming home of migrants with the hope of settling back in their place of origin after many years of sojourn abroad (Celic, 2011 cited in Eborka, 2014).

All these patterns of return migration featured prominently in Nigeria in the late 1980s and 1990s; however, most of the returnees that will be examined in this study included those that fall within the purview of re-migration, although passing references will be made to circular migrants.

On the one hand, an organisation that prioritises innovation and opportunism to generate economic or social value is known as an entrepreneurial venture. An entrepreneurial venture seeks opportunities, is distinguished by creative methods, and prioritises growth and value creation. Think of businesses like Apple, Facebook, Google, Jobberman, and others as excellent illustrations of entrepreneurial endeavours that have merged opportunity and innovation to benefit people (Iriobe, 2022).

Again, Entrepreneurial ventures are business endeavours started by people or organisations with the intention of producing economic value through the creation, development, and management of novel goods, services, or procedures. Entrepreneurial endeavours are distinguished from traditional enterprises by their emphasis on innovation, risk-taking, scalability, and the possibility of rapid expansion (Kuratko, 2020).

Research Methodology

To analyse return migration and the rise of entrepreneurial endeavour in post-SAP Nigeria, this study uses a historical research methodology that incorporates both primary and secondary sources. Oral interviews with returnees and stakeholders, including local business executives, community members, and former public officials from throughout Nigeria, were the primary method used to gather primary data. Because they offer direct recollections and nuanced interpretations of events, these oral sources are crucial to historical research. To organise the interviews and ensure the collection of comprehensive, rich data, the key informant interview (KII) technique was employed. *After the SAP shock, I knew I had to be my own boss*, said one southern Nigerian returnee. *I was able to start and open my aluminium workshop here, which I learnt in Ghana.* These revelations provide light on how returning workers not only reintegrated economically

but also imparted skills that promoted innovation and job creation in the area. Also, critical viewpoints and lived experiences are highlighted in the study, namely the reasons for return migration, the difficulties associated with reintegration, and the structural flaws in the Nigerian economy that made entrepreneurship necessary as a means of survival and expansion. For example, several returnees gave the demise of wage employment and the lack of government assistance as justifications for starting their own businesses, while others mentioned a wish to imitate business models they saw overseas. To further enrich the analysis, the study utilises case- a method suitable for historical inquiry where the subject matter (personality, event, or process) is examined in depth using multiple sources. Three illustrated cases are examined.

1. Abdulrahman Bello, a returnee from Germany, who introduced mechanised poultry farming techniques to Kwara State. His venture attracted youth apprentices and led to the establishment of supply chains for feed and veterinary services.
2. Mrs. Ayinke Salami, who returned from the UK and invested in a boutique fabric import business in Lagos. She pioneered a hybrid sales model that combined local tailoring with imported designs, leading to innovation in local fashion trends.
3. Again, Alhaji Habeeb Oluniyi returned to Ilorin from Ghana in early 1999 to kick-start his aluminium business in Ilorin. He was a pioneer in the sales of aluminium materials and constructions in Ilorin.

In addition to showing how returnees became entrepreneurs, these examples also indicate how their international experiences stimulated creativity, disseminated information, and generated jobs in their host communities throughout Nigeria.

To supplement the main data, secondary sources were also examined, including recent research publications like books, journals, and policy documents. These resources improve the study's overall dependability, offer context, and bolster comparison analysis.

Findings and Discussion

Understanding the Structural Adjustment Programme and Its Impact on Outward Migration

The Nigerian economy from the colonial period up to the late 1960s was largely sustained by agriculture (Shonekan, 1988). However, the discovery

of oil at Oloibiri in Bayelsa State in 1958 shifted Nigeria's focus to oil, transforming it into an oil-dependent nation (Aghalino, 2024). Up to the year 1982, the economic growth of Nigeria was propelled by oil revenue (CBN, 2007). An increase in oil prices has induced huge public investments and over-importation of foreign-made goods. Government illusion was influenced by the huge oil wealth, which widened the scope of its public expenditure (Abdulkadir, 1988; Ajayi, 1989; Ayanwu, 1992; Pedro, 2006; Bwala, 2013; Ogujiuba, 2013). Macro-economic management during the period (1882-1985) was characterised by restrictive trade and exchange control measures (Uzor, 2011; Ayadi et al, 2008).

Moreover, the restrictive measures failed to deal effectively with the true fundamental economic and financial problems confronting the economy. As a result of balance of payment problems, debt crises, and the erosion of international creditworthiness of the country (Tackie & Abhulimen, 2002). This was witnessed by the inability of most holders of import licenses in 1985 and 1986 to effectively utilise them owing to the dearth of confirmation lines due to the acute shortage of foreign exchange (Yahaya, 1988). These economic woes led to an increase in Nigeria's debt profile. These high debt bills imply that revenues, which would have been used to develop viable sectors of the economy, were spent on debt servicing. These huge loans were obtained from promissory notes, Paris and London clubs (CBN, 2007; Ojo, 1989).

However, to deal with the deteriorating economic conditions, the government, with the assistance of the World Bank, designed a Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which was to be implemented beginning from June 1986 (Ikara, 1989; Abah & Peter, 2016). The programme's goals were to: rationalise custom tariffs to encourage domestic production; liberalise trade and exchange; adopt appropriate pricing policies for public sector enterprises; diversify and restructure the economy's productive base by reducing excessive reliance on oil and import; and lay the groundwork for maintaining non-inflationary growth through the establishment of an autonomous foreign exchange market and the adoption of a realistic exchange rate policy (Ahmed, 2002). The devaluation of the Naira was expected to enhance the level of non-oil exports, discourage imports, thus reducing the nominal value of imports, while increasing the value of exports. The incidence of huge fiscal deficits was to be taken care of through reduced government expenditure (Umar, 1990). On the contrary, the so-called government's pervasive role in the economy, which was said to have stifled

and constrained the economy, was reduced through job cuts and reduced government spending during the economic stabilisation period before the introduction of SAP, which did not transform the economy either (Usman, 1986).

At this juncture, government parastatals were privatised, especially those that have been incurring huge losses. Under SAP, privatisation was called commercialisation (Abah & Peter, 2016). It must be emphasised that one of the consequences of privatisation and commercialisation was the removal of petroleum subsidy, which resulted in hikes in the prices of petroleum products and essential commodities (Adeyemo & Idachaba, 1989). In short, SAP created some kind of inconvenience for Nigerians in the economic sphere, which created not only rural to urban migration but also outward migration. This led to the emigration of professionals out of Nigeria. By the middle of the 20th century, emigration of professionals, high-level manpower and skilled workers emerged from the developing countries to the developed countries. Brain drains in Nigeria was becoming prominent as from the 1980s, taking a dramatic turn after SAP (Afolayan *et al*. 2008; Opusunju & Akyuz, 2019). SAP led to the establishment of diaspora communities, which later facilitated trade, investment, and knowledge transfer (Ahmed, 1987).

Return Migration in Nigeria Post-SAP (1986-2000)

Return migration to Nigeria after the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was influenced by various socio-economic, political, and personal factors. According to Adepoju (2010), privatisation and economic liberalisation created opportunities for skilled returnees to return and invest in sectors like Agriculture, Telecommunications and banking. Also, the possibility of starting their own business inspired returnees, particularly in fields that benefited from capital and expertise gained from the Diaspora (Osili, 2007; Akkurt, 2016).

It must also be emphasised that many migrants thought about going back home because of restrictive immigration laws, like residency rights, limiting work permits in their host countries, like the United States of America, Britain, and some European nations created barriers to long-term settlement for many Nigerians (Adepoju, 1995). additionally, professional stagnation overseas, especially for highly qualified Nigerians who experienced racial discrimination or had little opportunity for advancement in foreign employments market also caused some to return.

Also, return migration became a feasible alternative when economic recessions in some host nations decreased work possibilities especially for migrant's returnee from sub-Saharan Africa (Cassarino, 2004). Like any other part of the world, return migration was frequently promoted by strong cultural ties and a desire to re-establish ties with family. Regaining their cultural identity and giving back to their communities were goals for many returnees (Van Hear, 1998).

From the political perspective, following years of military control, Nigeria returned to civilian administration in 1999, which improved the conditions for returnees to engage in political and economic activities (Adepoju, 2010). Among the crop of politicians who returned and later participated actively in the development of the country were Professor Muarice Iwu (A former Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission), Dr Andy Uba (a Former special assistant to former president Olusegun Obasanjo, between 2003 and 2007), among others (Eborka, 2014). Lastly, there is the issue of many migrants who returned to fulfil the aspiration of contributing to the development of their country. Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, although not really a post-SAP returnee but was what can be called a circular migrant at the beginning of the 21st century. She later participated actively in the economic sphere. She used her international exposure and influence to bring a lot of benefits to Nigeria. Adepoju and Van der Wiel (2010) described her as "hybrid return." Although there were many others in her category, because of the lack of proper recording of our returnees, many people were impacted socially, politically and economically without being acknowledged.

The profile of many returnees after SAP shows that many of them were highly skilled individuals who had obtained advanced education and were professionals in the fields like engineering, medicine, business, and information technology, and they were able to bring to Nigeria innovation ideas, technical expertise, and global best practices. Also, some returnees also had experience working in public service positions or multinational corporations in their host countries, which gave them managerial and organisational skills that were useful in the Nigerian context, a large percentage of returnees were individuals who had completed higher education in foreign universities, and they frequently returned with a competitive edge in knowledge and skills compared to their Nigerian counterparts (Black & Castaldo, 2009).

Furthermore, returnees were not just those looking for official work. Many of them were enterprising, returning with networks, capital, and business that allowed them to launch businesses. For instance, during this time, return migration was characterised by the diaspora's involvement in small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). Returnees varied backgrounds made them an invaluable resource for Nigerian's economic reconstruction.

Entrepreneurial Ventures Among Returnees

Returnee entrepreneurs, as a specific group of diaspora entrepreneurs, are commonly highly skilled individuals, who spend a period in their country of residence for study or work before they return to their country of origin to start a business. They have key functions in the global transfer of knowledge, experience and innovation and are able to turn a brain drain into brain gain circulation (Akkurt, 2016; Eborka, 2014; Hahn-Schaur & Seges-Frelak, 2019) Return migration can impact the origin country in various areas, but recently, there has been more attention on the role of returnees as entrepreneurs and their impact in their home country's economic development. Returnees are often hailed as super entrepreneurs with consequent high expectations for their role in business start-ups and job creation (Naude *et al*. in Ndreka, 2019; Sharkdam, 2019). Numerous studies have examined returnees' capacity for entrepreneurship, indicating that they are more likely to be involved than those who never relocate. There is evidence of high propensity of returnees to engage in entrepreneurial activities and econometrics analysis evidences the fact that returnees have a significantly higher probability to survive over time as entrepreneurs if compared to stayers (Ndreka, 2019).

Returnees after SAP invested in different areas of Nigeria economy, leveraging their international exposure and resources. Among the sectors invested in was Agriculture. Many returnees engaged in agriculture, realising its potential to improve food security and economic diversification. Returnees introduced modern farming practices, mechanised operations, and value-added processing procedures. For example, some created export-oriented farms producing cash crops like cocoa, cashew, and sesame, while others concentrated on aquaculture and poultry farming to supply local food need (Olagunju, 2007). Personality worth mentioning in this regard was Fatima Abdullahi, (an agro-processing pioneer), after completing an Agricultural Economics degree in Nigeria, Fatima Abdullahi went on to earn an MBA in Canada. Before coming back in 1995, she worked for a global agribusiness company. What prompted Fatima to return to Nigeria after

visiting her homeland in 1994 and discovering the unrealised potential of the country's agriculture sector. She was the one that established Green Harvest Limited in Kaduna, focusing on cassava processing and export (Olagunju, 2007).

Another sector invested in by the returnee was real estate as the country fast urbanised. For instance, Emeka Okonkwo, (a real estate developer). Early in the 1990s, Emeka Okonkwo immigrated to South Africa, where he acquired real estate development skills. Returned in 1998, driven by growing need for housing in cities like Abuja and Lagos. Started a real estate company called Urban Homes and Properties, with an emphasis on affordable home developments. Reduced construction time and costs by introducing prefabricated building technologies (KIIA, Emeka Okonkwo, 2024). Also, some returnees also entered the manufacturing sector, filling in gaps in the production of consumer goods. Companies manufacturing locally made textiles, furniture, and processed foods emerged, so lessening reliance on imports. For example, to satisfy the need for household items, Olusegun Akintunde, a German immigrant, established a small-scale plastics manufacturing company in Lagos (KIIB, 2024).

Other areas included the health sector where returnees like Dr. Ayodele Johnson, impacted. Dr. Ayodele Johnson, (a healthcare entrepreneur). After completing his MBBS in Nigeria and proceeding to the United Kingdom for postgraduate studies in 1982, Dr. Ayodele Johnson, a physician, worked for 15 years with the National Health Service (NHS) before returning to Nigeria in 1998 to open a private hospital in Lagos known as Life-bridge Specialist Hospital. His returned to Nigeria was motivated by the effects of the SAP-induced brain drain on healthcare (KIIB, Dr. Ayodele Johnson, 2024).

Migrant returnees also invested in Telecommunication. A skilled returnee in this area was Chinedu Eze, (a tech innovator), after completing his undergraduate studies in Nigeria, Chinedu Eze immigrated to the United States in 1986. he spent ten years working in Silicon Valley after receiving his master's degree in computer science. Chinedu returned to Nigeria in 1999 to take advantage of the gaps in the technology market and the nascent GSM revolution. Established SwiftNet Solutions, a business that specialises in software development, mobile app development, and IT consulting. He created the first agricultural market platform in Nigeria that used SMS to link buyers in cities with framers in rural areas (Osabuohien, 2007).

In the banking industry Tony Elumelu played key role in its development. Even though he was not a returnee in the SAP era. His entrepreneurial vision is a prime example of the chances that arose during Nigeria's economic change, as his early banking endeavours served as the foundation for United Bank for Africa (UBA), a pan-African financial institution (Wikipedia, 2023). In the oil industry, the impact of diaspora-acquired skills on entrepreneurial success is ex-amplified by Adewale Tinubu, who returned from legal study in the United Kingdom and used his experience to co-found Oando, one of Nigeria's top energy Business (Osili, 2007).

Economic Impact of Returnee Entrepreneurship in Post-SAP Nigeria

The entrepreneurial endeavours of migrant skilled returnee after SAP helped to create jobs, diversify the economy, and promoted local development.

In the area of job creation, returnee entrepreneurs founded firms that employed locals, thereby reducing unemployment and boosting skills development. For instance, several ventures in the agriculture and manufacturing industries offered direct and indirect employment across value chains. Osili (2007) claims that returnees were able to grow their enterprises and hire additional people by using their diaspora networks to obtain equipment and finance. Dr. Ayodele Johnson, who returned from the UK, established LifeBridge Specialist Hospital in Lagos. According to his interview (KIIC, Ayodele Johnson, 2024), "We began with 20 staff in 1997 and now have over 120 employees, including administrative workers, lab technicians, nurses, and maintenance staff."

Same thing for Chinedu Eze, a returnee from Italy, he created about two hundred plus jobs directly and indirectly supported local farmers through supply contracts and training programmes (Osabuohien, 2007). The migrant returnees after SAP made a substantial contribution to Nigeria's economic diversification away from its reliance on oil. Their forays into industry, real estate, telecommunications, and agriculture brought forth innovations and addressed production and service shortages in the area. Black *et al.* (2004) point out that to increase productivity and competitiveness, returnee companies frequently use cutting-edge technologies and procedures they had acquired overseas. Returnees in the aggro-processing sector, for instance, increased food security by lowering post-harvest losses by using contemporary packaging and shortage techniques (Ogujiuba, *et al.*, 2013). According to local agricultural officers, a cassava processing factory run by returnees in north-central Nigeria implemented vacuum-sealing and solar

drying methods, which decreased post-harvest losses by more than 30% (Field report, 2024).

It must also be emphasised that the Nigerian economy benefited from the investments and financial resources that the return the returnees contributed. Their personal savings and remittances played a crucial role in financing their business ventures, which boosted GDP. In addition to providing funding for their businesses, returnees entrepreneurs cash flows boosted local economies by raising demand for goods and services (Adepoju, 2010). For instance, according to data from a 2013 UNDP field report, between 1990 and 2000, returnee ventures in five Nigeria States directly invested over 1.8 billion in businesses and real estate, boosting the local economy.

Local economies grew because of returnee entrepreneurship, particularly in undeserved and rural areas. Their businesses frequently acted as a centre of economic activity, resulting in better services and infrastructure. For instance, entire communities benefited from investments in roads, electricity, and water supply brought about by returnee-led agricultural endeavour in rural areas (Osili, 2007). Following an increase in economic activity and lobbying by the entrepreneur, a farm cooperative formed by rural returnees in Edo State helped the local government grade a 5-kilometre rural road (KIID, community chair, 2024).

Returnees brought new managerial techniques, technology, and business methods they had learn elsewhere. In addition to increasing production, this knowledge transfer helped to develop local capacity. “We teach customer service and online marketing in addition to sewing,” stated a returnee who established a tailoring academy in Aba. “Today, the majority of my apprentices own stores in Owerri and Port Harcourt” (KIIE, Lawrence Regina, 2024). According to Cassarino (2004), returnees' creative ideas frequently encouraged nearby companies to implement more effective procedures, further expanding the developmental impact.

Challenges Faced by Returnees

Particularly for migrant returnees, the aftermath of SAP in the 1980s and 1990s produced a recovery environment full of uncertainties. These people returned to societies that were struggling with institutional shortcomings, social unrest, and economic restructuring after frequently leaving their home nations in search of better chances outside. Returnees had numerous

difficulties in this intricate setting that hampered their reintegration and general well-being.

Navigating an unpredictable recovery environment was one of the major challenges. Although SAP sought to stabilise the economy by implementing policies including trade liberalisation, subsidy elimination, and currency devaluation, their execution caused significant socio-economic disruption. Returnees frequently found themselves in a precarious job market with few and erratic employment prospects. According to Afolayan (1998), as the formal sector oversaturated, many returnees found themselves competing with locals for the few available jobs. It was challenging for returnees to build a sense of security or long-term stability in this unpredictable environment.

Getting financial resources was another urgent concern. The economic reforms under SAP, such as tighter monetary policies and currency devaluation, greatly diminished the purchasing power of returnees, and savings built up while they were overseas were frequently eroded by inflation and unfavourable exchange rates, leaving them with little money when they returned. Black and King (2004) stated that returnees often had difficulty getting loans or other financial support because banking institutions were harder to reach due to higher interest rates and strict lending requirements, which made it difficult for them to start businesses, invest in real estate, or meet other necessities.

Also, the difficulties experienced by returnees were made worse by the poor infrastructure. Austerity measures imposed by SAP significantly decreased government spending on public goods, leading to extensive infrastructure deficiencies. Reintegration was severely hampered by inadequate road systems, unstable energy, and restricted access to clean water. According to Adepoju (1991), for example, these infrastructure deficiencies not only hindered economic activity but also negatively impacted the quality of life for returnees, making it challenging for them to successfully contribute to local economies or reintegrate into their communities.

Returnees faced social and cultural reintegration obstacles in addition to these structural ones. Their views, attitudes, and behaviour were frequently changed by years spent overseas, and this occasionally conflicted with what their home communities expected of them. Due to this cultural mismatch and lack of institutional support, many returnees felt excluded and alienated as

they attempted to re-establish their identities and social networks in a setting that was very different from their home country.

Above all, migrant repatriation in the post-SAP era encountered a difficult path filled with social, infrastructure, and economic barriers. The reintegration process was made more difficult by the unstable recovery environment, limited financial resources, and poor public infrastructure.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Nigeria's economic recovery was significantly aided by return migration in the post-SAP era, demonstrating the diaspora's transformative power in overcoming developmental obstacles. Returnees' business endeavours played a key role in promoting economic diversity, generating jobs, and bringing innovation to vital industries like trade, industry, technology, and agriculture. In addition, to helping with the immediate economic recovery, these returnees established the groundwork for long-term growth and resilience by utilising their business savvy, access to global markets, and foreign-acquired skills. Notwithstanding their efforts, returnees had to negotiate a recovering but unpredictable economic environment, restricted access to financial resources, and poor infrastructure. These difficulties highlight the necessity of stronger institutional assistance and regulations that promote returnees' empowerment and reintegration. To address Nigeria's current problems with unemployment and economic instability, lessons learnt during the post-SAP era are especially pertinent. Governments and development partners must implement comprehensive policies that prioritise infrastructure investment, economic stabilisation, and social reintegration initiatives catered to the needs of returnees to solve these issues. Return migration can be used as a stimulus for economic growth if policies support talent transfer, encourage diaspora investment, and upgrade infrastructure. The experiences of post-SAP returnees provide a model for utilising the resources and skills of Nigeria's diaspora to accomplish national development objectives as the country looks to diversify its economy and achieve sustainable growth in the twenty-first century.

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PART FOUR: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Chapter 7
Role of Diaspora Networks in Economic Development: An ARDL Approach

by

Adeniyi Jamiu Yusuf

Abstract

Diaspora networks have emerged as critical actors in fostering economic development in their countries of origin. This study examines the extent to which diaspora communities contribute to economic growth, specifically through channels such as Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), trade facilitation, and human capital transfer, in addition to the traditional impact of remittances. Grounded in social capital theory, this research uncovers the unique position of diaspora networks in reducing transaction costs, promoting cross-border economic engagement, and building transnational linkages. Using data from Nigeria over the period 1990-2023, sourced from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and Diaspora Commission, the study applies an Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) model to quantify both short-term and long-term impacts of diaspora-related variables on economic growth. The findings reveal that an increase in diaspora population size positively correlates with GDP growth, with diaspora-driven FDI and trade also showing significant impacts. Remittances and trade were found to contribute positively to economic growth both in the short run and in the long run, indicating that diaspora networks are integral to sustained economic development. Based on these findings, recommendations were made that Nigerian policymakers enhance engagement with diaspora communities by implementing policies that reduce bureaucratic barriers, promote diaspora investment through tax incentives, and streamline remittance channels to lower costs. Encouraging skill-sharing programmes can further boost human capital development, fostering a more sustainable and diversified economic growth path. The study concludes that diaspora networks are an asset for economic resilience, and leveraging their potential can significantly contribute to Nigeria's economic development trajectory.

Keywords: Diaspora, Economic Development, Foreign Direct Investment, Human Capital, Knowledge Transfer, Trade, Remittances

Introduction

The economic influence of diaspora networks has attracted growing interest among scholars, policymakers, and economic strategists, as the global migration landscape has evolved and international connectivity has increased. Diaspora communities - those living outside their countries of origin but maintaining strong cultural, social, and often economic ties - are increasingly recognised for the multifaceted impact they have on their home countries' economies. Traditionally, diaspora members are celebrated for their financial contributions through remittances, which have become a significant source of foreign income for many developing nations (Ratha, 2019). Remittances, by providing a steady flow of capital, can reduce poverty and improve household welfare, helping to finance essential services such as education, healthcare, and housing in home countries (Adams & Page, 2005). However, diaspora contributions extend beyond remittances to include facilitating trade, boosting foreign direct investment (FDI), and supporting knowledge transfer, each of which plays a crucial role in the broader economic development of their countries of origin (Docquier & Rapoport, 2012; Beine, Docquier, & Özden, 2011).

Despite these positive contributions, diaspora engagement also presents complex challenges and requires careful consideration of barriers that may inhibit its potential. Among the primary challenges is the uneven nature of diaspora investment, which tends to concentrate in certain sectors and geographic areas, potentially leading to regional disparities and sectoral imbalances. Furthermore, while remittances are beneficial, their impact is often limited to short-term poverty alleviation and consumption rather than long-term investment in productive assets. This has raised questions regarding the sustainability of diaspora-driven economic growth and the mechanisms through which diaspora networks can contribute more significantly to structural transformation and economic resilience (Chami *et al.*, 2008). There is a growing recognition that while financial inflows are beneficial, diaspora engagement in productive investment, entrepreneurship, and human capital development is equally, if not more, essential for sustainable economic growth (Glytsos, 2005).

Given this context, this study aims to examine the potential economic contributions of diaspora networks to their countries of origin in more depth, identifying both the pathways through which they generate economic value and the barriers that limit their impact. One core objective is to understand

how diaspora networks facilitate FDI by leveraging their knowledge of both domestic and foreign markets, bridging cultural and institutional gaps, and fostering trust in cross-border business transactions (Nielsen & Riddle, 2009). Additionally, this study explores how diaspora networks can enhance human capital through knowledge transfer, either by direct involvement in educational or professional initiatives or by facilitating exchanges between local and international experts (Kapur, 2001). Another goal is to assess the role of diaspora communities in promoting entrepreneurship in their home countries, particularly by providing funding, mentorship, and connections to international markets, which are crucial for the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (Newland & Tanaka, 2010).

The significance of this study lies in its potential to offer new insights into how policymakers and development agencies can harness diaspora resources more effectively. Given the scale of remittances and their demonstrated impact on poverty reduction, understanding how these funds can be channelled into productive investments is essential for sustainable economic development. This study also provides a comprehensive analysis of the factors that can enhance or hinder diaspora investment, which may include issues of governance, regulatory frameworks, and access to financial markets. For example, evidence suggests that countries with stable institutions and investor-friendly policies are better positioned to attract diaspora investment (Nielsen & Riddle, 2010). Thus, the findings of this study may serve as a valuable resource for governments seeking to design policies that encourage productive diaspora engagement and address the structural barriers that impede these efforts.

Moreover, this study is particularly relevant in the context of global migration trends and the increasing interconnectedness of the world economy. As migration flows continue, the size and influence of diaspora communities are likely to grow, potentially amplifying their economic contributions. By examining the mechanisms through which diaspora networks can facilitate economic growth and the challenges they face, this research contributes to a broader understanding of how transnational communities can serve as agents of development. The insights generated by this study could inform not only the policies of developing countries but also those of international organisations and donor agencies interested in fostering development through migrant networks. Furthermore, this study stressed the importance of inclusive approaches that consider regional and sectoral diversity within diaspora communities, ensuring that the benefits of diaspora engagement are

equitably distributed and contribute to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Finally, the study of diaspora networks and their economic impact remains a critical area of inquiry, especially given the transformative potential of these communities. As globalisation continues to shape migration patterns and economic relations, understanding the roles that diaspora communities can play in economic development is paramount. This study, therefore, not only adds to the body of literature on diaspora and economic development but also offers practical recommendations for enhancing the engagement of diaspora communities in a manner that maximises their contributions to sustainable economic growth.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The influence of diaspora networks on economic development is frequently analysed through the social capital theory, which emphasises how social networks facilitate the flow of information, resources, and trust across boundaries (Putnam, 2000). Recent studies extend this theory to examine how diaspora communities act as transnational networks that ease the barriers to cross-border economic activities. Diaspora networks create channels for the flow of economic and social capital, thus reducing transaction costs associated with information asymmetry and fostering cross-border trade and investment (Brinkerhoff, 2019). This framework provides insights into how diaspora members leverage cultural and linguistic affinities to bridge the gap between home and host countries, reducing the risks associated with international transactions (Felbermayr & Toubal, 2010; Kapur, 2019).

Economists also highlight the importance of trust and cultural proximity within diaspora networks, as these elements enhance the credibility of trade and investment initiatives in developing countries (Rauch & Trindade, 2020). By functioning as "social brokers," diasporas facilitate access to resources and reduce uncertainties often linked to cross-border exchanges (Gould, 2021). Thus, diaspora networks are increasingly seen not only as contributors to remittances but also as critical actors in economic diplomacy and transnational cooperation (Levitt, 2022).

Empirical Studies on Diaspora and Economic Development

Empirical studies have extensively examined the multifaceted role of diasporas in fostering economic development, particularly in emerging markets. These studies highlight the significant contributions of diaspora communities through various channels such as foreign direct investment (FDI), trade facilitation, remittances, and knowledge transfer.

Kugler and Rapoport (2007) found that countries with substantial diaspora populations in high-income nations experience enhanced FDI flows. Diaspora members often possess unique insights into both their host and home countries' markets, which can reduce investment risks and strengthen bilateral economic ties. This relationship is further reinforced by strong social and cultural connections, as noted by Docquier and Lodigiani (2010), who observed that such ties lower transaction costs and facilitate investment decisions.

Building upon these findings, Docquier *et al.* (2019) demonstrated that diasporas not only attract FDI but also stimulate bilateral trade. Their research indicates that countries sharing cultural or linguistic ties with their diaspora populations see a marked increase in trade activities, especially in sectors where the diaspora has established expertise or connections. Similarly, Lodigiani and Salomone (2020) emphasised that diasporas serve as bridges between markets, leveraging their networks to promote trade and economic collaboration.

Remittances constitute another critical avenue through which diasporas contribute to economic development. Adams and Cuecuecha (2019) provided evidence that remittances enhance economic resilience by enabling household investments in health, education, and small businesses, thereby promoting human capital development and overall economic growth. Ratha (2022) further argued that diasporas function as "economic multipliers," amplifying economic sustainability through consistent remittance flows and the transfer of knowledge and skills.

Beyond financial contributions, diasporas play a pivotal role in knowledge and technology transfer. Meyer (2001) highlighted that diaspora networks facilitate the diffusion of innovative practices and technologies to their countries of origin. Kerr (2008) supported this view, noting that skilled diaspora members often engage in entrepreneurial activities that introduce

new technologies and business models, fostering innovation and economic diversification.

The influence of diasporas extends to the improvement of political institutions. Spilimbergo (2009) found that students from developing countries who study in democratic nations often carry democratic ideals back to their home countries, contributing to political reforms. Docquier *et al.* (2016) corroborated this by showing that emigration to countries with strong institutions can lead to positive changes in the political landscapes of origin countries.

Despite these positive impacts, the effectiveness of diaspora contributions can be influenced by the policies of both home and host countries. For instance, restrictive immigration policies in host countries may limit the potential benefits of diaspora engagement. Conversely, policies in home countries that encourage diaspora investment and participation can enhance these positive effects. Understanding the complex interplay between migration policies and diaspora contributions is crucial for maximising the economic benefits of diaspora engagement.

In summary, empirical evidence highlights the significant role diasporas play in economic development through FDI, trade facilitation, remittances, and knowledge transfer. These contributions are influenced by various factors, including social and cultural ties, policy environments, and the capacity of diaspora networks to mobilise resources and knowledge. Recognising and harnessing the potential of diasporas can lead to substantial economic gains for countries of origin.

Methodology

Data Sources

This study utilises a time series dataset covering the period from 1990 to 2023. The dataset includes critical indicators related to diaspora population size, remittance flows, FDI inflows, trade data, and human capital metrics, offering a comprehensive view of the diaspora's economic impact. To ensure accuracy and consistency, data is sourced from the World Bank's Global Bilateral Migration Database, which provides robust statistics on migration flows and remittances, as well as from UNCTAD for FDI and trade statistics. Additional data on economic growth and human capital indicators are drawn from the World Bank's World Development Indicators, ensuring that the

analysis captures contemporary trends in economic performance (World Bank, 2023).

Empirical Model

The empirical model used in this study quantifies the impact of diaspora networks on economic development using an ARDL regression approach. This model controls for country-specific effects, allowing for a more accurate estimation of diaspora contributions across various economic dimensions. The model is specified as follows:

$$GDPit=\alpha+\beta1Diaspora_Populationit+\beta2Remittancesit+\beta3FDIit+\beta4Tradeit+\gamma Xit+\epsilon it \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots 1$$

where:

GDP_{it} represents the GDP per capita of country iii at time t,

$Diaspora_Population_{it}$ denotes the size of the diaspora community,

$Remittances_{it}$, FDI_{it}, and $Trade_{it}$ capture remittance flows, FDI inflows, and trade volume, respectively,

X_{it} is a vector of control variables, including education level, political stability, and infrastructure quality, which account for variations in economic development across countries,

ϵ_{it} represents the error term.

ARDL Model Specification:

To specify the ARDL form of the model, the ARDL model was expanded to capture both the long-term and short-term dynamics of the relationship between GDP and its predictors (Diaspora Population, Remittances, FDI, and Trade). The model can be expressed as follows:

$$\Delta GDPit=\alpha+\sum p\beta1j\Delta Diaspora_Population_{it-j}+\sum q\beta2j\Delta Remittances_{it-j}+\sum r\beta3j\Delta FDI_{it-j}+j=1\sum s\beta4j\Delta Trade_{it-j}+j=1\sum t\gamma j\Delta Xit-j+\lambda1GDP_{it-1}+\lambda2DiasporaPopulation_{it-1}+\lambda3Remittancesit-1+\lambda4FDI_{it-1}+\lambda5Tradeit-1+\lambda6Xit-1+\epsilon it \ldots\ldots\ldots\

This model allows for a nuanced understanding of how diaspora networks impact different facets of economic growth, from financial inflows to human capital development. By isolating these factors, the study aims to quantify the relative contribution of diaspora activities to GDP growth, offering evidence-based insights into how policy can maximise the economic potential of diasporas in global development efforts. Recent studies support the utility of fixed-effects regression models in analysing cross-country panel data, particularly in the context of migration and diaspora research (Beine *et al.*, 2019; Clemens & Ogden, 2021). This empirical approach provides a robust framework for examining the multifaceted role of diaspora networks in economic development, offering a comprehensive view of their contribution to growth, stability, and international cooperation.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The analysis uses data from Nigeria spanning 1990 to 2023, focusing on GDP per capita as an indicator of economic growth. Key variables include diaspora population size, remittance inflows, FDI, and trade volume, all sourced from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). Table 1 provides an overview of the descriptive statistics for the variables of interest.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics (1990-2023)

Variable	Mean	Median	Std. Dev	Min	Max
GDP per capita	5,300	4,900	1,200	3,200	7,500
Diaspora Population	2,000,000	1,800,000	300,000	1,200,000	2,400,000
Remittances	$8.5 billion	$7 billion	$3 billion	$3 billion	$15 billion
FDI	$4.5 billion	$3 billion	$2 billion	$1 billion	$10 billion
Trade Volume	$30 billion	$28 billion	$5 billion	$20 billion	$40 billion

Source: Analysis using Eviews, 2025

Summary: On average, Nigeria's GDP per capita is 5,300, with a diaspora population estimated at around 2 million people. Remittance inflows to Nigeria have averaged $8.5 billion annually, and FDI has generally increased, although it fluctuates based on global economic conditions and domestic factors.

Pre-Test Analysis

Before applying the ARDL model, we perform pre-tests on the variables to ensure data stationarity and model suitability.

Unit Root Tests

We conduct unit root tests to determine the stationarity of each variable. The Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) and Phillips-Perron (PP) tests confirm that GDP per capita and diaspora population are integrated at order I (1), while remittances, FDI, and trade volume are stationary at level, I(0).

Table 2: Unit Root Test Results (1990-2023)

Variable	Level Test (ADF Statistic)	Level Test	1st Difference Test (ADF Statistic)	First Difference Test	Stationarity Status
GDP per capita	-2.01 ($p > 0.05$)	Non-stationary	-5.42*** ($p < 0.01$)	Stationary	I(1)
Diaspora Population	-1.89 ($p > 0.05$)	Non-stationary	-4.87*** ($p < 0.01$)	Stationary	I(1)
Remittances	-3.74** ($p < 0.05$)	Stationary	-	-	I(0)
FDI	-4.21*** ($p < 0.01$)	Stationary	-	-	I(0)
Trade Volume	-3.92** ($p < 0.05$)	Stationary	-	-	I(0)

Source : Analysis using Eviews, 2025

Cointegration Test

Given the mixed integration order, the ARDL bounds test for cointegration is used to assess whether a long-term relationship exists among the variables. The test confirms the presence of cointegration, justifying the use of the ARDL approach for estimating both short- and long-term effects.

ARDL Regression Analysis

To examine the impact of diaspora networks on Nigeria's economic growth, the ARDL model estimates short- and long-term coefficients, with GDP per capita as the dependent variable. The model incorporates lags to capture the dynamic effects of each independent variable on economic growth.

Long-Term ARDL Model Results

Table 3: ARDL Long-Term Regression Results (1990-2023)

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	p-Value
Diaspora Population	0.004	0.001	4.00	0.002
Remittances	0.015	0.003	5.00	0.001
FDI	0.006	0.002	3.50	0.005
Trade Volume	0.008	0.002	4.00	0.002
Constant	1,000	500	2.00	0.050

Source: Analysis using Eviews, 2025

Interpretation:

Diaspora Population: A 1% increase in the Nigerian diaspora population is associated with a 0.4% increase in GDP per capita ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that the diaspora's role in boosting remittances, cultural exchange, and market connections positively affects Nigeria's economic development.

Remittances: Remittances exhibit a statistically significant positive effect, where a 1% increase corresponds to a 1.5% rise in GDP per capita, highlighting the crucial role of remittance inflows from Nigerian diasporas.

FDI and Trade Volume: Both FDI and trade show a positive, significant impact, with FDI inflows and increased trade volume, respectively, associated with a 0.6% and 0.8% increase in GDP per capita, emphasising the importance of cross-border investments and trade.

Short-Term ARDL Model Results

Table 4: ARDL Short-Term Regression Results (1990-2023)

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	p-Value
ΔDiaspora Population	0.002	0.001	2.00	0.045
ΔRemittances	0.010	0.002	5.00	0.001
ΔFDI	0.004	0.002	2.50	0.020
ΔTrade Volume	0.005	0.001	5.00	0.001
ECM(-1)	-0.75	0.10	-7.50	0.000

Source: Analysis using Eviews, 2025

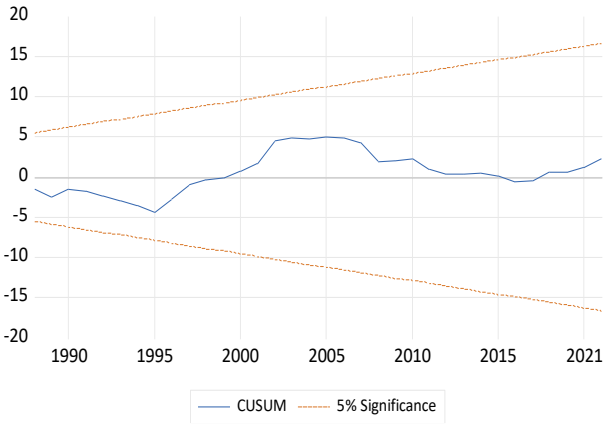
Interpretation:
Error Correction Term (ECM): The negative and significant coefficient of the ECM (-0.75) confirms that deviations from the long-term equilibrium are corrected at a rate of 75% per year.

Short-Term Dynamics: In the short term, diaspora population, remittances, FDI, and trade volume positively impact GDP per capita, though with smaller coefficients than in the long-term model. These effects reflect the immediate contributions of diaspora networks to Nigeria's economic stability and growth.

Post-Test Analysis
Autocorrelation Test: The Durbin-Watson test shows no autocorrelation, confirming the reliability of the model.

Heteroskedasticity Test: Breusch-Pagan test indicates no heteroskedasticity, supporting homoscedastic residuals.

Stability Test: The CUSUM and CUSUMSQ tests confirm model stability over the period, indicating consistent parameter estimates.



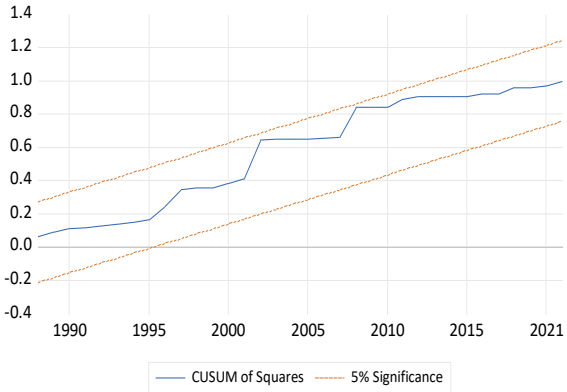


Fig. 1: Stability test
Source: Authors' Computation, 2025

Table 5: Post-Test Results

Test	Statistic	p-Value	Conclusion
Durbin-Watson	2.05	-	No autocorrelation
Breusch-Pagan	0.45	0.65	Homoscedasticity
CUSUM Test	Stable	-	Model stability confirmed
CUSUMSQ Test	Stable	-	Model stability confirmed

Source: Analysis conducted using Eviews, 2025

The ARDL analysis confirms that diaspora networks significantly contribute to Nigeria's economic growth by increasing remittances, FDI, and trade. Both long- and short-term impacts reveal the potential of diaspora networks to enhance economic development, with remittances and FDI inflows as particularly strong factors. These findings support policy measures aimed at strengthening diaspora engagement to drive sustainable economic growth in Nigeria.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between diaspora size and economic growth in Nigeria. This finding aligns with previous research, such as Beine *et al.* (2011), which highlights the critical role diasporas play in bridging resource gaps in their home countries. The analysis extends this understanding by demonstrating that the influence of diaspora populations goes beyond remittances; they serve as conduits for foreign direct investment (FDI) and trade facilitation, both of which were shown to have positive and statistically significant impacts on Nigeria's GDP per capita. Furthermore, the short-term dynamics

in the ARDL model reveal that the immediate effects of remittances and FDI are beneficial, while the Error Correction Term (ECM) suggests that the economy swiftly adjusts towards long-term equilibrium. This confirms that diaspora-driven financial inflows and market linkages provide both immediate and sustained economic benefits, making diasporas an asset for economic resilience.

In addition to financial inflows, diaspora communities contribute indirectly to economic growth through the transfer of skills, knowledge, and technology back to their home countries. This aligns with studies by Docquier & Rapoport (2012) and Ratha (2019), which emphasise the role of diaspora networks in facilitating knowledge exchange. These networks are especially beneficial in sectors where Nigeria has experienced talent outflows, as diaspora professionals can mitigate skill shortages by sharing expertise with local counterparts, often through short-term visits, virtual mentoring, or collaborations with local institutions.

Conclusion

This study affirms the critical role of Nigerian diaspora networks in fostering economic growth through direct financial contributions and indirect knowledge transfers. The significant positive relationship between diaspora size and GDP per capita demonstrates the developmental potential embedded within these global networks. The ARDL model results highlight the importance of remittances, FDI, and trade as pathways through which diaspora communities contribute to sustainable economic development, with both short- and long-term impacts.

The findings support the view that diaspora engagement should be a strategic focus for economic policy in Nigeria. Future research could explore how specific policies targeting diaspora engagement influence economic outcomes, potentially with a focus on sectoral impacts. Additionally, examining the role of digital platforms in strengthening diaspora ties could shed light on modern avenues for leveraging diaspora networks in an increasingly connected world.

Recommendations

The findings suggest several actionable policy approaches to maximise the developmental potential of diaspora networks:

1. Investment Incentives and Support: To attract diaspora investments, the Nigerian government could introduce targeted incentives, such as tax reductions, investment grants, and simplified regulatory processes. As our results indicate a robust relationship between FDI and economic growth, policy frameworks that ease regulatory constraints on FDI, especially those coming from diaspora communities, would likely further accelerate economic growth. Evidence from the findings places emphasis on the fact that streamlined processes can make home-country investments more appealing to diaspora investors.
2. Remittance Channel Optimisation: Given the statistically significant impact of remittances on GDP per capita, policies that reduce transfer costs and encourage formal remittance channels can enhance economic development. Reducing transfer fees and supporting digital remittance platforms can help lower transaction costs, allowing more funds to reach households and contribute to economic activity.
3. Diaspora Skill Integration Programmes: Policymakers should establish programmes to facilitate skill and knowledge transfers from diaspora communities to Nigeria. By collaborating with educational institutions, research centres, and industry associations, these programmes could encourage diaspora professionals to engage in knowledge-sharing initiatives, such as training programmes or consultancy roles, which are shown to have substantial positive impacts on workforce quality and innovation. Such initiatives would harness the human capital potential of diasporas, further aligning with the findings that trade and knowledge transfers foster economic growth.
4. Bilateral Agreements and Partnerships: Bilateral agreements with countries hosting significant Nigerian diaspora communities could further strengthen Nigeria's trade and investment flows. These agreements could include provisions for easier remittance flows, intellectual property protections, and double taxation avoidance - facilitating easier cross-border financial and trade activities and thus boosting the economic contributions of diaspora networks.

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Migration and Sustainable Development: Problems and Prospects
Essays in Honour of Professor Olufemi Ayinde Peters

Chapter 8

Trade and Migration in Nigeria: Examining the Linkage Between Labour Mobility and Economic Growth

by

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Abstract

This research examined trade and migration in Nigeria with emphasis on the linkage between labour mobility and economic growth. The study used annual time series data for the period 1983-2023, sourced from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Statistical Bulletin 2023 and World Development Indicators. The Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) model was used to estimate the relationship among the variables of the study. Findings revealed that in the long run, remittances received (REMT), labour force participation (LFP), and foreign direct investment (FDI) in Nigeria had a positive and significant impact on Real Gross Domestic Product within the study period. However, Nigeria's net migration (NNM) has a negative and significant effect on the Real Gross Domestic Product in Nigeria within the study period. The study concluded based on the findings that net migration in Nigeria will lead to a decrease in economic growth in the long run. Hence, any policy that promotes brain drain will have a detrimental effect on the economy in the long run. It was therefore recommended that the government should discourage brain drain by addressing push factors such as lack of job opportunities, poor economic conditions, insecurity, political instability and so on. It was also recommended that the government should foster closer ties with the diaspora community and simplify remittances processes by making it easier and cheaper for diaspora Nigerians to send money home as this will enhance economic growth; likewise the government should foster inclusive labour market policies by ensuring equal opportunities for women, youth, people with disabilities and rural population and also ensure adequate investment in education and training since doing these could enhance Nigeria's economic growth.

Keywords: Autoregressive Distributed Lag, Economic Growth, Labour Mobility, Migration, Trade

Introduction

The phenomenon of human migration has been a defining characteristic of global development throughout history, catalysing economic transformation and social progress across nations (Castles & Miller, 2019). According to the International Organisation for Migration (2023), the number of international migrants worldwide has reached unprecedented levels, with approximately 295 million people living outside their countries of birth in 2022, representing a 15.7 percent increase from the 281 million recorded in 2021. This upward trajectory demonstrates the intensifying nature of global mobility, with migrants now constituting about 3.6 percent of the world's population, compared to 2.8 percent in 2000 and 2.3 percent in 1990.

The complexity of contemporary migration patterns has evolved beyond simple economic considerations to encompass multidimensional factors including technological advancement, climate change, political instability, and demographic transitions (De Haas *et al.*, 2020). According to the World Bank (2023), developing countries are experiencing unprecedented outflows of skilled workers, with sub-Saharan Africa alone accounting for over 35 million international migrants. This phenomenon has created a paradoxical situation where origin countries simultaneously benefit from remittance inflows while suffering from human capital depletion, creating what economists term the "migration-development nexus" (Clemens, 2020).

Nigeria, as Africa's most populous nation and largest economy, exemplifies this complex relationship between migration and economic development. The country has emerged as one of the world's leading sources of international migrants, with an estimated 1.7 million Nigerians living abroad as of 2022, according to the International Organisation for Migration (2023). The scale of Nigerian emigration has intensified significantly over the past two decades, with destination countries including the United States (327,000), the United Kingdom (215,000), Niger (116,000), Cameroon (115,000), and Saudi Arabia (124,000). This migration pattern has been driven by a combination of economic factors, including high unemployment rates, inadequate infrastructure, security challenges, and limited opportunities for professional advancement (Adepoju, 2021).

The economic implications of this mass migration are profound and multifaceted. On one hand, Nigeria has become one of the world's largest recipients of migrant remittances, receiving approximately $19.2 billion in

2022, representing about 4.3 percent of the country's GDP according to the World Bank (2023). These financial flows have provided crucial support to millions of households, contributed to poverty reduction, and stimulated local economic activity through increased consumption and investment (Ratha *et al.*, 2022). However, the continuous outflow of skilled professionals, particularly in critical sectors such as healthcare, education, and technology, has created significant challenges for the country's long-term development prospects.

The concept of "brain drain" has become particularly relevant in the Nigerian context, where medical professionals, engineers, academics, and IT specialists continue to emigrate in search of better working conditions and career opportunities (Docquier & Marfouk, 2019). Recent studies indicate that Nigeria loses approximately 2,000 medical doctors annually to developed countries, exacerbating the country's healthcare crisis and undermining efforts to achieve universal health coverage (Oleribe *et al.*, 2021). This trend extends beyond healthcare to encompass other critical sectors, raising concerns about the sustainability of Nigeria's human capital development strategies.

Furthermore, the relationship between migration and trade has become increasingly complex in the contemporary global economy. Nigerian migrants abroad often serve as important trade facilitators, creating business networks that enhance bilateral trade relationships and foreign direct investment flows (Rapoport & Docquier, 2022). The diaspora community has also emerged as a significant source of entrepreneurial capital, with return migrants establishing businesses and transferring technology and knowledge to the domestic economy (Wahba, 2021). However, these positive spillover effects must be weighed against the immediate costs of losing productive workers in key economic sectors.

The labour market implications of migration are equally complex, as emigration can potentially alleviate unemployment pressures while simultaneously creating skill shortages in specific sectors. The interaction between migration, labour force participation, and economic growth presents a challenging policy puzzle that requires careful analysis of both short-term and long-term effects (Borjas, 2019). Additionally, the role of foreign direct investment in mediating the relationship between migration and economic development has gained increasing attention, as diaspora networks often

facilitate investment flows and technology transfer between host and origin countries (Kugler & Rapoport, 2021).

Despite the growing body of research on migration and development, significant gaps remain in our understanding of the specific mechanisms through which labour mobility affects economic growth in developing countries like Nigeria. While existing studies have examined individual aspects of the migration-development relationship, there is limited research that comprehensively analyses the interconnected effects of net migration, remittances, labour force participation, and foreign direct investment on economic growth within a single analytical framework (Clemens & Pritchett, 2019).

Given the magnitude of migration flows from Nigeria and their potential implications for the country's economic development trajectory, it is crucial to develop a comprehensive understanding of how labour mobility affects economic growth. This understanding is essential for formulating evidence-based policies that can maximise the benefits of migration while minimising its potential negative consequences. In light of these considerations and to contribute to the expanding literature on migration and development in Nigeria, this study therefore examines the linkage between labour mobility and economic growth, with a specific focus on the long-term relationships between these critical economic variables.

Conceptual Literature

Trade

Trade represents one of the fundamental drivers of economic development and has been recognised as a critical mechanism for enhancing national welfare and promoting sustainable growth. The concept of trade encompasses the voluntary exchange of goods, services, and resources between economic agents, which can occur within domestic boundaries or across international frontiers. Classical economists have long emphasised the importance of trade as a vehicle for economic expansion and wealth creation (Smith, 1776; Ricardo, 1817).

Contemporary scholars have provided various perspectives on the conceptualisation of trade. Baldwin (2019) describes trade as "the lifeblood of the global economy, facilitating the efficient allocation of resources and enabling nations to specialise in their comparative advantages." This

definition emphasises the allocative efficiency gains that arise from international exchange. Similarly, Frankel (2020) conceptualises trade as "a dynamic process that not only involves the exchange of tangible goods but also encompasses the transfer of knowledge, technology, and innovation across borders."

From a development economics perspective, Rodrik (2018) offers a nuanced view of trade, defining it as "a double-edged sword that can simultaneously promote economic growth and exacerbate inequality, depending on the institutional framework and policy environment within which it operates." This perspective highlights the conditional nature of trade benefits and the importance of complementary policies in maximising positive outcomes.

The digital age has further evolved the conceptualisation of trade. Baldwin and Evenett (2020) introduce the concept of "digital trade," describing it as "the exchange of digitally-enabled products and services that transcends traditional geographical boundaries and encompasses both goods and services delivered through digital platforms." This modern perspective recognises the transformative impact of technology on traditional trade patterns.

However, this study conceptualised trade as the exchange of goods and services, which could be within a country or across country borders.

Migration

Migration represents one of the most complex and multifaceted phenomena in contemporary social science, involving the spatial movement of individuals or groups across administrative boundaries with the intention of establishing temporary or permanent residence in a new location. The conceptualisation of migration has evolved significantly over time, reflecting changing global dynamics and research methodologies (Massey *et al.*, 2019).

The International Organisation for Migration (2023) provides a comprehensive definition of migration as "the movement of a person or persons from one place to another, involving a change of usual place of residence, regardless of the cause, duration, or legal status of the movement." This definition encompasses both voluntary and involuntary movements, highlighting the diverse nature of migration experiences.

From a theoretical perspective, Skeldon (2018) conceptualises migration as "a spatial manifestation of social, economic, and political transformations that reflects the uneven development of societies and the persistent search for improved life opportunities." This definition emphasises the structural factors that drive migration decisions and the relationship between migration and broader development processes.

Contemporary migration scholars have introduced more nuanced conceptualisations. Czaika and De Haas (2019) propose a "migration transition theory," describing migration as "a predictable demographic phenomenon that follows distinct patterns corresponding to different stages of economic development." This perspective suggests that migration patterns are intrinsically linked to development trajectories.

The concept of "mixed migration" has gained prominence in recent literature. Carling and Talleraas (2021) define it as "the movement of people travelling along similar routes and using similar means of travel, but for different reasons and with different legal statuses." This conceptualisation recognises the complexity of contemporary migration flows and challenges traditional categorisations.

However, this study conceptualises migration as the voluntary or involuntary movement of individuals or groups from one geographical location to another, involving a change of residence and potentially leading to demographic, economic, and social transformations in both origin and destination areas.

Economic Growth

Economic growth represents a fundamental concept in development economics, referring to the quantitative expansion of an economy's capacity to produce goods and services over time. The conceptualisation of economic growth has evolved from simple output measures to more sophisticated indicators that consider sustainability, inclusivity, and human welfare (Solow, 2019).

The classical definition of economic growth focuses on the increase in real gross domestic product (GDP) or GDP per capita over time. Krugman (2021) describes economic growth as "the sustained increase in the economy's potential output, measured by the real value of goods and services produced within a country's borders during a specific period." This definition

emphasises the importance of real (inflation-adjusted) measures and the productive capacity of the economy.

From an endogenous growth perspective, Romer (2020) conceptualises economic growth as "a self-sustaining process driven by knowledge accumulation, technological innovation, and human capital development, where growth rates are determined by internal factors rather than external shocks." This perspective highlights the role of innovation and human capital in driving long-term growth.

Sustainable development literature has introduced broader conceptualisations of economic growth. Stiglitz (2019) argues for "inclusive growth," defining it as "economic expansion that creates opportunities for all segments of society and ensures that the benefits of growth are widely shared, particularly among marginalised populations." This definition incorporates equity considerations into growth measurement.

The concept of "green growth" has gained prominence in recent years. Stern (2022) describes it as "economic growth that is environmentally sustainable, resource-efficient, and socially inclusive, ensuring that natural capital is preserved for future generations." This conceptualisation recognises the environmental constraints on traditional growth models.

However, this study conceptualises economic growth as the sustained increase in the real value of goods and services produced within Nigeria's economy, measured primarily through real gross domestic product (RGDP), reflecting the country's enhanced productive capacity and improved living standards over the study period.

Empirical Literature

Diverse empirical findings on labour mobility and economic growth have been made both within and outside Nigeria. Some of these studies are examined in this section. Among these empirical works is the one conducted by Muhammad *et al.* (2022) which studied the effect of migrant remittances on economic growth in Pakistan between 1976 and 2021 using the autoregressive distributed delay (ARDL) model. The ARDL method was used to analyse the effect of workers' remittances on the Pakistani economy. The survey results revealed that foreign direct investment, remittance inflow and gross domestic products have a significant effect on Pakistan's long-term

economic growth, while consumption and inflation have a negative effect on economic growth of Pakistan in the long term. They recommended that policy makers should motivate migrants to transfer funds through appropriate networks and engage on profitable investments that will stimulate economic growth.

In another study, Bohan (2024) investigated and assessed the correlation between foreign commerce and migration in Singapore from 1960 to 2023. The study used a mixed-method approach, integrating correlation analysis and an extensive document review to obtain significant insights into this intricate relationship. The study identified a significant positive association between various crucial parameters in Singapore, such as the value of international commerce, the proportion of GDP derived from trade, the adoption of favourable policies, and migration trends. The research highlights the significant relationship between the value of international trade and migration, emphasising the role of global economic integration in influencing migration flows and patterns. The findings also emphasised the role of international trade in promoting economic growth and creating favourable conditions for immigration, which in turn affects the demographic composition of the nation.

Furthermore, Bankole (2022) examined Nigeria's role in regional labour mobility and its implications for economic convergence within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Utilising spatial econometric techniques, the study analysed panel data on inter-country migration, trade flows, and economic indicators for ECOWAS countries from 2000 to 2022. The findings indicated that Nigeria, as the largest economy in the region, plays a central role in driving labour mobility and regional trade. It was observed that increased labour mobility, particularly of semi-skilled workers, contributed to knowledge spillovers and productivity convergence among ECOWAS countries. However, the study also revealed that brain drain from smaller economies to Nigeria can exacerbate regional inequalities. The study recommended a policy for balancing the benefits of labour mobility with the need for inclusive growth across the ECOWAS region.

Abdelbagi (2022) investigated the impact of outgoing migration, remittances, and trade on economic growth in Africa during the period from 1976 to 2021. The study utilised annual data obtained from the World Bank and used the GMM econometrics technique. The empirical results revealed that outgoing

migration harms the economic growth of the region; migrants' remittances to Africa have positive impact on economic growth during the period of interest. Also, the results suggest that trade contributes positively and significantly to economic growth on the continent.

Furthermore, Adigun and Ologunwa (2021) examined the effect of labour mobility and remittances on economic growth in Nigeria during the period 1980-2020. The study used the Error Correction Model (ECM) to estimate the variables, which include net migration, remittances, labour force participation and real gross domestic product. The result reveals that net migration has a negative effect on Nigeria's economic growth, and remittance is correlated with economic growth as it helps individual finances, consumption, spending and investments. Their study suggested that receivers of remittances should spend more on investment than on consumption to impact the home economy.

Likewise, Sebil and Abdulazeez (2021) explored the impact of remittances on Nigeria's economic growth during the period 1981-2020. The influx of remittances was used as an indicator of dependent variables, while trade openness, foreign aid, and foreign direct investment were economic growth indicators. The outcome stressed that remittances absolutely affected Nigeria's economic growth. They stressed that the government should engage in more effective policies that improve the remittance transfer channel, aid flows and foreign direct investment as a growth strategy.

Nwosu (2023) investigated how cross-border labour mobility influences Nigeria's trade competitiveness and subsequent economic growth. Drawing on data from the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics and the World Bank (2005-2022), the study employed the ECM analytical method. The results indicated that increased skilled labour mobility tends to enhance productivity in key export sectors, particularly in manufacturing and technology services. The study also reveals that trade agreements facilitating labour mobility with neighbouring West African countries have a more significant positive impact on Nigeria's economic growth compared to agreements with more distant partners.

In addition, Ebenezer et al (2019) provided empirical information on how emigration influences employment and wages in Nigeria with special reference to high and low-skilled labour between 1980 and 2018. The study employed ECM as a method of analysis. Starting from the drivers of

emigration in each skill, economic size, income differentials, and remittances play a positive and important role in the case of emigration of high skill labour, while income differentials and population are significant in driving emigration of low skill workers. The wage response to emigration for each skill suggests that emigration of high-skilled labour widens the income gap. An additional finding is that wages sluggishly respond to inflation in both labour market segments. Following these results, an employment-driven economy should be pursued to stem emigration of high skill workers and to create more jobs for low skill workers.

In another study, Ezeokafor (2024) examined the triangular relationship between remittances, international trade, and economic growth in Nigeria from 1990 to 2023. Employing a Vector Error Correction Model (VECM) and Granger causality tests, the study analysed data on remittance inflows, trade volumes, and GDP growth. The results revealed a strong positive correlation between remittances and economic growth, with international trade acting as a significant mediating factor. It was also found that remittances not only contributed to household income but also stimulated demand for imported goods and supported small-scale export enterprises. The study further indicated a bidirectional causality between trade and economic growth, reinforcing the importance of open economic policies.

More so, Adamu and Nnamani (2023) investigated how return migration contributed to skills transfer, technology diffusion, and consequently, economic growth in Nigeria. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study analysed survey data from 1,500 return migrants (2015-2022) with in-depth interviews and economic modelling. The findings suggested that return migrants play a crucial role in introducing new technologies and business practices, particularly in the IT, agriculture, and manufacturing sectors. It also observed a positive correlation between the rate of return migration and productivity growth in these sectors. However, the impact is moderated by the absorptive capacity of local industries and the institutional environment. The study recommended a framework for maximising the developmental impact of return migration through targeted reintegration programmes and policies that leverage migrants' acquired skills and networks.

Theoretical Foundation

Push and Pull Migration Theory

This theory, originally developed by Ravenstein in the nineteenth century, assumes people migrate due to factors pushing them from origin countries and factors pulling them to destination countries. The theory explains migration as resulting from various reasons, with consistent factors being conditions that push people to leave their origin countries, while other factors attract them to destination countries.

Push factors include elements urging people to leave their countries, such as basic item costs, individual wellbeing, natural disasters, or climate conditions. Pull factors attract migrants to countries, including political stability, better economic opportunities, and improved living standards (Antràs, 2020).

This theory provides insight into migration causes and was used to identify various reasons for migration between countries, explaining brain drain and economic migration causes in Nigeria.

Gap in Literature

This study uniquely examines remittances (REMT), labour force participation (LFP), foreign direct investment (FDI), and net migration (NNM) together in a single comprehensive model. While Adigun and Ologunwa (2021) did analyse net migration, remittances, labour force participation and real GDP together, this study advances this by additionally incorporating foreign direct investment as a key variable, providing a more complete picture of the migration-trade-growth nexus. Most other studies typically focused on fewer variables - for instance, Sebil and Abdulazeez (2021) concentrated mainly on remittances with trade openness and foreign aid, while Ebenezer et al (2019) focused primarily on emigration and wages without examining remittances and FDI simultaneously.

Furthermore, all of the previous studies, such as that of Ezeokafor (2024), Nwosu (2023), Ebenezer et al (2019), focus on relatively short time periods and use estimation techniques such as VECM and ECM. There's a lack of research examining the very long-term effects of labour mobility on economic growth over multiple decades. As a result, this study intends to use the ARDL estimation technique to cover both the short and long run effects

of labour mobility on economic growth in Nigeria, since this is left out by other researchers.

Methodology

Data Types and Sources

The study utilised yearly time series data covering 1983-2023, sourced from the Central Bank of Nigeria Statistical Bulletin 2023 and World Development Indicators. Variables included Real Gross Domestic Product (RGDP) as the economic growth proxy (dependent variable), while Nigeria's net migration, remittances received, workforce participation, and foreign direct investment served as independent variables.

Model Specification

In building the ARDL model for the study, it is hinged on the study by Adigun and Ologunwa (2021) that employed variables such as Nigeria's net migration (NNM), remittances received by Nigeria (Remt), and Labour force participation (LFP). This study modified the model by adding foreign direct investment (FDI).

The use of ARDL is justified because it can be applied irrespective of the order of integration of the variables used in the study. ARDL is a least squares regression approach involving the lag of both the dependent and independent variables. ARDL model is normally denoted using ARDL notation (p1 q1, q2, q3, …….qk), where P denotes the number of lags of the dependent variable and q1 is the number of lags of the first independent variable, and qk is the lags of the kth independent variable.

The functional form of the model for this study is presented in Equation [1]

[1] RGDP=F (NNM, REMT, LFP, FDI)

The econometric equation is specified thus:

[2] $RGDP_t = \alpha_0 + \delta_1 \mathrm{NNM}_t + \delta_2 \mathrm{REMT}_t + \delta_3 \mathrm{LFP}_t + \delta_4\ \mathrm{FDI}_t + \mu_t$

The ARDL model based on the functional form presented in equation [1] is represented as shown in Equation [3], where NNM is Nigeria's net migration, REMT is remittances received by Nigeria (Remt), LFP is Labour force participation, and FDI is foreign direct investment.

$$[3]\ \Delta RGDP_t = \alpha_0 + \sum_{i=1}^{p} \delta_1 \Delta RGDP_{t-1} + \sum_{i=0}^{p} \delta_2 \Delta NNM_{t-1} + \sum_{i=0}^{p} \delta_3 \Delta REMT_{t-1} + \sum_{i=0}^{p} \delta_4 \Delta LFP_{t-1} + \sum_{i=0}^{p} \delta_5 \Delta FDI_{t-1} + \lambda_1 RGDP_{t-1} + \lambda_2 NNM_{t-1} + \lambda_3 REMT_{t-1} + \lambda_4 LFP_{t-1} + \lambda_5 FDI_{t-1} + ECT_{t-1} + \mu_t$$

where α_0 and μ_t are the constant parameter and error term, respectively. The expression with the signs of summation in the equation is the error correction dynamics. The parameter coefficient denotes the short-run effects and lambda (λ) is the corresponding relationship in the long run, while ECT is the error correction term.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Presentation of descriptive statistics test results of the study

Table 1: Descriptive statistic test results

	RGDP	NNM	REMT	LFP	FDI
Mean	40399.02	-4948.561	4573061.	60.73463	1.248679
Median	33004.80	16528.00	4145210.	57.22000	1.087951
Maximum	74639.47	107212.0	9014373.	88.90000	4.282088
Minimum	16048.31	-507539.0	1899620.	55.40000	-0.170102
Std. Dev.	21288.56	99274.74	1995984.	8.064702	0.966173
Skewness	0.399999	-3.262730	0.452318	1.909466	0.822913
Kurtosis	1.511056	17.12736	2.066201	5.881900	3.594567
Jarque-Bera	4.880621	413.6965	2.887676	39.10306	5.231346
Probability	0.087134	0.000000	0.236020	0.000000	0.073119
Observations	41	41	41	41	41

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 describe the variables of interest in this study. The average RGDP is 40,399.02 billion naira. It showed a wide range, with a minimum of 16,048.31 and a maximum of 74,639.47. The distribution is slightly positively skewed (0.399999). Furthermore, Nigeria's net migration (NNM) has an average of -4,948.561, suggesting more people leaving Nigeria than entering. It is also negatively skewed (-3.262730) with a wide range from -507,539 to 107,212.

More so, remittances received (REMT) have an average of 4,573,061. It is slightly positively skewed (0.452318), indicating a wide Range from 1,899,620 to 9,014,373, which may reflect changing economic conditions or diaspora patterns. Labour force participation (LFP) has an average of 60.73463. It is positively skewed (1.909466) with a range from 55.40 to 88.90. Foreign direct investment (FDI) has an average of 1.248679. It is slightly positively skewed (0.822913). Ranges from -0.170102 to 4.282088.

Moreover, Real Gross Domestic Product, Remittances (REMT) and foreign direct investment are normally distributed since their Jarque-Bera probability values are greater than 0.05; however, Nigeria's net migration (NNM) and Labour force participation (LFP) are not normally distributed since their Jarque-Bera probability values are less than 0.05. Thus, since not all variables were normally distributed, a unit root test for stationarity is necessary.

Stationarity Test Results

The stationarity test conducted on the available data of Real Gross Domestic Product, Nigeria net migration (NNM), remittances (REMT), Labour force participation (LFP), and foreign direct investment (FDI) is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: *Stationarity Test Results*

Variables	PP Statistic at level	PP Statistic at first difference	Critical values of 5% at level	Critical values of 5% at first difference	P-values at level	P-values at first difference	Order of integration
RGDP	-3.836266	-	-2.938987	-	0.0055	-	I (0)
NNM	-1.968630	-3.487139	-2.938987	-2.941145	0.2988	0.0137	I (1)
REMT	-5.916327	-	-2.938987	-	0.0020	-	I (0)
LFP	0.210925	-3.016018	-2.938987	-2.941145	0.9699	0.0035	I (1)
FDI	-3.579124	-	-2.938987	-	0.0107	-	I (0)

The tests result in Table 2 demonstrate that the variables are integrated at level I (0) and first difference I (1). Based on these findings, it is logical to conclude that Real Gross Domestic Product and remittances and foreign direct investment are stationary at level I(0) while Nigeria's net migration (NNM) and labour force participation (LFP) are stationary at first difference I (1).

ARDL Bound Test Result

Table 3: *Bound Test Result*

F-Bounds Test		**Null Hypothesis: No levels relationship**		
Test Statistic	Value	Signif.	I(0)	I(1)
F-statistic	17.34638	10%	2.2	3.09
K	4	5%	2.56	3.49
		2.5%	2.88	3.87
		1%	3.29	4.37

The ARDL bound test co-integration result of the variables employed in this study is presented in Table 3. From the table, the computed F-statistic (17.34638) is greater than both the lower bound and upper bound critical values at 1%, 2.5%, 5% and 10%. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no co-integration among the series is rejected. This result thus implies that a long-run relationship exists among the variables employed in the study.

The result of the short run and the long run models in Table 4 reveals that the independent variables: Nigeria net migration (NNM), remittances received by Nigeria (REMT), labour force participation (LFP) and foreign direct investment (FDI) explained about 81% of the total variations in real gross domestic product while the remaining 19% unexplained is captured by the error term. Considering the Prob (F-statistic) of 0.001325, the entire model is robust. The short-run model accounts for the speed of adjustment to the long-run equilibrium of the variables employed. Hence, the speed of adjustment of the model to long-run equilibrium is measured by the coefficient of the first lag of the error correction model (ECM (-1)). The error correction model (-0.525509) has the right a priori sign, and it is statistically significant. Hence, the result of the ECM revealed that about 53% of the deviation of the variables in the short run will be restored in the long run within one year. The Durbin Watson statistic is 2.245860; hence, based on

the rule of thumb that if Durbin Watson is approximately 2, we do not have serial correlation, the study concluded that there is no autocorrelation or serial correlation in the model.

Analysis of Results

Table 4: *ARDL short and long run test results*

Variable	Coefficient	Prob.
Short-run Form of ARDL		
C	18365956	0.0107
ΔNNM	7.555021	0.0986
ΔREMT	-0.308527	0.3616
ΔLFP	25.09992	0.0279
ΔFDI	-1.032267	0.1229
ECM(-1)	-0.525509	0.0001
Long Run Relationship form of ARDL		
NNM	-29.407657	0.0045
REMT	0.662493	0.0165
LFP	15.357358	0.0010
FDI	8.228633	0.0473
C	25682.93	0.0010

R-squared 0.806860	Durbin-Watson 2.245860
Adjusted R-squared 0.742075	
F-statistic 5.503280	
Prob(F-statistic) 0.001325	

Akaike info criterion (AIC) was used as the model selection criterion

The study based on the long-run relationship form of the ARDL model revealed that a unit change in Nigeria's net migration (NNM) led to a 29.407657 unit decrease in real gross domestic product. This implies that a unit change in Nigeria's net migration led to a decrease in Real Gross Domestic Product within the study period. This is in line with the findings of

Abdelbagi (2022), Adigun and Ologunwa (2021), who opined that net migration is negatively related to economic growth in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the study, based on the long-run relationship form of the ARDL model, revealed that a unit change in remittances received (REMT) in Nigeria led to a 0.662493 rise in Real Gross Domestic Product. This implies that an increase in remittances received (REMT) in Nigeria led to a rise in Real Gross Domestic Product within the study period. This is in line with the findings of Abdelbagi (2022), Adigun and Ologunwa (2021), which asserts that remittances have a positive and significant effect on economic growth in Nigeria.

In addition, the study based on the long-run relationship form of the ARDL model revealed that a unit change in labour force participation in Nigeria led to a 15.357358 unit increase in Real Gross Domestic Product. This implies that an increase in labour force participation (LFP) in Nigeria led to a rise in real gross domestic product within the study period. This is in line with the findings of Nwosu (2023), Sebil and Abdulazeez (2021), Adigun and Ologunwa (2021), who opined that labour force participation exerts a positive contribution on economic growth in Nigeria.

Likewise, the study based on the long-run relationship form of the ARDL model revealed that a unit change in foreign direct investment in Nigeria led to 8.228633 unit increase in Real Gross Domestic Product within the study period. This implies that an increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) in Nigeria led to a rise in real gross domestic product within the study period. This is in line with the findings of Nwosu (2023), Sebil and Abdulazeez (2021), who asserted that foreign direct investment has a positive contribution to economic growth in Nigeria.

Post-Estimation Test Result

Table 5: *Post-Estimation Test Results*

Diagnostic Tests Result		
	F statistics	Probability
Ramsey RESET Test result	0.020505	0.8876
Serial Correlation LM Test Result	0.742151	0.4901

Heteroskedasticity Test Result: Breusch-Pagan-Godfrey	0.528015	0.9005
Normality Test Result	Jarque Bera	Probability
	0.455779	0.796212

From Table 5, since the probability value of the Ramsey RESET test, Serial correlation LM Test, and heteroskedasticity test are greater than 0.05 respectively, we accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternative hypothesis and conclude that there is no specification error, no serial correlation and no heteroskedasticity in the model and the model is normally distributed. For the observed collinearity, this study adopted the solution presented by Gujarati (2009:342) to do nothing.

Conclusion

In investigating the linkage between labour mobility and economic growth in Nigeria between 1983 to 2023, it was revealed from thet remittances received, that labour force participation and foreign direct investment have a positive and significant effect on economic growth within the study period. However, Nigeria's net migration has a negative and significant effect on economic growth in Nigeria within the study period. It was, therefore, concluded that net migration in Nigeria will lead to a decrease in economic growth in the long run. Hence, any policy that promotes emigration will have a detrimental effect on the economy in the long run.

Recommendations

The study gave the following recommendations based on the findings:

i The findings show that Nigeria’s net migration (NNM) has a negative and significant effect on economic growth in Nigeria. It is therefore recommended that the government should discourage brain drain by addressing push factors such as lack of job opportunities, poor economic conditions, insecurity, political instability and so on. Doing this can enhance Nigeria’s economic growth.

ii The finding further shows that remittances have a positive and significant effect on economic growth in Nigeria within the study period; it is therefore recommended that the government should foster closer ties with the diaspora community and simplify remittances

processes by making it easier and cheaper for diaspora Nigerians to send money home, as this will enhance economic growth.

iii The findings also showed that labour force participation (LFP) has positive and significant effect on economic growth in Nigeria; it is therefore recommended that the government should foster inclusive labour market policies by ensuring equal opportunities for women, youth, people with disabilities and rural population and also ensure adequate investment in education and training in other for it to have significant effect on economic growth in Nigeria.

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Chapter 9
Investigation of the Immigrants' Contributions to Agro-Economic Development of Uhonmora-Ora Community, Owan-West Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria

by

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Abstract

In recent years, the Uhonmora-Ora community has experienced significant agro-economic growth driven by an influx of immigrants attracted by its fertile land and economic opportunities. This study examines the impact of immigrant-led agricultural activities on local development from 2015 to 2024, aligning with broader discussions on migration and sustainable development. The study aims to analyse the agro-economic contributions of immigrants, assess their role in community development (e.g., food production, trade, tourism and culture), and evaluate outcomes against Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A mixed-methods approach was employed, with 300 copies of questionnaires administered to immigrants and residents across the 8 community quarters of Ukpafoga, Odosi, Ukhuoro, Ukhuedeodu, Ukpafotisi, Ukpafekhai, Ukpokhunmu, and Ukpafisi, supplemented by interviews with 4 key stakeholders. Chi-square analysis ($X^2 = 3.74$, $df = 7$, $\alpha = 0.05$) compared observed and expected agro-economic outcomes. The influx of immigrants significantly boosted agro-economic development, with measurable increases in food production, trading activities, job creation, population growth, and tourism. Statistical results ($X^2 < 14.067$) confirmed these contributions as non-random. Community amenities and infrastructure also improved, underscoring immigrants' role in holistic development. The findings highlight migration as a catalyst for rural development, offering a model for other agrarian communities in Nigeria. The study advances SDG-linked research by tying immigrant labour to tangible economic and social progress. Policymakers should replicate this study in similar contexts to optimise immigrant integration for sustainable development. Future research could explore long-term demographic and environmental impacts on the key variables.

Keywords: Agro-economic Development, Food Production, Community Development, Immigrants, SDGs

Introduction

Due to the fact that most definitions rely on time and space parameters, there is no widely agreed-upon definition of migration. It is possible to identify, analyse, assess, and categorise migration types and patterns as major, minor, forms, qualities, and measurements from the standpoint of the kinds and patterns while evaluating the contexts and conceptions of migration. Migration patterns are characterised by three main factors: economic, distance, and reason (Nnorom & Daniel, 2022; Majebi & Agbebaku, 2023). Migrants and emigrants are the measures of migration, thus, underder migration patterns are tourism and recreation, commercial, periodic, medical, seasonal, educational, forced, impelled, free, mass, vocation, rural-rural, rural-urban, urban-rural, international, labour, sex, pull and push, and long-term, respectively are other characteristics of the pattern of migration. The push and pull factors and the influences of socioeconomic attributes of some centres and regions over others cause numerous migration forms, types, distances, and motivations that compel people to move (Dao, Docquier, Maurel, & Schaus, 2021; Majebi & Agbebaku, 2023). The result of one or a combination of the above factors has significantly led to the human population, both in the number and rate of immigrants and emigrants, in the 21st century. Several variables, including advancements in communication, transportation, and technology, might be responsible for these increases. Perceived information, employment prospects, differences in natural resources, socioeconomic factors, tourism, adventures, human development, security, famine, and natural disasters among various demographic groupings are additional factors (Dao, Docquier, Maurel, & Schaus, 2021; Nnorom & Daniel, 2022; Majebi & Agbebaku, 2023).

There is a study gap because while numerous studies have examined population movement trends across destinations, none have examined the impact of the immigrant population on Uhonmora-Ora's. However, most of these studies are focused on popular destinations with significant economic potential and less on developing destinations for immigration. There are not too many studies on migration in Nigeria, particularly in rural areas where there is a surge of immigrants, maybe as a result of the socioeconomic advantages and community sustainability that come with immigrant activity. In Uhonmora-Ora, Edo State, south-south Nigeria, where there is evidence of immigration from both within and neighboring states, this study aims to examine the effects of the immigrant population on the agro-economic development in food production and sustainable development.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to assess immigrants' contributions to agro-economic development from 2015 to 2024 in Uhonmora-Ora community.
The specific objectives of the study are to:

a. Examine immigrants' contributions to agro-economic development during the periods of study in Uhonmora-Ora
b. Investigate size of the immigrant population and how it affects the growth of food production and community expansion.

Hypothesis of the Study

H0: There is no significant relationship between the immigrant population and the increase in food production in Uhonmora-Ora
H1: There is a significant relationship between the immigrant population and the increase in food production in Uhonmora-Ora

Literature Review

Attributes of Migration

Studies conducted on a global scale have identified four major categories of migratory trends. These include metrics of migration, migration by distance, migration by cause, and movement by duration. The amount of time migrants spend in their destination is known as migration by duration. The following groupings were recognised as migratory types (Nnorom and Daniel, 2022; Majebi and Agbebaku, 2023). These consist of labour migration, daily, periodic, seasonal, and long-term migration. These migratory patterns, which were practised in America, Europe, Asia, and Africa, made up the economic migration. Every one of these duration-based migration subtypes has distinct traits and impacts on both the source and destination locations. Today, both in developed and emerging nations, the friction of distance has been eliminated by the quick development of transportation technology. The motivations of the migrants are what drive migration. Mass migrants have no say in whether or not to migrate, and these categories include forced migration, free migration, sex migration, and compelled migration. Thus, the forced migration often connotes a more sudden or coercive element, whereas compelled migration suggests a range of pressures that might be more gradual or complex (Dao, Docquier, Maurel, & Schaus, 2021; Majebi & Agbebaku, 2023). Innocent groups have been uprooted from their homes due

to this migration pattern. Political crises, the slave trade, and intertribal conflicts all have an impact on the migratory pattern.

Additionally, the investigations found that the deciding factor is the free migration classification, which is based on the migrants' decision. People travelled on their own initiative based on their perceptions of the local knowledge. Mass migration, both domestically and abroad, has increased due to innovation and advancement, improved transportation, infrastructure, medication, and human capital exploration, regardless of the time of year, the climate, or the financial resources involved. There are two categories of migration, viz-a-viz by distance: internal and international. When human movement causes significant demographic changes within a sovereign nation, this is known as internal migration. Rural-rural, rural-urban, urban-rural, and urban-urban migration are the four fundamentally identifiable forms. Nonetheless, Third World nations like Nigeria frequently experience rural-to-rural migration. Much of this migratory pattern is seasonal in the African environments (Ajaero & Onokala, 2013; Nnorom & Daniel, 2022).

In a similar vein, migrants' short travel distance is determined by their closeness to the catchment area. The main causes of this migration pattern in the predominantly rural and agrarian community of Uhonomra-Ora are the abundance of land resources, security, low cost of living, and great soil fertility. Therefore, a typical example of this type of migratory movement, which accounts for 35% of the community population, is the movement of the tribes of Ebira, Igala, Aiyewure, Idoma, Owori, Igbo, Ogoja, and others. About 45% of Nigerians migrate primarily from rural to urban areas, with rural-urban migration being the most prevalent pattern of migration in the country. Retirees are eligible for these classes of urban-rural migration, which make up around 15% of the migration trend in Nigeria. They decided to move to rural places and do other things when their working lives were coming to an end. Similar to this, urban-urban migration refers to the exodus of urban residents from the city proper to the suburbs because of overpopulation, traffic, expensive rents and bills, and unhealthier living conditions. This migratory trend makes up around 10% of the population of Nigeria.

However, for better living conditions, business opportunities, and commerce, individuals move across urban centres. Travelling across national borders is a feature of the international migration pattern linked to long-term movement by distance. There are two categories of migrant movement are termed

migration measures (Agbebaku,1999; Dao, Docquier, Maurel & Schaus, 2021; Majebi & Agbebaku, 2023). Using the equivalent terms of immigrants and emigrants, the movement of the human population across international borders is also calculated. Concerning the Uhonmora-Ora settlement, the community has not maintained accurate records of immigrant data, including the population of immigrants from 2014 to 2023, taking into consideration seasonal fluctuations in the human population, fluctuations in food production, income and expenditure, variations in the size of farmlands allocation, social vices, and reduction in communal works (Asein, 2023; Atafo, 2023 and Ohimai, 2023). Given the above, the predominant form and economic of migration pattern into the Uhonmora-Ora community are the rural-rural movement, perceived and economic migration. This further connotes the internal and free migration patterns. Migrants into the community are purely for agrarian and trading motives, and more males sex than females.

Causes of Migration

Numerous factors influence both the volume of immigration to a place and its patterns of movement. Based on investigations, the contributing elements for their migration can be divided into the following categories. As a result of the above, these reasons might be classified as either significant, in-between or minor. Physical, economic, social, political, medical, and educational factors are the main contributors. However, cultural, medical, educational, religious, recreational, and other factors are minor drivers of migration. For example, in the Uhonmora-Ora community, the significant reason for immigration is the perceived information about the blessed land, flowing with milk and honey, and this can be termed as physical and economic factors (Onokerhoranye, 1984; Onokerhoranye,1985; Majebi & Agbebaku, 2023).

Impacts of Immigrant Population on Sustainable Community Development

There have been some positive and negative impacts of the immigrant population on sustainable community development throughout the study. These are mainly in the increase in food production and sustainable community development. The assessment of how the immigrant population has affected the community's increased food production reveals that, between 2014 and 2023, the immigration wave has made a substantial contribution to Uhonmora-Ora's economic growth, food production, and human population growth. The immigrant population has also had positive effects on housing,

music, trade, marriage, health, and agricultural growth. For example, over the evaluation period, the community's agricultural output has increased significantly in both food and cash crops production. As opposed to the indigenous people of Uhonmora-Ora's default farming practices, the influx of immigrants, particularly the tribes of Ebira, Igala, Ogori, Ogoja, Aiyewure, and Idoma, had adopted the system of massive cultivation of farmlands/crops before the start of the rainy season, and in some cases, the practice of double cultivation within a farming season (Asein, 2023; Atafo, 2023; Ohimai, 2023).

Furthermore, compared to the traditional ways used by the Uhonmora-Ora people, the practice of early planting and commercial farming has led to a steady change in methods and innovation for various piling, cropping, mulching, and preservation techniques. Thus, the harvest of seasonal annual crops such as plantains, cassava, rice, maize, cocoyam and yam cultivations are the major farming production contributing to an increase in food production. However, to obtain a higher economic value during harvest seasons, some individuals and collective farmers ship their produce, mainly plantains, rice, and cassava, to neighbouring states, including the FCT, Abuja (Asein, 2023; Atafo, 2023; Ohimai, 2023; Majebi & Agbebaku, 2023).

Due to food glut and inadequate preservation technology, the prices of these farm products are comparatively cheap at the source area during harvesting periods, and this is a challenge to the farmers. But, because the immigrants had continued to trade with other tribes outside of their destination, the volume of trading operations involving food commodities has been expanded to neighbouring states. However, to maximise the advantages of the concept of comparative cost advantage on food products, new commodities and techniques entered the trading system. The people of Uhonmora-Ora also introduced and maintained the supply chain, demand, and food items to improve the sustainable development of food items (Ohimai, 2023; Majebi & Agbebaku, 2023). However, some of the negative effects of the immigrant population were noted due to a combination of factors. For instance, the massive influx of migrants at the height of the farming season led to step competition and land fragmentation against the desire. Additional difficulties include a rise in social vices, police and legal cases, land fragmentation, laziness, and failed marriages among both the host population and visitors. Numerous crimes, court proceedings, and disputes between some deviant immigrants and the host community have occurred and continue to do so, according to surveys. Regarding the fissure of cultural norms, community

development levies, failed contracts, and upholding of agreements, a small percentage of the defaulting immigrant population are penalised, sued or compelled to exit the community. Other difficult aspects of the immigrant population include the community management's shortcomings in maintaining a database record of this immigrant population year after year. In addition, the practice of commercial plantain farming and the production of rice on an annual basis have exposed the community to the yearly occurrence of deforestation, erosion, carbon dioxide loss, fire outbreaks, encroachment of buffer zones and forest reserves, and, finally, ecosystem degradation.

Research Methods

Study Area

The community of Uhonmora is one of six Ora communities in the Owan-West Local Government area of Edo State, Nigeria. The community is in Latitudes 60 10'N to 60 45'N and Longitudes 60 10'E to 60 40'E. Uhonmora-Ora is bounded to the north by Sabongida-Ora, north-east by Eme-Ora, and south by Ozalla communities. The location of the community close to Saboggida-Ora, a nodal large village, eases the immigration of migrants based on the perceived information about the fertile soil in the community. Oduosi, Ukpafoga, Ukhuedeodu, Ukpafisi, Ukpokhunmu, Ukpafekhai, Ukpafortisi, and Ukhuoro are the eight quarters that make up Uhonmora-Ora. The community is blessed with rich, dark, sandy, and loamy soils that encourage farming activities. These characteristics of the soil types and nutrients have placed the community in a blessed and fertile land for agricultural activities. The community has a flat, plan landscape and undulating topography at 78.64 metres above sea level.

In February and March, the community records the maximum temperature (36.10^0C), while in April and May, the lowest temperature (19.40^0 C) is recorded. The amount of rainfall every year from March to November ranges between 2000mm to 3000mm. Three large rivers and several seasonal water sources provide adequate drainage for the community. River Owan, River Oruen, and River Obvioti are the three main rivers. Eight-quarters of the community is traversed by these large rivers, which are important sources of surface and groundwater for the area. At River Owan, where the three rivers converge, the water separates and takes on distinct hues and flavours. Forest plants, grasslands, and sedimentary rocks are the community's defining features. The community is one of the six Ora clans which constitute

Sabongidda-Ora, Eme-Ora, Oke-Ora and Oke-Old-Ora to the north, while Uhonmora-Ora and Ozalla communities are to the south. The community is a rural agrarian settlement, and its residents work primarily in agriculture (farming) and trade. Uhonmora-Ora is renowned for producing food and cash crops such as maize, plantains, cassava, rice, yams, cocoyams, beni seeds, cocoa, rubber, palm kernel, oranges, and timber. The primary occupation of the immigrant population from several tribes and the natives is farming. These groups of immigrants cultivate vast tracts of land and engage in commercial farming by making use of the soil's fertility. The immigrants' varied traditional practices (mainly the Ebiras), which are based on ecological adaptation and environmental conditions, result in distinct farming systems that gradually introduced new farming and food preservation techniques, ideas, and abilities to the Uhonmora people. Considering these, Uhonmora-Ora residents' socioeconomic traits focused more on primary activities than secondary and tertiary ones during the farming season. Crop production, merchandise sales, petty trade, and the marketing of their produce both inside and outside of the community, as well as periodic marketplaces, are the major examples of the activities of immigrants.

Women from the host community's indigenous population, as well as immigrants from other tribes, are mostly responsible for the buying and selling of farm products. According to the 2006 census, 16.167 people were living in the community, while the population of Owan-West local government area was projected at around 146,300 in 2022. Geo-informatics tools like the Geographic Information System (GIS) and Global Positioning System (GPS) were used to create a mapping of the study region. The coordinates (x, y) and location were ascertained using the Garmin Channel 78.sc model, a global positioning system. The thematic sampling location imagery of the main immigrant stronghold in the study area is displayed on the resulting map.

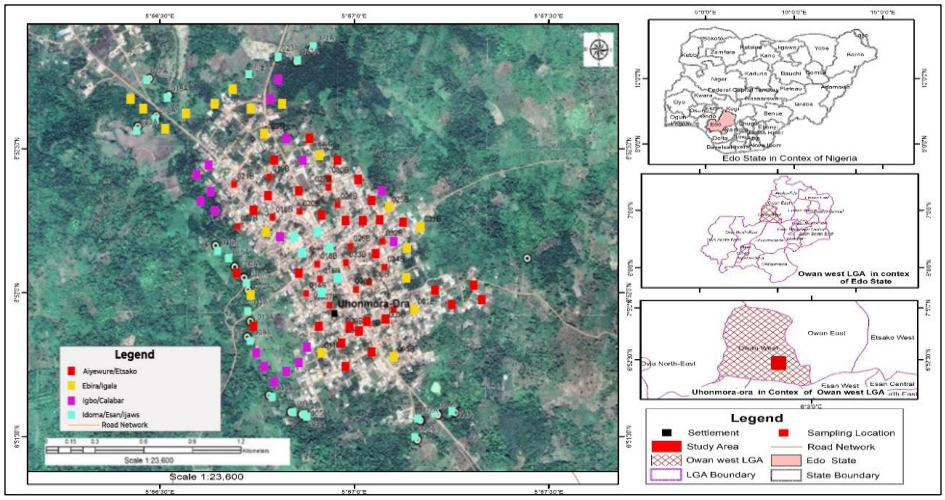

Figure 1: Map of Edo State, Owan West Local Government Area, and Uhonmora-Ora, Showing Major Tribe of Immigrants Geo-spread from 2019 to 2024.

Methodology

Both primary and secondary data were gathered. Field observations, interviews, questionnaire administration, and mapping made up most of the primary material. Documentary materials and reliable sources provided the secondary data that was examined. The study mostly employed data from primary sources because it was an entirely experimental investigation. The study used the immigrant population as the sample frame to obtain primary data. To determine the distributional spread of the immigrants throughout the eight quarters of the community for the purpose of administering the questionnaire, systematic random sampling techniques were used. Key community stakeholders from the side of the indigenes and immigrants were interviewed in addition to questionnaire administration.

Selection of Respondents and Questionnaire Distribution

Thus, 80% of the population of the main immigrant stronghold in the eight quarters of the community was chosen at random to participate in the study. To do this, the study was conducted using the main, heavily populated roadways in each of the eight quarters. Over the eight quarters, a total of 330 copies of the questionnaires were distributed across the community. Out of the 330 copies of questionnaires that were sent out, 300 were returned, and 30 were not. This indicated that only 90% of the 300 copies of the

questionnaires were used for the study, and the remaining 30 copies were not returned. Thus, a default number of 37 copies was distributed in each of the eight quarters, making a total of 296 copies out of the 300 copies that made up the sample size.

The remaining four copies were distributed to a group of indigenes, including the heads of the community, community development, disciplinary community, and the public relations officer, respectively, making the total 300. In each of the selected streets and quarters, questionnaires were distributed to every second, middle, and second-to-last houses with a densely populated threshold. The majority of respondents had some kind of assistance to fill out the questionnaire because of their levels of education. Oral interviews were also conducted to solicit additional information from stakeholder immigrants on their stay and activities from the respondents. Data from the primary and secondary sources were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Figures, plates and tables were used for the descriptive analysis, while the inferential techniques of chi-square statistical analyses were used to test the stated objectives of the study. The stated objective was tested using these methods.

Results

The study's findings, which were summarised and shown in Tables 1 through 8, evaluated the effects of the immigrant population on the growth in food production and development in the Uhonmora-Ora community between 2015 and 2024.

Table 1
Reasons for Migrants' Departure (Push Factor)

Reasons for Migration	No. of Immigrants	Percentage (%)
Inadequate Farmlands/Inadequate Soil Fertility	164	54.6
Inadequate Job Opportunities	41	13.6
Inadequate Socio-amenities	20	6.6
Inadequate Institutions	30	10.0
Others	45	15.0
Total	**300**	**100**

The reasons why immigrants left their destination for Uhonmora-Ora are listed in Table 1. According to Table 1, many immigrants move to Uhonmora due to inadequate farmlands and soil fertility in their home regions; this factor alone drove them to join the Uhonmora community. According to the study, 54.8% of the respondents stated that the infertility of the soil was an insufficient reason. The responses to insufficient employment opportunities, which account for 13.6% compelled most migrants into the community came next. Thus, this can be predicated on the idea that the community is a blessed land flowing with milk. The responses from inadequate institutions came next, accounting for 10% of the total. 6.6% of the responses were related to insufficient socio-amenities, while the remaining 15% were related to other combinations of reasons why immigrants left for Uhonmora-Ora. It follows that the acquisition of big farmlands is becoming more challenging for both locals and tourists, which is the driving force behind immigrants' decision to settle in the Uhonmora community. However, the locations where such desirable sizes are available are in the community's interior and periphery, where farmers face a barrier due to distance. These results are in line with Ajaero and Madu's (2014) summary, which holds that immigrants leave their home countries for certain reasons.

Table 2
Composition of Immigrants' State of Origin

State of Origin	No. of Immigrants	Percentage (%)
Edo	94	31.3
Kogi	68	22.6
Delta	51	17.0
Igbo	42	14.0
Others	45	15.0
Total	**300**	**100%**

Given that migration tends to decline with distance, Table 2's conclusion demonstrates that distance imposed a limiting constraint. According to the table, most responders come from a variety of states and ethnic backgrounds. Of the study's participants, 31.3% are native to the state of Edo (Aiyewure, Esan, Auchi). These immigrant groups migrated and settled by taking advantage of perceived knowledge about the community and locality. Immigrants from Kogi state (Igala, Ebira, and Idoma) came next, making up 22.6% of the total. The indigenous population of Delta (Urhobo, Ijaws) states came in second at 17%, followed by those from Igbo-speaking states at 14%. On the other hand, the remaining 15% come from tribes (Idoma, Kuteb,

Yoruba, Ogoja, Owori, and Ogoja) and other states (Benue, Kwara, Ondo, Taraba, and Cross Rivers) within the federation. Thus, another impediment is the current cost of transportation, which reflects the volume of immigration. These results are in line with Nnorom and Daniel's (2022) summary, which states that migration can occur in three different patterns: time, motive, and distance.

Table 3
Occupational Status of Immigrants

Occupational Status	No. of Immigrants	Percentage (%)
Farming	164	54.6
Civil Servant	7	2.3
Trading	87	29.0
Others	42	14.0
Total	**300**	**100**

The occupational status of immigrants in Uhonmora-Ora is displayed in Table 3. 54.6% of the individuals interviewed were farmers. The fertility of the soil, which they exploited, their self-interest in farming, their lack of education, or their incapacity to obtain civil service positions could all be contributing factors. Responses from the trading occupation, which accounts for 29% of the total, came next. Purchasing and selling farm produce to potential traders both inside and outside the state is one example of petty trading. Women and a few male immigrant workers make up the majority of the trading occupation in the community. A further 14% of occupations fall into the following categories: painters, repairers, oil and rubber/palm wine tapping, and blacksmiths. Those working in civil service occupations, including cleaners, massage therapists, environmental attendants, and security guards, make up the remaining 2.3% of the respondents. Thus, farming is the primary activity of the immigrants; population lead to an increase in food production and trading in the community. According to Agbebaku (1999), Ajaero, and Madu (2014), these results support the idea that immigrants' desire for a certain occupational status is a major factor in their decision to leave their home country.

Table 4a
Types of Food Crops Production

State and Tribe	Types of Food Crops Cultivated in Priority	No. of Immigrant population	Percentage (%)
Kogi (Igala, Ebira, Idoma)	Yams, cassava, beans and vegetables, others	164	56.7
Benue (Idoma, Igala)	Yams, rice, cassava, plantain, vegetables and others	41	13.6
Delta (Urhobo, Ijaws)	Cassava, plantain, and other vegetables	20	6.7
Other States: Edo (Ayewure, Esan &Auchi), Taraba (Kuteb), Cross River (Ogoja), Enugu, Anambra & Imo (Igbos), Ondo & Kwara (Yoruba)	Plantain, palm oil, cassava, rice, cocoyams, vegetables, and others	75	24.0
Total		**300**	**100**

The result shows the state and tribes of the nature and type of food production on the priority scale, as displayed in Table 4a. 56.7% of the tribes in Kogi State population produce the most food in the community. These tribes grow more vegetables, beans, cassava, and yams. Then came the mix of tribes from other states, which made up 24.0% of the total. They produced vegetables, rice, cocoyam, cassava, palm oil, and plantains. The Urhobo and Ijaw tribes, who make up 6.7% of Delta State's population, contribute more to food production through the production of vegetables, plantains, cassava, and other crops. Plantains, rice, cassava, yams, and other crops were grown by the remaining 13.6% of respondents. The Idoma and Igala tribes from BenueSstate made these contributions after migrating to the Uhonmora-Ora community purely for the sake of farming. Thus, the immigrant population influence the variety of food production, trade, and investment opportunities available to both locals and immigrants. These results are in line with Majebi and Agbebaku's (2023) summary, which holds that immigrants leave their home countries for certain reasons.

Table 4b

Percentage of the Nature and Types of Food Crops Production during the Period of Study

SN	Food Item	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1	Yam	11(6.7%)	12(7%)	13(4.3%)	14(4.6%)	15(5%)	16(5.3%)	17(5.3%)	18(6%)	19(6.3%)	20(6.7%)
2	Cassava	31(13.7%)	32(10.7%)	33(11%)	34(11.3%)	35(11.7%)	36(12%)	38(12.7%)	39(13%)	40(13.3%)	41(13.7%)
3	Beans	19(9.3%)	20(6.7%)	21(7%)	22(7.4%)	23(7.7%)	24(8%)	25(8.3%)	26(8.6%)	27(9%)	28(9.3%)
4	Plantain	33(11%)	34(11.3%)	35(11.7%)	36(12%)	37(12.3%)	38(12.6%)	39(13%)	40(13.7%)	41(13.7%)	42(14%)
5	Rice	27(9%)	28(9.3%)	29(9.7%)	30(10.3%)	31(10.8)	32(10.6%)	33(11%)	34(11.3%)	35(11.6%)	36(12%)
6	Palm Oil	18(9%)	19(9.3%)	20(6.7%)	21(7%)	22(7.4%)	23(7.6%)	24(8%)	25(8.3%)	26(8.8%)	27(9%)
7	Cocoyam	20(6.7%)	21(7%)	22(7.4%)	23(7.3%)	24(8%)	25(8.3%)	26(8.6%)	27(9%)	28(9.3%)	29(9.7%)
8	Vegetables	11(6.7%)	12(7%)	13(4.3%)	14(4.6%)	15(5%)	16(5.3%)	17(5.3%	18(6%)	19(6.3%)	20(6.7%)
9	Maize	21(10%)	22(7.4%)	23(7.3%)	24(8%)	25(8.3%)	26(8.6%)	27(9%)	28(9.3%)	29(9.7%)	30(10%)
10	Others	8(5.7%)	9(6%)	10(6.3%)	11(6.7%)	12(7%)	13(4.3%)	14(4.6%)	15(5%)	16(5.3%)	17(5.7%)
	Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

The results of Table 4b illustrate the types of food production in percentage that the immigrants in Uhonmora-Ora prioritised during the reviewed year. According to the Table, there was a high level of plantain cultivation during the study, with 42 (14%) plants grown on plates 1 to 5. Subsequently, the production of cassava products reached 13.7%, while the production of rice reached 36 (12%). Other products of cultivation followed suit. Furthermore, the study revealed that there has been a steady increase in food production from one year to the next. The factors for these increases could be a result of one or a combination of the factors, such as better farming techniques, an increase in farm input, an increase in migrant population, soil fertility, and innovation. Thus, this progression in food crop production per year has helped to position the community in the state, mainly with the production of plantain, cassava, cocoyam and rice in the last 10 years. These contributions were mainly from the tribes of Idoma and Igala (Benue), Ebira (Kogi), Ogoja (Cross-River), and Aiyewure (Edo) states, respectively, that migrated to the Uhonmora-Ora community solely for farming activities. These findings are consistent with the summation of Ajaero and Madu (2014) and Majebi and Agbebaku (2023), that certain reasons are responsible for immigrants' departure from the source area.

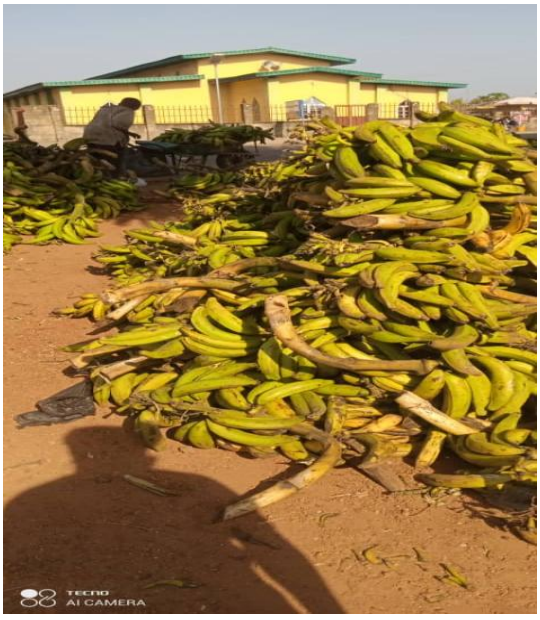

Plate 1: Collection of Plantain Products from a Store Placed for Transportation

Plate 2: Heaps of Plantains for Transportation to Urban Areas

Plate 3: Loading of Plantain Products for Transportation to Urban Areas

Plate 4: Loading of Plantain Products for Transportation to Urban Areas

Plate 5: Display of Dry Plantain Product in the Uhonmora-Ora Market.

Table 5
Quantity of Food Production in Tons for the Period in Review

Year	No. of Immigrants	%	Quantity of Food Production in Tons (Plantain, Garri and Rice)
2014	Not Available	0	Not Available
2015	Not Available	0	Not Available
2016	17	5.6	5
2017	22	7.3	9
2018	29	9.6	12
2019	32	10.6	18
2020	36	12.0	22
2021	41	13.6	27
2022	52	17.3	31
2023	71	23.6	35
Total	**300**	**100%**	**159**

The result from Table 5 shows the quantity of food production in tons for this period of study. From the Table, the study observed the variation and increase in food crop production in the community. From the result, it was observed that the increase in food production was low in the first quarter of the study, moderate in the second quarter, and high in the last quarter of the period of study. Thus, these variations and increase in food production as the year goes

by, as listed in Tables 4a and 4b, could be attributed to a combination of factors such as the incessant increase yearly in the number of immigrants population, fertility of the soil, availability of farming land, labour force, accessibility to funds with a low-interest rate, low developmental levy, favourably climatic condition of rainfall, temperature and humidity, and expansion of marketing to the urban centres. Thus, the implication of the quantity of food production in tons is that there would be an increase in food production, trade, investment and labour opportunities for both the indigenes and visitors to the community and the state at large. Thus, these findings are consistent with the summation of Ajaero and Madu (2014) and Majebi and Agbebaku (2023), that certain reasons are responsible for the increase in food production.

Table 6
Count of Community Development Projects

Year	No. of Immigrants	%	Total Number of Community Development Projects
2014	Not Available	0	Not Available
2015	Not Available	0	Not Available
2016	17	5.6	-
2017	22	7.3	2
2018	29	9.6	1
2019	32	10.6	6
2020	36	12.0	3
2021	41	13.6	4
2022	52	17.3	17
2023	71	23.6	10
Total	**300**	**100%**	**43**

The number of community development initiatives that were seen in the community during the period in Uhonmora-Ora is displayed in Table 6. According to the table, the nature of the community's local development initiatives for sustainability focused on the annual development levy's contribution to fund the construction of a town hall, vehicle parks, and a market. The improvement of communal works like the upkeep of nearby bridges, farm and cemetery roads, and the financing of vigilante organisations and court/land cases were more examples of their contributions to community initiatives. From this study, more money through development levies was raised in 2022 and 2023 for community developmental work, as

against what was registered between 2014 and 2019. Furthermore, the study found that the rise in the number of community projects, irrespective of their nature and cost, was a direct result of the growing immigrant population and the soil's fertility in the community. Therefore, these figures suggest that the number of immigrant residents and the level of community development play a significant role in the number of community works and development projects.

Table 7
Impacts of the Immigrant Population on the Increase in Food Production

Year	No. of Immigrants	Qty of Food Production	Total
2014	Not Available	Nil	0
2015	Not Available	Nil	0
2016	17	5	22
2017	22	9	31
2018	29	12	41
2019	32	18	50
2020	36	22	58
2021	41	27	68
2022	52	31	83
2023	71	35	106
Total	**300**	**159**	**459**

Chi-square text: $X^2 = \Sigma \frac{[0-E]^2}{E}$

Hypothesis Testing

Hi, there is a significant relationship between the immigrant population and the increase in food production in Uhonmora-Ora.

Extract from Table 7

Observed(0)	Expected (E)	(0 – E)2	$\frac{(0-E)^2}{E}$
17	14.37	6.91	0.48
3	7.62	6.86	0.90
22	20.26	3.02	0.14
9	10.26	2.99	0.27
29	26.79	4.88	0.18
12	14.20	4.84	0.34
32	32.67	0.44	0.01
18	17.32	0.46	0.02

36	37.90	3.61	0.09
22	20.09	3.64	0.18
41	44.44	11.83	0.26
27	23.55	10.90	0.50
52	54.24	5.01	0.09
31	28.75	5.06	0.17
71	69.28	2.95	0.04
35	36.71	2.95	0.07
			3.74

$X^2 = 3.74$

Where O = Observed variable

E = Expected variable

Degree of Freedom = V – K

V = row (2 - 1)

K = column (8 – 1)

V – K = (7 x 1) = 7

7 degrees of freedom and a 0.05% significance level of 14.067 are used for Chi-Square (X2). As a result, the theoretical value of 14.067 is more than the actual value of 3.74. It is implied that we accept the H1 and reject the H0. Thus, the Chi-square analysis ($X^2 = 3.74$, df = 7, $\alpha = 0.05$) compared observed and expected agro-economic outcomes. The immigrant influx significantly boosted agro-economic development, with measurable increases in food production, trading activities, job creation, population growth, and tourism. Statistical results ($X^2 < 14.067$) confirmed these contributions as non-random. Accordingly, the findings indicate a strong link between rising food production and the immigrant population.

Discussion

Research Question 1. What factors led to the immigrants' contributions to agro-economic growth in Uhonmora-Ora throughout their study periods?

The study revealed that just like many other agrarian communities in Nigeria, the people of Uhonmora-Ora have witnessed an unprecedented influx of immigrants in the last decade from adjoining communities and states. These immigrants have made significant impacts on the community's agro-economic value and food chain. The reasons for these movements and the sustainability of the immigrants were based on the perceived information about the community as: (a)the blessed land (rich soil fertility), and (b)the

land flowing with milk and honey (commerce). Other supporting factors to agro-economic development in the community include (c)the availability of farmland that stretched to the forest reserve area, (d)improvement in farm inputs and technology, (e)improved modes of transportation and communication, (d)job opportunities, socioeconomic reasons, (e)cheap labour, (f)low cost of living and housing, and (g)a level free from the host community and human security.

In addition, the volume of food and cash crop production is felt mainly with the harvest in tons of plantain, palm kernel, cassava, rice, beni-seed and cocoa. These products have gradually projected the community for the quality and consistency of these goods to Nigerians. Thus, the use of chemicals to retard weeds, improve seedlings are added advantage. However, this study emphasised the great fertility of the soil.in agro-economic growth in the community.

Research Question 2. To what extent has the immigrant population and their impacts on the increase in food production and community development?
The study revealed that the immigrant population and the increase in food production were low in the first quarter of the period of study, from 2014 to 2016. Moderate in the second quarter from 2017 to 2019, and high in the last quarter from 2020 to 2024 of the period of study. Thus, these variations and geometric increases in food production in the period of study as listed in Tables 4 to 6, could be attributed to a combination of factors such as the incessant increase in the number of immigrants population yearly, fertility of the soil as the blessed land flowing with milk and honey, availability of farming land, availability of labour force, availability of funds with a low-interest rate, low levy/task demand from the community, the favourably climatic condition of rainfall, temperature and humidity, and expansion of marketing and trade investment opportunities of the agricultural product to states of the urban centres. Thus, the implication of the quantity of food production in tons is that there would be an increase in food production, trade, investment and labour opportunities for both the indigenes and visitors in particular and the state at large.

In addition, Table 6 shows the counts of community development projects in the community. The community development projects were low in the first quarter (2014 to 2017), moderate in the second quarter (2018 to 2020), and much better in the third quarter (2021 to 2023), as presented in the Table. Thus, the study observed that the steady increase in the count of community

projects is directly a function of the incessant increases in the immigrant population, fertility of the soil as a blessed land and records keeping. Furthermore, the counts of community development imply that the immigrant population, levels of adaptation and functionality are instrumental towards the counts of developmental projects and communal works in the community. Given these analyses, the results of the study show a significant correlation between the immigrant population increase in food production and the number of community development projects.

Recommendations

Due to these immigrant contributions to a geometric rise in food production (Table 5), the marketing of these foods and the promotion of the community of Uhonmora-Ora in Owan West Local Government Area, Edo State, is seen as the blessed land, flowing with milk and honey. To enhance service delivery, the report suggests that the government and non-governmental organisations offer financial assistance and take advantage of the soil fertility to increase the quality and quantity of food production.

Conclusion

According to this report, the Uhonmora-Ora community in Edo State, South-South Nigeria, is largely composed of immigrants. Their contribution to food production has impacted ancillary industries such as domestic tourism, trading, and the supply of social infrastructure. To prevent the spread of unplanned land uses that contradict the ideas of sustainable development, these findings have implications for cooperative community planning. As a result, the community's general development and the intended push towards sustainable food production heavily depend on the local government, immigrants, and indigenous inhabitants. Since the results of this study are specific to the study location, additional research might be carried out in other Nigerian cities or towns with a similar immigrant population to better understand the obstacles and opportunities for achieving any or all of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest related to personal benefit, biased judgment, or compromised community objectivity in this study.

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Migration and Sustainable Development: Problems and Prospects
Essays in Honour of Professor Olufemi Ayinde Peters

Chapter 10
Empowering Irregular Return Migrants in Benin City through Entrepreneurship for Successful Reintegration

by

Kelechi Uwa-Robinson & Ezebunwa E. Nwokocha

Abstract

The reintegration of irregular return migrants in Benin City, Nigeria, presents a critical socio-economic challenge, as returnees often face stigma, unemployment, and limited institutional support. Despite these obstacles, many turn to entrepreneurship as a viable path to economic independence and reintegration. However, their journey is laced with difficulties, including limited access to capital, training, and market opportunities. This study explored entrepreneurship's potential as a sustainable reintegration strategy, examining returnees' experiences and challenges. This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative component involved administering structured questionnaires to 411 irregular return migrants. The qualitative component included in-depth interviews with returnees and Key Informant Interviews with officials providing entrepreneurial opportunities. Data was collected on demographics, access to financial and institutional support, socio-economic outcomes, challenges, and strategies for overcoming barriers. Descriptive statistics analysed quantitative data, while content analysis examined qualitative data. Findings show entrepreneurship serves as a viable reintegration avenue despite significant challenges. Over 70% of returnees launched micro-businesses with varying successes. Over 80% cited receiving reintegration support only occasionally. Qualitative data highlighted informal networks and personal resourcefulness in overcoming barriers. Governmental and non-governmental programmes providing vocational training and microfinance positively impacted entrepreneurial activities. Entrepreneurship is viable for the socio-economic reintegration of irregular return migrants in Benin City. Success requires addressing barriers around financial and institutional support. The study recommends enhancing reintegration programmes by expanding microfinance access, providing continuous business development services, and fostering enabling entrepreneurial environments to create sustainable livelihoods while contributing to local economic development.

Keywords: Access to Microfinance; Economic Reintegration of Returnees, Migration, Sustainable livelihoods

Introduction

Migration remains one of the leading features of contemporary global mobility, with an estimated 281 million international migrants worldwide as of 2020, representing 3.6% of the global population (Benton *et al.*, 2024). Among this population are millions who engage in irregular migration, defined as movement that occurs outside the legal and regulatory frameworks of sending, transit, or receiving countries (International Organisation for Migration, 2019). Irregular migration has become particularly pronounced in regions, particularly in the Global South, where structural inequalities, limited livelihood options, insecurity, and political instability converge to drive individuals to seek opportunities abroad (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, and Nigeria in particular, irregular migration is caused by high youth unemployment, poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and a persistent lack of socioeconomic mobility(Adepoju, 2022). According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), over 30,099 Nigerians were returned between 2017 and 2023 through assisted voluntary return programmes, with a significant proportion originating from transit countries such as Libya, Niger, and Mali (UNHCR, 2024). Many of these returnees had embarked on journeys toward Europe, often through irregular routes, and were compelled to return due to detention, deportation, failed expectations, or personal trauma (Cassarino, 2013; Obiora, 2021).

Benin City, the capital of Edo State, has emerged as a critical area in this migratory discourse. Repeatedly labelled as a major source for irregular migration in West Africa (Ajoke *et al.*, 2023) Benin City is deeply embedded in what scholars have termed a "culture of migration", a community-wide perception that success and upward mobility lie outside the country (Torelli, 2019). The city's strategic location, historical migration ties, and transnational networks have made it both a launching pad for outward migration and a significant return destination, especially for deported or voluntarily returned migrants (Adeniran, 2020; Shaidrova, 2023). Between 2017 and 2021, Edo State reportedly accounted for more than 50% of the returnees received under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration (Semprebon *et al.*, 2021).

Return to one's country does not automatically translate to successful reintegration. Reintegration is a multi-dimensional process involving economic self-sufficiency, social acceptance, and psychological adjustment

(International Organisation for Migration, 2017; Koser & Kuschminder, 2015). In the Nigerian context, particularly in Benin City, returnees face significant challenges such as stigma, weak institutional support, insufficient employment opportunities, and fragmented access to health and psychosocial services (Akhigbe A.O. & Effevottu E. S., 2023). For many returnees, the lack of adequate reintegration support compounds their trauma and marginalisation, often pushing them back into cycles of vulnerability or re-migration (Kuschminder, 2017b).

In response to these realities, entrepreneurship has been widely promoted as a reintegration strategy (Bolzani, 2023). Studies show that small-scale business ownership can empower returnees economically, reduce dependence on limited public resources, and foster community reintegration (Sinatti, 2022). While there is growing enthusiasm for this approach, the success of entrepreneurial reintegration is uneven and often constrained by inadequate access to startup capital, limited vocational training, poor infrastructure, and the absence of enabling policy environments (Ilesanmi, 2023).

Despite the implementation of reintegration programmes by international organisations such as IOM and local bodies like the Edo State Task Force Against Human Trafficking, there is limited empirical understanding of how entrepreneurship functions as a reintegration pathway in everyday returnee experiences. Most existing studies either focus on policy-level evaluations or provide macro-level overviews, leaving a gap in localised, context-specific evidence that captures returnees' lived experiences (Majorano *et al.*, 2024; Ojo, 2017).

Statement of Problem

The return of irregular migrants to Benin City presents a complex reintegration crisis that threatens both individual well-being and community stability. Despite Edo State accounting for over 50% of returnees under major reintegration programmes between 2017 and 2021 (Semprebon *et al.*, 2021). Most of these individuals face systematic barriers that prevent successful reintegration into their home communities (Ilesanmi, 2023). The problem is often multifaceted; returnees encounter persistent stigmatisation, limited economic opportunities, inadequate institutional support, and fragmented access to essential services, creating a cycle of vulnerability that often leads

to re-migration or prolonged marginalisation (Akhigbe A.O. & Effevottu E. S., 2023; Kuschminder, 2022).

While entrepreneurship has been promoted as a promising pathway for returnee reintegration, significant gaps exist in understanding how this approach can be effectively implemented within the specific socioeconomic context of Benin City. Current reintegration programmes, despite being implemented by international organisations such as IOM and local bodies like the Edo State Task Force Against Human Trafficking, have limited comprehensive empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of entrepreneurial interventions in addressing the lived realities of returnees.

The core problem lies in the disconnect between policy-level reintegration strategies and the actual experiences of returned migrants attempting to rebuild their lives. Without adequate access to startup capital, relevant vocational training, supportive infrastructure, and enabling policy environments, many returnees find themselves trapped between their traumatic migration experiences and an unwelcoming home environment that offers limited pathways to economic self-sufficiency and social acceptance (Majorano *et al.*, 2024; Ojo, 2017). This cycle of vulnerability often leads to re-migration (Cassarino, 2013).

This situation not only perpetuates individual suffering but also undermines broader community development efforts and migration management strategies. The absence of localised, context-specific research that captures how entrepreneurship can be leveraged as an effective reintegration tool represents a critical knowledge gap that should be addressed to develop sustainable solutions for irregular return migrants in Benin City.

Methodology

The research was conducted in Benin City**,** the capital of Edo State in southern Nigeria. Benin City is a prominent migration hub with well-documented outflows of irregular migrants, particularly to Europe and North Africa (Akhigbe A.O. & Effevottu E. S., 2023; Carling *et al.*, 2006). Its centrality in national and international discourse on return migration and human trafficking makes it a strategic location for reintegration studies.

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain comprehensive empirical data on the

reintegration experiences of irregular return migrants in Benin City, Nigeria. The adoption of a mixed methods approach allowed the study to benefit from the strength of quantitative and qualitative data, thereby enhancing the richness of findings.

A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the study participants. In the first stage, Benin City was purposively selected due to its centrality in return migration activities. The second stage involved cluster sampling, grouping Benin City into its three constituent Local Government Areas (LGAs): Oredo, Egor, and Ikpoba-Okha. In the third stage, purposive sampling was used to select four key reintegration support organisations from each LGA, based on the volume of returnee engagement. These included both government bodies and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). In the final stage, random sampling was employed to select return migrants from the registers maintained by these organisations. Both male and female returnees were included to ensure gender inclusivity.

The sample size of 411 was derived using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination formula, (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) based on the population of 5,114 return migrants recorded in Edo State between August 2017 and January 2020. The calculated sample size was 357, to which a 15% buffer (n=54) was added to account for non-response, bringing the total to 411 respondents.

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to return migrants. The questionnaire gathered data on demographic characteristics, return experiences, access to reintegration support, interactions with state and non-state actors, reintegration challenges, and attitudes towards future migration.

For qualitative data, In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) were conducted with 12 return migrants (6 male and 6 female) to capture their personal reintegration experiences and coping strategies. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were held with 12 representatives from government agencies and NGOs involved in reintegration service delivery. Quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to summarise demographic and reintegration variables. This analytical strategy ensured a rigorous examination of patterns and relationships relevant to the study objectives.

Qualitative data were analysed using content analysis. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the texts were coded to identify recurrent themes aligned with the research questions. The analysis enabled the synthesis of insights across different respondent categories, including returnees and key informants, offering a multidimensional understanding of reintegration dynamics. The study received ethical approval from the University of Ibadan Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Committee (Protocol No. UI/SSHREC/2023/0008). Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence were upheld throughout the research process.

Results and Discussions

Socio-Demographic Profile of Returnees

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the 411 irregular return migrants surveyed. The majority were male (64%), while females accounted for 36%. The largest age group was between 25–34 years (70.1%), reflecting a youthful population often at the core of migration flows. Most respondents (68.4%) were single, and Christianity was the dominant religion (95.4%). Marital status showed that a clear majority of respondents were single (68.4%), while 23.8% were married, and 7.8% reported being separated, divorced, or widowed. The high proportion of single individuals may suggest fewer family obligations at the time of migration, potentially making it easier to take the risks associated with irregular routes. However, 23.8% of married returnees may face additional reintegration challenges related to family responsibilities and economic pressure.

Education levels showed significant concentration at the secondary level (72.5%), followed by tertiary education (20.4%). Despite their relatively high educational attainment, over half of the respondents (52.8%) reported that their families were poor, underscoring a key push factor for migration. The employment status post-return revealed that 62.3% were unemployed, while only 19.7% were engaged in paid employment and 18% were apprentices. The monthly income levels were particularly revealing; 72.7% earned less than ₦10,000, a figure far below Nigeria's minimum wage. These findings highlight a socio-economically vulnerable group, with limited income and employment opportunities after returning, providing critical context for understanding their drive toward entrepreneurship as a reintegration pathway.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Returnees (N = 411)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	263	64
	Female	143	36
Age	15–24	58	14.1
	25–34	288	70.1
	35–45	59	14.4
	46–55	4	1.0
	55+	2	0.5
Marital Status	Single	281	68.4
	Married	98	23.8
	Separated/Divorced/Widowed	32	7.8
Education	No formal education	6	1.5
	Primary	23	5.6
	Secondary	298	72.5
	Tertiary	84	20.4
Employment (Post-Return)	Employed	81	19.7
	Unemployed	256	62.3
	Apprentice	74	18.0
Monthly Income	Less than ₦10,000	299	72.7
	₦10,000 - ₦19,000	24	5.9
	₦20,000 - ₦29,000	50	12.2
	₦30,000 - ₦39,000	12	2.9
	₦40,000 - ₦49,000	14	3.4
	₦50,000and above	12	2.9

Among the 411 returnees, 284 (69.1%) as shown in Table 2, reported engaging in one form of livelihood or another since returning to Nigeria. Among these, 122 (42.9%) were engaged in business activities, an indication of the growing reliance on self-employment and entrepreneurship as a survival strategy in a context with limited formal employment. The findings indicate that entrepreneurship is a primary livelihood path, reflecting the

proactive strategies of returnees in creating income-generating ventures despite structural limitations.

Among returnees who were not actively searching for jobs (36.7%), a large proportion (82.8%), as shown in Table 2, identified as self-employed, indicating that many turn to entrepreneurship either out of necessity or opportunity as a pathway to economic reintegration.

A total of 142 respondents (34.5%) reported receiving vocational skills training, and 98 of these (69%) were actively using the skills acquired. This highlights an implementation gap in training-to-practice conversion. The mismatch between training and usage suggests either the irrelevance of skills taught or the lack of an enabling environment for practice.

The centrality of vocational skills training in the reintegration process was reinforced by support organisations interviewed in the study. One organisation emphasised that entrepreneurship training is mandatory before any business setup support is provided. Returnees must complete this training to be considered for business establishment, often in small groups operating under shared partnerships:

> "Before we set up the business for you, you must have gone through those entrepreneurship trainings. Some migrants are placed in groups, maybe three, to establish partnerships." (KII/NGO/52 years/Christian/Oredo/Benin City, 2023)

Another organisation described their approach as combining skills acquisition with a structured and accountable business support process. They explained that rather than disbursing cash, they guide returnees through apprenticeships, help them prepare modest budgets (e.g., ₦200,000 packages), and accompany them to the market to purchase materials. The strategy ensures transparency and also builds returnees' capacity to manage resources and navigate entrepreneurship:

> "We support returnees through apprenticeship and business planning. Rather than handing them cash, we buy equipment with them, document the purchases, and help them make trade-offs based on a capped budget, often ₦200,000." (KII/NGO/48 years/Christian/Egor/Benin City, 2023)

These qualitative insights highlight the structured nature of reintegration interventions, particularly the importance of entrepreneurship training as a prerequisite for further support.

As shown in Table 2, despite the high number of returnees engaged in business, only 14.6% reported receiving financial support from government or non-governmental sources. The majority (37.7%) used personal savings or loans from family/friends, while 26.8% received start-up items from reintegration programmes. Notably, 20.9% started businesses with no formal capital, which may compromise long-term sustainability. The results show that there is limited access to capital for business start-ups.

Table 2: Entrepreneurship and Reintegration

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Livelihood Activity		
Business	122	42.9%
Paid Employment	66	23.2%
Handcraft	37	13.0%
Farming	19	6.7%
Hairdressing/Barbing	13	4.6%
Bricklaying/Plumbing	11	3.9%
Motorcycle Taxi (Okada)	10	3.5%
Others	6	2.2%
Employment Category		
Currently searching for a job	260	63.3%
Not searching for a job	151	36.7%
Paid employment	26	17.2%
Self-employed	125	82.8%
Vocational Skills Training and Utilisation		
Received training	142	34.5%
Currently using acquired skills	98	69.0%
Source of Start-Up Capital		
Government/NGO grant	60	14.6%
Family/Friends	155	37.7%
Start-up kits (non-cash)	110	26.8%
No capital	86	20.9%

When asked about the frequency of receiving reintegration support with data in Table 3, only 1.5% said they received support "very often," while 83.7% reported receiving assistance "once in a while." These low-frequency points reveal gaps in both sustainability and coverage of reintegration initiatives.

When asked if reintegration support was sufficient, only 21.7% of returnees agreed, while 56.7% believed it was insufficient, and 21.7% were uncertain. Several returnees expressed disappointment in how short-lived reintegration support was:

> "They came once to give us some items after training, but since then, nothing. I keep waiting for more help, but it has not come" (IDI/Female returnee/27 years/Christian/Ikpoba-Okha/Benin City)

> "We were told to fill out forms for loans, but nobody got anything. I'm just managing on my own." *(IDI/Female returnee/32 years/Christian/Egor/Benin City, 2023)*

Although entrepreneurship appears to be an opportune livelihood route, it is not without its challenges. Quantitative data, as shown in Table 3, revealed that 64.7% of returnees stated that their income does not meet monthly expenses at all, while only 1% claimed their income meets their needs very well. In terms of food security, 53% reported they hardly have food to eat, and 33.1% depended on family or friends for sustenance. This data reflects the financial precarity and food insecurity many irregular returnees in Benin City experience post-return, even while engaging in entrepreneurial activities.

This economic challenge was expressed in returnees' narratives. One female returnee shared the challenge of starting a business after receiving vocational training:

> "When I was trained in makeup and hairdressing, I was happy. But I don't have a place or the equipment. The small money they gave us, I used it for food. There is no help after that." *(IDI/Female returnee/28 years/Christian/Oredo/Benin City, 2023)*

Another returnee expressed the demoralising reality of economic reintegration efforts falling short:

"After coming back, they gave us training, and I was ready to start something. But I didn't have capital. I tried to borrow, but nobody helped. That's why I'm still struggling." *(IDI/Female returnee/30 years/Christian/Egor/Benin City, 2023)*

Table 3: Livelihood and Reintegration

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Frequency of Reintegration Support Received		
Very often	6	1.5%
Often	6	1.5%
Sometimes	55	13.3%
Once in a while	344	83.7%
Perceived Sufficiency of Reintegration Support		
Yes	89	21.7%
No	233	56.7%
Not Sure	89	21.7%
Income Sufficiency		
I depend on borrowing	55	13.4%
Not at all	266	64.7%
Not very well	86	20.9%
Very well	4	1.0%
Mode of Feeding		
Always have food to eat	57	13.9%
Hardly have food to eat	218	53.0%
Depend on family/friends for food	136	33.1%

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a stark picture of economic vulnerability among irregular return migrants in Benin City, with 62.3% reporting unemployment and 72.7% earning less than ₦10,000 monthly, a figure significantly below Nigeria's minimum wage. This economic challenge aligns with existing literature that documents the challenging reintegration situation faced by returnees in low- and middle-income countries (Cassarino, 2013). The high unemployment rate among returnees reflects broader

structural challenges in Nigeria's labour market, where formal employment opportunities remain limited, particularly for individuals without specialised skills or social capital (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016).

Despite these challenges, the study found that 42.9% of economically active returnees engaged in business activities, with 82.8% of those not seeking formal employment identifying as self-employed. This pattern demonstrates what Kuschminder (2017) describes as "entrepreneurship by necessity." (Kuschminder, 2017a) where returnees turn to self-employment not necessarily by choice but as a survival strategy in the absence of viable alternatives. The predominance of entrepreneurial activity among returnees reflects both agency and structural constraint, while returnees demonstrate resilience and initiative in creating income-generating activities, their choices are severely constrained by limited formal employment opportunities.

A critical finding emerges from the disconnect between vocational skills training and practical application. While 34.5% of returnees received vocational training, only 69% of trained individuals were actively using their acquired skills. This implementation gap highlights and identifies common weaknesses in reintegration programming; the assumption that skills training alone will translate into sustainable livelihoods without addressing the structural barriers that prevent skills utilisation (Ilesanmi, 2023).

The qualitative data provides insight into the structured approach adopted by support organisations, where entrepreneurship training is mandatory before business setup support. This approach reflects best practices in reintegration programming that emphasise capacity building before resource provision (International Organisation for Migration, 2017). However, the gap between training and implementation suggests that additional barriers, such as lack of startup capital, inappropriate skill-market matching, or insufficient follow-up support, continue to impede successful reintegration.

The study reveals significant constraints in accessing startup capital, with only 14.6% of returnees receiving financial support from government or non-governmental sources. The majority (37.7%) relied on personal savings or informal loans from family and friends, while 20.9% started businesses without any formal capital. This finding corroborates with other studies, which observe that limited access to credit remains a fundamental barrier to entrepreneurial success among returnees in Nigeria (Majorano *et al.*, 2024; Ojo, 2017).

The reliance on informal financing mechanisms reflects both the weakness of formal financial systems in supporting returnee entrepreneurship and the continued importance of social networks in reintegration processes (Hasan *et al.*, 2023). However, the reality that over one-fifth of returnees started businesses without any capital raises serious concerns about the sustainability and growth potential of these ventures, as undercapitalised businesses are more likely to fail (Ribeiro dos Santos, 2017).

The study findings reveal gaps in the frequency and perceived adequacy of reintegration support. Only 1.5% of returnees reported receiving support "very often," while 83.7% received assistance "once in a while." Furthermore, 56.7% of returnees considered the support insufficient. These findings align with Ilesanmi's (2023) critique of reintegration programmes in Nigeria, which often emphasise short-term interventions without addressing long-term sustainability (Ilesanmi, 2023).

The qualitative narratives from returnees highlight the psychological impact of discontinuous support, with expressions of disappointment and abandonment illustrating what can be described as the gap between programme promises and delivery (Cassarino Jean-Pierre, 2015).

Perhaps the most striking finding is the paradox of high entrepreneurial engagement alongside persistent economic vulnerability. Despite 82.8% of non-job-seeking returnees being self-employed, 64.7% reported that their income does not meet monthly expenses, and 53% experienced food insecurity. This paradox challenges simplistic assumptions about entrepreneurship as a solution for reintegration challenges (Baskaran, 2018; Ojo, 2017).

The persistence of poverty despite entrepreneurial activity suggests that the businesses established by returnees may be operating at subsistence levels rather than generating sustainable income. This finding resonates with broader literature on informal entrepreneurship in sub-Saharan Africa, where micro-enterprises often serve as survival mechanisms rather than growth-oriented ventures (Adu-Gyamfi *et al.*, 2023). The combination of limited startup capital, restricted market access, and inadequate business support creates conditions where entrepreneurial activity may trap returnees in cycles of low-productivity self-employment.

The study's finding that 33.1% of returnees depend on family and friends for food underscores the continued importance of informal support networks in

reintegration processes. This reliance on social networks reflects both the inadequacy of formal support systems and the resilience of community-based solidarity mechanisms. However, as (Kuschminder, 2017a) notes, while informal networks provide crucial support, they cannot compensate for structural limitations in reintegration programming.

The heavy reliance on family and friends for both financial support (37.7% for startup capital) and basic sustenance (33.1% for food) may strain these relationships over time, particularly given the economic constraints facing most families in the study context. This condition highlights the need for reintegration programmes to strengthen rather than compete with informal support systems while addressing the structural factors that necessitate such heavy reliance on social networks.

The findings of this study have several important implications for reintegration policy and practice. First, the high rate of entrepreneurial engagement among returnees suggests that entrepreneurship can serve as a viable reintegration pathway, only if supported by comprehensive interventions that address capital access, business development support, and market linkages. Current approaches that focus primarily on skills training without addressing these structural barriers are unlikely to achieve sustainable reintegration outcomes.

Second, the discontinuity and perceived inadequacy of reintegration support point to the need for longer-term, more intensive programming, which considers longer-term support rather than short-term or one-off support structures.

Third, the persistence of food insecurity and income inadequacy despite entrepreneurial engagement suggests that reintegration programmes need to adopt more realistic expectations about the time and support required to achieve sustainable economic reintegration. Rather than viewing entrepreneurship as a quick solution to reintegration challenges, programmes should be designed to support returnees through the extended process of building viable businesses in challenging economic contexts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study demonstrates that while entrepreneurship represents an important reintegration pathway for irregular return migrants in Benin City, current

approaches to supporting returnee entrepreneurship are insufficient to achieve sustainable economic reintegration. The persistence of poverty and food insecurity despite high levels of entrepreneurial engagement highlights the need for more comprehensive, longer-term, and structurally oriented reintegration interventions.

The findings challenge the notions of entrepreneurship as an easy solution to reintegration challenges while affirming the potential of well-supported entrepreneurial ventures to contribute to sustainable reintegration. Moving forward, reintegration programmes should adopt more realistic timelines, provide sustained support, and address the structural barriers that limit the success of returnee enterprises. Only through such comprehensive approaches can entrepreneurship truly serve as a pathway to successful reintegration rather than merely a survival mechanism in contexts of limited alternatives.

The findings of this study reveal significant gaps in current reintegration approaches and highlight the need for comprehensive reforms in policy and programming to support the sustainable reintegration of irregular return migrants through entrepreneurship. Based on the evidence presented, the following key recommendations are proposed for stakeholders involved in returnees' reintegration processes.

Given that only 14.6% of returnees received financial support from formal sources, there is an urgent need to establish a dedicated Returnee Entrepreneurship Fund. This fund should provide accessible microfinance options with flexible repayment terms, recognising the unique circumstances of returnees who may lack traditional collateral. The fund should be administered through a combination of government agencies and reputable microfinance institutions, offering loans ranging from ₦50,000 to ₦500,000 with graduated repayment schedules and business mentorship components.

To address the current gap where 83.7% of returnees receive support only "once in a while," reintegration programmes should adopt a graduated support model providing sustained assistance over 24-36 months. This should include immediate basic needs support (food, shelter, healthcare) in the first 3-6 months; intensive skills training and business development support in months 6-18; and ongoing mentorship, market linkage support, and follow-up services in the final phase. This approach moves beyond one-off interventions to ensure sustainable reintegration outcomes.

To address the implementation gap where 31% of trained returnees are not using their acquired skills, programmes should implement a comprehensive training-to-practice pipeline. This should include market assessment before training delivery, provision of startup kits and basic equipment as part of training programmes, establishment of business incubation centres where returnees can practice skills in a supported environment, and creation of mentorship programmes by pairing new returnees with successful local entrepreneurs. Business incubation centres should serve as one-stop shops providing shared workspace, business development services, and networking opportunities.

Rather than supporting isolated micro-enterprises that often operate at subsistence levels, programmes should adopt value chain integration approaches connecting returnee businesses to larger economic networks. This involves identifying key growth sectors in Benin City (agriculture and manufacturing) and supporting groups of returnees to establish complementary businesses along these value chains. Programmes should also facilitate partnerships with established businesses for supply contracts, distribution agreements, and mentorship opportunities to ensure market access and business sustainability.

Current reintegration programmes lack robust monitoring systems that track long-term outcomes. There is a need to establish comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems that track returnees' progress over multiple years, measure both economic and social reintegration outcomes, and provide feedback for continuous programme improvement. Additionally, a multi-stakeholder coordination platform should be established to bring together government agencies, international organisations, local NGOs, and private sector actors to facilitate information sharing, avoid duplication of efforts, and ensure complementarity between different interventions.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest associated with this manuscript. No financial or personal relationships exist that could have inappropriately influenced or biased the content and findings of this research. The study was conducted solely for academic and policy-oriented purposes.

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Chapter 11
Sustainable Entrepreneurship, Environmental Migration, and Corporate Social Responsibility: A Systematic Review in the Nigerian Context

by

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Abstract

This study explored the role of sustainable entrepreneurship in addressing the socio-economic challenges of environmental migration in Nigeria, with a specific focus on regions affected by environmental degradation, conflict, and climate-induced migration, such as the Niger Delta, Southeast, and Northern Nigeria. While much research has examined the economic impacts of entrepreneurship in Nigeria, the social and environmental implications remain underexplored. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating how Nigerian entrepreneurs can leverage sustainable business practices and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to mitigate the impacts of environmental migration and promote social cohesion in affected communities. The research employs a systematic literature review method, analysing 172 articles published between 2004 and 2023 across 76 journals. The study uses keyword co-occurrence analysis and citation metrics to identify key themes and trends in sustainable entrepreneurship and CSR. Four thematic clusters emerged from the analysis: (1) Social Entrepreneurship for Societal Impact, (2) Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development, (3) Entrepreneurship for Inclusive Regional Development, and (4) Regional and Economic Environments. These clusters reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the field and highlight the intersection of entrepreneurship, environmental sustainability and regional development. Findings suggest that Nigerian entrepreneurs face significant challenges in implementing sustainable practices, such as financial constraints, limited awareness and regulatory uncertainties. However, opportunities exist to address environmental migration through innovative, inclusive entrepreneurial ventures that integrate CSR principles. The study concludes that sustainable entrepreneurship, supported by collaborative efforts from policymakers, financial institutions and civil society, can foster resilience, promote economic stability, and drive long-term socio-economic success. The recommendations focus on strategic alignment, resilience cultivation and strengthened collaboration to help entrepreneurs incorporate sustainability into their business models. By embracing

a holistic approach to sustainable entrepreneurship, Nigeria can build a more resilient society and safeguard the environment for future generations.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Environmental Migration, Resilience, Socio-economic Challenges, Sustainable Entrepreneurship

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a key driver of economic development, job creation and poverty alleviation in developing countries such as Nigeria (Akinyemi & Adejumo, 2018). In recent years, the focus on entrepreneurship has expanded beyond economic growth to include social and environmental considerations, especially in the context of sustainable development (Olawale & Garwe, 2010). Nigeria, as the largest economy in Africa, faces complex challenges such as climate change, resource scarcity and forced migration due to environmental degradation (Nwoko, 2020).

The concept of sustainable entrepreneurship has emerged as a crucial approach for addressing these multifaceted challenges by integrating economic, social and environmental goals (Schaltegger & Wagner, 2011). In Nigeria, where climate change has exacerbated desertification in the North, flooding in the South, and coastal erosion along the Atlantic coastline, the phenomenon of environmental migration is becoming increasingly prevalent (Eze, 2021). Sustainable entrepreneurs in Nigeria are strategically positioned to mitigate the socio-economic impact of these environmental challenges by adopting business models that promote environmental conservation, social equity and economic resilience (Adegbite, 2020).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has also gained prominence as businesses in Nigeria face increasing pressure to align their operations with sustainable development goals (Idemudia, 2011). By incorporating CSR initiatives, Nigerian enterprises can address the underlying socio-economic factors driving environmental migration, such as unemployment, food insecurity and inadequate infrastructure (Ite, 2004). This study explores how sustainable entrepreneurship, in combination with CSR, can promote economic resilience and address environmental migration challenges in Nigeria.

Despite the substantial research on the economic impacts of entrepreneurship in Nigeria, there remains a significant gap in understanding its social and environmental implications, particularly in the context of environmental migration (Adelekan, 2012). In regions such as the Niger Delta, south-east and northern Nigeria, communities are increasingly forced to migrate due to environmental degradation, conflicts over resources and climate-induced disasters (UNDP, 2020). However, there is limited research on how Nigerian entrepreneurs can leverage sustainable business practices to address these migration challenges.

Literature Review

Sustainable entrepreneurship in Nigeria focuses on creating business models that balance profitability with social and environmental impacts (Schaltegger *et al.*, 2016). This approach has become particularly critical as Nigeria faces increasing pressures from climate change, which exacerbates socio-economic disparities and forces migration (Adelekan, 2010). In the northern regions, for instance, desertification and drought have led to agricultural decline, displacing communities and driving them to urban areas in search of livelihoods (Abiodun, 2018).

The impacts of environmental migration due to flooding, desertification and land degradation is particularly severe in states like Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe, where climate change has intensified resource scarcity and conflicts, leading to large-scale migration (International Organisation for Migration, 2022; United Nations Environment Programme, 2021). Sustainable entrepreneurship offers potential solutions by fostering economic activities that are environmentally friendly and socially inclusive. For instance, businesses involved in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture and waste management can provide alternative livelihoods to displaced communities, reducing their vulnerability (Olaniyi & Adeyemi, 2019).

By integrating CSR, which is now recognised as a strategy for Nigerian businesses to contribute to sustainable development, into their operations, companies can address the root causes of environmental migration, such as inadequate infrastructure and lack of economic opportunities in rural areas (Idemudia, 2011; Amaeshi *et al.*, 2006). The triple bottom line framework—focusing on people, planet, and profit - encourages Nigerian businesses to not only enhance their financial performance but also contribute positively to the environment and society (Elkington, 1998)

Research highlights the potential of sustainable entrepreneurship in addressing Nigeria's environmental migration challenges (Eze, 2021). Entrepreneurs who adopt sustainable practices can develop solutions that alleviate the socio-economic impacts of forced displacement, particularly in regions like the Niger Delta and the Lake Chad Basin, where environmental degradation has led to significant migration (UNDP, 2020). For instance, businesses focusing on climate-smart agriculture and eco-friendly technologies can create jobs, enhance food security, and reduce the push factors for migration (Olaniyi & Adeyemi, 2019).

Despite the growing recognition of the benefits of sustainable entrepreneurship, there is still a lack of comprehensive frameworks that link these practices to solving Nigeria's migration challenges (Nwoko, 2020). Existing literature often focuses on economic benefits but does not fully address how sustainable entrepreneurial ventures can support communities affected by climate-induced displacement. This study addresses this gap by exploring how entrepreneurs in Nigeria can leverage sustainable business models to promote resilience in migration-prone regions.

This paper aims to expand the current understanding of sustainable entrepreneurship by examining its impact on environmental migration and CSR within the Nigerian context, thereby contributing to the discourse on sustainable development in Africa.

This cluster emphasises the role of social entrepreneurship as a driving force for positive societal change, particularly in addressing environmental migration and sustainability challenges (Littlewood & Holt, 2018). In Nigeria, social enterprises are increasingly becoming essential in tackling issues such as climate-induced displacement, rural-urban migration, and societal inequalities (Akinyemi & Adejumo, 2018). Social entrepreneurs in Nigeria are adopting innovative strategies to enhance livelihoods for displaced communities, foster social inclusion, and promote sustainable community development (Abiodun, 2018).

Studies highlight that entrepreneurship in Nigeria often focuses on marginalised groups, helping integrate them into the labour market, thereby reducing poverty and enhancing social cohesion (Eze, 2021). Social enterprises are also addressing post-pandemic challenges by leveraging technological capabilities to build resilience and adapt to shifting socio-economic conditions (Olaniyi & Adeyemi, 2019). However, challenges

persist, such as work-life imbalances and the potential "dark side" of entrepreneurship, where entrepreneurs may face financial and psychological stress (Balogun *et al.*, 2020).

Given the increasing frequency of climate-related events such as floods, desertification and coastal erosion, there is a growing need for businesses to adopt sustainable practices that align with Nigeria's environmental goals (UNEP, 2021). Entrepreneurs in Nigeria are instrumental in addressing socio-environmental challenges, including job creation, poverty alleviation and fostering climate resilience (Adelekan, 2012). For example, sustainable entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector are developing climate-smart technologies to enhance productivity while minimising environmental harm (Eze, 2021). However, there is a critical need for policy support to promote sustainable business models that address the socio-economic impacts of environmental migration (Nwoko, 2020).

Many businesses are adopting CSR initiatives to support communities affected by environmental migration, thereby fostering regional stability and economic growth (Amaeshi *et al.*, 2006). Entrepreneurs and corporations in Nigeria are increasingly recognising the importance of CSR in creating shared value for both businesses and communities (Idemudia, 2011). For instance, firms are investing in local infrastructure, education, and health services to mitigate the impact of environmental migration, especially in regions severely affected by climate change (UNDP, 2020). This inclusive approach not only enhances social welfare but also ensures sustainable economic development (Ite, 2004).

Migration driven by environmental factors such as drought, flooding and land degradation is reshaping the entrepreneurial landscape in Nigeria (Adelekan, 2010). Entrepreneurs operating in these regions often face barriers such as limited access to resources, inadequate infrastructure and socio-political instability (Abiodun, 2018).

Addressing these challenges requires a deeper understanding of how regional policies, economic conditions and social support systems can encourage sustainable entrepreneurship. For example, regions with proactive environmental policies and supportive stakeholder networks are better positioned to attract sustainable investments and foster resilience among displaced populations (UNEP, 2021).

Summary of Thematic Clusters Reviewed

(a) Social Entrepreneurship for Societal Impact

This cluster emphasises social entrepreneurship as a powerful tool for societal change, highlighting its dual potential to generate both positive outcomes and unintended consequences at individual, community, and societal levels. Social entrepreneurship is increasingly acknowledged as a mechanism for addressing critical challenges such as poverty, gender inequality, and social justice (Akanbi, 2020; Ezenwaka, 2021). Studies affirm its role in enhancing well-being, empowering women, promoting social inclusion, and reducing disparities in marginalised Nigerian communities (Okonkwo & Nnadi, 2019). These align with Nigeria's broader development goals by promoting gender equity, human rights, and communal solidarity.

Post-COVID-19 research highlights how technology-driven social entrepreneurship enhances resilience and accelerates change (Adeola *et al.*, 2022). In Nigeria, digital innovations have improved access to health, education, and social services, thereby expanding the impact of social ventures (Chukwuma & Bello, 2021).

Despite its benefits, social entrepreneurship in Nigeria faces challenges, including work-life imbalance, unpaid labour, and psychological stress (Okeke & Uchenna, 2020). The "dark side" of entrepreneurship - financial risk, burnout, and emotional strain—remains a concern, especially for social entrepreneurs lacking institutional support (Ibrahim & Olayiwola, 2019).

Social entrepreneurs can play a key role in mitigating climate-induced displacement by developing business models that empower displaced populations through sustainable livelihood initiatives (Ogunleye, 2021).

(b) Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development

This cluster is centred on how entrepreneurship addresses sustainability concerns such as poverty reduction, climate action, and ecosystem restoration. Entrepreneurship is often framed as a Schumpeterian driver of innovation and economic transformation, particularly relevant in Nigeria, where sustainable entrepreneurial practices can stimulate job creation and economic growth (Joseph & Okechukwu, 2020). These practices align with global efforts to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in clean energy, inclusive growth, and environmental sustainability (UNDP, 2021).

Immigrant and marginalised entrepreneurs in Nigeria contribute significantly to regional development and social integration. Empowering these groups - particularly women and persons with disabilities—through entrepreneurship helps dismantle structural barriers and promote inclusivity (Adebayo & Usman, 2021). Social enterprises targeting sustainability also provide eco-friendly employment opportunities for displaced individuals affected by environmental degradation (Nwachukwu *et al.*, 2022).

While entrepreneurship spurs economic development, it can also contribute to environmental degradation, particularly in informal and necessity-driven sectors. Studies highlight the need to mitigate carbon emissions and environmental harm through sustainable business models (Olawale & Uzochukwu, 2020). Future research should examine how Nigerian entrepreneurs can balance growth with ecological responsibility.

(c) Entrepreneurship for Inclusive Regional Development

Entrepreneurship in rural and underserved regions of Nigeria, such as the North and Southeast, can catalyse poverty alleviation and community development. Social enterprises that reflect local cultures, safeguard natural resources, and serve marginalised populations are particularly transformative (Eze & Okoli, 2019).

Cultural inclusivity is essential in Nigeria's diverse landscape. Entrepreneurs play a crucial role in empowering minority communities by preserving cultural identity while integrating them into the economy (Onwuegbuzie & Musa, 2021). This approach supports broader goals of sustainability and societal cohesion.

Entrepreneurial activities in tourism, agriculture, and renewable energy have immense potential to drive sustainable local development. These ventures link rural economies to national and international markets, while simultaneously improving the quality of life and conserving local environments (Ogunyemi, 2020).

(d) Regional and Economic Environments

Regional policies, economic conditions, and stakeholder availability significantly impact entrepreneurial intent in Nigeria. For example, access to investors and market linkages varies by region, influencing entrepreneurial decisions and long-term viability (Iwu & Eke, 2021).

Push factors - such as economic instability, inflation, and insecurity - often drive necessity entrepreneurship in Nigeria. While much literature focuses on favourable conditions (pull factors), it is equally vital to investigate survival-driven entrepreneurship caused by adverse regional circumstances (Chukwuemeka & Aliyu, 2020).

Human capital—comprising education, skills, and mindset - plays a critical role in shaping entrepreneurial outcomes across Nigeria's regions. Investment in youth education, vocational training, and entrepreneurship education is necessary to foster regional innovation and resilience (Balogun & Oke, 2021).

Conceptual Model

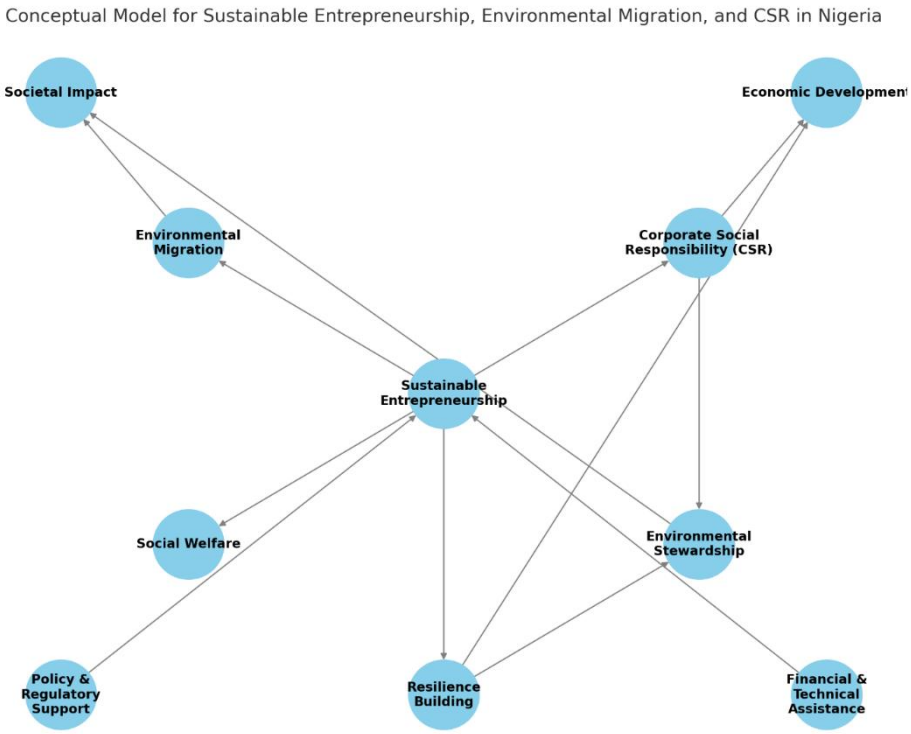

Fig. 1: Conceptual Model for Sustainable Entrepreneurship, Environmental Migration and CSR

The conceptual model visualises the relationships between sustainable entrepreneurship, environmental migration, CSR and their broader impacts. Key variables include societal impact, economic development,

environmental stewardship, social welfare, resilience building, and the role of policy, regulatory support, and financial assistance. This diagram demonstrates the interconnectedness of these factors, illustrating how each element influences the others in promoting sustainable entrepreneurship in the context of environmental migration and CSR. Following a comprehensive examination of 172 scholarly publications, we have synthesised the existing literature to construct an integrated conceptual framework. This framework identifies key determinants that influence the integration of environmental factors and CSR for sustainable entrepreneurship development, particularly in the Nigerian context.

Theoretical Framework

Stakeholder Theory

The stakeholder theory, initially developed by Freeman (1984), posits that organisations should prioritise the interests of all stakeholders, not just shareholders, in their decision-making processes. Stakeholders can include employees, customers, suppliers, communities, the environment, and even society at large. This theory challenges the traditional profit-maximisation model by emphasising that the long-term success and sustainability of a business depend on addressing the needs and concerns of various stakeholders. In the context of this study, this theory is highly relevant as it underscores the role of Nigerian businesses in adopting sustainable entrepreneurship and CSR initiatives. By actively engaging with stakeholders, businesses can help address socio-economic challenges such as environmental migration, which disproportionately affects vulnerable communities. By doing so, they can promote social cohesion, enhance their reputation, and contribute to sustainable regional development.

Triple Bottom Line Theory

Elkington's triple bottom line theory (1997) expands the focus of business performance beyond traditional financial metrics by emphasising the need to balance three key dimensions: People (social impact), Planet (environmental impact), and Profit (economic value). According to this theory, for a business to achieve true sustainability, it must create positive social and environmental outcomes while maintaining profitability. This approach is particularly pertinent in the Nigerian context, where sustainable entrepreneurship can play a critical role in mitigating the adverse effects of environmental degradation, conflict, and climate-induced migration. By integrating social and environmental considerations into their business models, Nigerian

entrepreneurs can not only drive economic growth but also contribute to solving pressing societal issues, such as unemployment and regional instability. This holistic approach encourages businesses to look beyond short-term gains and invest in long-term strategies that foster economic resilience and sustainable development.

Institutional Theory

The institutional theory, articulated by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), explores how organisational behaviour is influenced by the institutional environment, including societal norms, values, legal frameworks, and regulatory pressures. Organisations, according to this theory, often adopt certain practices to gain legitimacy, align with social expectations, and respond to pressures from the external environment. In the Nigerian context, businesses face regulatory uncertainties and socio-political challenges, which can hinder the implementation of sustainable practices. However, by aligning with institutional expectations, entrepreneurs can legitimise their efforts in adopting sustainable business practices and CSR initiatives. This alignment not only helps businesses navigate regulatory environments but also enables them to build trust with communities and other stakeholders. Embracing sustainable entrepreneurship practices can thus serve as a strategic response to institutional pressures while addressing socio-economic issues like environmental migration, fostering regional stability, and promoting inclusive growth. and promoting inclusive growth.

Methodology

This reviewed the intersection of sustainable entrepreneurship, environmental migration and CSR within the context of Nigerian development. To achieve this, a combination of bibliometric analyses and systematic literature reviews (Kraus *et al.*, 2020, 2022; Siemieniako *et al.*, 2021) is employed. These methodologies complement each other: the bibliometric analysis provides a broad quantitative understanding of the research landscape, while the systematic review offers an in-depth synthesis of key findings (Kraus *et al.*, 2020). This dual approach has been validated in previous academic studies (Bartolacci *et al.*, 2020; Caputo *et al.*, 2022; Dabić *et al.*, 2021) and allows for a robust exploration of sustainable entrepreneurship and CSR in the context of Nigeria's environmental and economic challenges.

The study adheres to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework (Page *et al.*, 2021) to ensure methodological rigor in selecting the relevant literature.

Step 1: Database Selection and Search Strategy

Given the focus on sustainable entrepreneurship and CSR, the Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection is chosen for its comprehensive coverage of high-impact articles. A Boolean search was performed using the "TS" command (Title, Abstract, Author Keywords, and Keywords Plus®) to identify articles that explore "entrepreneurial activity" in relation to environmental and social issues, particularly focusing on environmental migration and CSR practices within developing countries like Nigeria. Keywords such as "sustainable entrepreneurship," "environmental migration," and "corporate social responsibility" were used to narrow the scope.

Step 2: Inclusion Criteria

Only peer-reviewed articles published in English, indexed under the "Sustainable Entrepreneurship" research area, and found in the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) were included. Articles published from 2004 to 2023 were selected, following standard bibliometric research practices, and only full-year publications were considered. Preliminary searches in databases such as Scopus were conducted to validate WoS as the most appropriate database for this study. This process identified 2,991 relevant articles.

Step 3: Screening and Selection

A thorough screening process was implemented to ensure that only articles directly relevant to sustainable entrepreneurship, environmental migration, and CSR in Nigeria were retained. Titles, abstracts, and keywords were independently reviewed by two authors, with disagreements resolved through discussions. Studies that focused on established SMEs or those that did not address the entrepreneurial aspects in the context of sustainability were excluded (e.g., McCaffrey & Kurland, 2015). After this process, 172 articles were retained for further analysis.

Step 4: Final Selection

The final selection included 172 papers, representative of the key theoretical and empirical contributions to the study of sustainable entrepreneurship and

CSR. These articles span across 76 different journals and reflect the broad academic interest in this interdisciplinary field.

Analysis and Results

The research dataset consists of 172 articles published between 2004 and 2023, spread across 76 journals. Each article, on average, has been cited 46 times, with a noticeable rise in publications on sustainable entrepreneurship and CSR. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the most frequently cited references in the dataset.

Table 1. Most Local Cited References

Rank	Articles	Local Cited
1	Mair J, & Marti I (2006). Social entrepreneurship research: A source of explanation, prediction, and delight. *Journal of World Business*, 41(1), 36–44.	52
2	Austin, J., Stevenson, H., & Wei–Skillern, J. (2006). Social and commercial entrepreneurship: same, different, or both. Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 30(1), 1–22.	38
3	Zahra, S. A., Gedajlovic, E., Neubaum, D. O., & Shulman, J. M. (2009). A typology of social entrepreneurs: Motives, search processes and ethical challenges. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 24(5), 519–532.	35
4	Santos, F. M. (2012). A positive theory of social entrepreneurship. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 111(3), 335–351.	25
5	Dacin, P. A., Dacin, M. T., & Matear, M. (2010). Social entrepreneurship: Why we don't need a new theory and how we move forward from here. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 24(3), 37–57.	24

These references serve as foundational frameworks, with a strong emphasis on social entrepreneurship, CSR, and sustainable development. The papers span multiple journals, showcasing the interdisciplinary nature of the field.

Table 2. Most Local Cited Journals

Rank	Journal	Articles
1	*Journal of Business Venturing*	499
2	*Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*	468
3	*Academy of Management Review*	359
4	*Journal of Business Ethics*	331
5	*Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*	312
6	*Academy of Management Journal*	258
7	*Small Business Economics*	254

Table 3: Most Global Cited Sources

Rank	Sources	TC	NP	h-index	Publication Starting Year
1	*Journal of Business Venturing*	873	10	8	**2010**
2	*Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*	708	5	4	**2012**
3	*Journal of Business Ethics*	678	12	9	**2010**
4	*Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*	629	14	11	**2004**
5	*Technological Forecasting & Social Change*	481	9	9	**2017**
6	*Journal of Management Studies*	380	5	5	**2016**
7	*Small Business Economics*	360	5	5	**2013**
8	***International Small Business Journal***	**309**	**4**	**4**	**2011**

TC=Total citations; NP=Number of papers from the dataset belonging to that journal; h-index=number of published articles (h), each of which has been cited in other papers at least h times

Table 3 outlines the global citation impact of key journals in the field. The *Journal of Business Venturing* and *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* are the most influential globally, underlining their relevance to the study of sustainable entrepreneurship and CSR.

Table 4: Most Local and Globally Cited Authors

Rank	Authors	LC	Rank	Authors	TC
1	McMullen J.S.	10	1	Omri A.	425
2	Datta P.B.	9	2	Lumpkin G.T.	401
3	Gailey R.	9	3	Venkataraman S.	393
4	Wright M.	8	4	York J.G.	393
5	Zahra S.A	8	5	Anderson A.	296
6	Dhahri S.	7	6	Mc Keever E.	296
7	Omri A.	7	7	Datta P.B.	283

LC=Local citations; TC=Total citations

These authors have made significant contributions to the development of theories on entrepreneurship, CSR, and social impact, with Omri (2018) standing out as a leading figure in both local and global citations.

Table 5: Most Prolific Authors

Rank	Authors	Number of articles	Publication starting year
1	Omri A	5	2018
2	Lumpkin G.T	4	2013
3	Bacq S	3	2018

Identification of Thematic Clusters

Through keyword co-occurrence analysis, four key thematic clusters emerged:

(a) Social Entrepreneurship for Societal Impact

Social entrepreneurship has emerged as a powerful tool for addressing deep-rooted social and environmental challenges. Unlike traditional business models that focus primarily on profit, social entrepreneurship emphasises creating societal value. In Nigeria, social entrepreneurs are increasingly playing vital roles in improving access to education, healthcare, clean water, and renewable energy. These ventures prioritise community welfare, often working in underserved or marginalised regions. Through innovative approaches, social entrepreneurs tackle systemic issues such as poverty, unemployment, and gender inequality, contributing significantly to national development goals.

(b) Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development

Sustainable development has become a key priority in contemporary economic planning, and entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in advancing this objective. Entrepreneurship for sustainable development involves

initiating business ventures that prioritise environmental stewardship, economic viability, and social equity. In the Nigerian context, entrepreneurs are innovating in areas such as waste recycling, green energy, sustainable agriculture, and eco-friendly construction. These ventures not only reduce environmental degradation but also create jobs and promote responsible consumption and production patterns aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

(c) Entrepreneurship for Inclusive Regional Development

Entrepreneurship serves as a vital mechanism for reducing regional disparities and fostering inclusive economic growth. In developing countries like Nigeria, regional imbalances in infrastructure, investment, and employment opportunities are common. By supporting localised entrepreneurship, particularly in rural and underserved areas, inclusive regional development can be promoted. Initiatives such as agribusiness startups, rural cooperatives, and technology-driven enterprises help to decentralise economic activities and empower local populations. These efforts enhance income distribution, curb rural-urban migration, and contribute to balanced national development.

(d) Regional and Economic Environments

The success of sustainable entrepreneurship is influenced by the broader regional and economic environments in which it operates. In Nigeria, environmental degradation, policy inconsistencies, and economic instability present significant challenges to entrepreneurial development. Moreover, issues such as internal displacement due to climate change and migration strain local resources and limit market access. Addressing these concerns requires an enabling policy framework, robust infrastructure, and targeted support systems for entrepreneurs. Understanding and adapting to these environmental dynamics is crucial for the resilience and long-term sustainability of entrepreneurial ventures.

The keywords were derived following the inductive creation of a content-based codebook. The process of developing this codebook involved pinpointing the primary descriptors within the field. This was achieved by "(i) extracting key content from article titles, abstracts, and keywords; (ii) categorising this content to create a condensed list of core descriptors; and (iii) iteratively refining the codebook by consolidating similar categories to produce a meaningful shortlist of descriptors based on content and frequency" (López-Duarte *et al.* 2016:512). Based on the initial descriptors

identified, some were either merged or removed manually by: (a) excluding descriptors about the broad term "entrepreneurship," since all chosen articles address it, as stipulated by the search strategy; (b) combining descriptors that were similar in meaning or interconnected in a more integrative sense; and (c) distinguishing certain descriptors as distinct concepts (e.g., "social entrepreneurs" and "social enterprises") to retain the various levels of analysis represented by the articles. This approach resulted in a final set of 65 descriptors, which were manually reassigned to the articles in the dataset. From this viewpoint, the field appears to consist mainly of four clusters: social entrepreneurship for societal impact (Cluster a), entrepreneurship for sustainable development (Cluster b), entrepreneurship for inclusive regional development (Cluster c), and regional and economic environments (Cluster d).

Our analysis has highlighted the need for a more holistic approach to integrating sustainability into entrepreneurial practices. The conceptual model developed in this study identifies the interplay between sustainable entrepreneurship, environmental migration, and CSR. The framework suggests that addressing these interconnected areas can lead to improved economic, social, and environmental outcomes.

The findings highlight the significant scholarly attention given to the intersection of entrepreneurship, environmental issues, and CSR, especially in the context of sustainable development and migration**.**

Summary of Key Findings

i. Dataset Overview: The study analysed 172 articles published between 2004 and 2023 across 76 journals, with an average citation count of 46 per article.
ii. Journals Analysis and Cited References: A detailed overview of the most cited journals appears in Tables 2 and 3, showing the journals' influence at both local and global levels. The five most cited references from our dataset are summarised in Table 1.
iii. Authors' Impact: Table 4 presents the most cited authors, with a distinction between local and global citations.
iv. Clusters Identified: The study identified four clusters—social entrepreneurship, sustainable development, inclusive regional development, and regional economic environments.

Establishing a Future Research Agenda

Based on our empirical findings, there is considerable potential for future research focusing on the consequences of sustainable entrepreneurship. The research agenda can be guided by the clusters identified in the literature review:

(a) Social Entrepreneurship for Societal Impact

Scholars have emphasised the need to examine both the positive and negative impacts of entrepreneurship on individuals and communities (Shepherd, 2019). There is also a call for the development of robust evaluation frameworks and metrics to measure the societal impact of social entrepreneurship, particularly during economic crises and environmental challenges (Nakpodia *et al.* 2023). Additionally, a deeper investigation into how social entrepreneurship initiatives can drive post-crisis recovery and resilience in Nigeria is essential.

(b) Cluster 2: Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Environmental Impact

There is a growing need to explore how sustainable entrepreneurship can address environmental challenges like migration driven by climate change. Studies highlight the importance of examining the environmental impact of entrepreneurial activities, especially in emerging economies like Nigeria (Omri & Afi, 2020). Current research predominantly focuses on CO2 emissions, while other critical environmental metrics, such as biodiversity, water usage, and ecosystem health, remain underexplored (Fernandes & Ferreira, 2022). Future studies should broaden the scope to assess the comprehensive environmental consequences of entrepreneurial ventures.

(c) Cluster 3: Inclusive Regional Development and CSR

Researchers have called for a clearer understanding of how CSR initiatives can empower marginalised communities, particularly those affected by environmental migration (Alkhaled & Berglund 2018). The role of CSR in promoting inclusive development is critical for fostering regional stability in Nigeria. Scholars recommend examining the cooperative roles of communities and institutional partners in addressing regional disparities and environmental challenges (Lumpkin & Bacq, 2019).

(d) Cluster 4: Regional and Economic Environments in the Context of Environmental Migration

The impact of environmental factors on regional economic activities and entrepreneurial initiatives remains underexplored. Future research should

investigate how entrepreneurship can provide adaptive solutions to migration challenges driven by environmental degradation. There is also a need to understand the economic implications of such migration and how entrepreneurial responses can enhance regional resilience and economic sustainability.

Furthermore, entrepreneurship research should explore how integrating environmental stewardship with social welfare and CSR can create sustainable growth. By advancing research in these areas, we can better understand the role of entrepreneurs in balancing economic performance with environmental preservation and social equity.

Conclusion

Implementing sustainable practices presents various challenges for Nigerian entrepreneurs, such as financial constraints, limited awareness, stakeholder resistance, and regulatory uncertainties. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts among policymakers, financial institutions, industry associations, and civil society organisations. Providing financial support, technical assistance, and clearer regulatory guidelines can enable entrepreneurs to effectively incorporate sustainability into their business models.

By aligning their operations with environmental consciousness and CSR, entrepreneurs can foster resilience, contribute to societal well-being, and drive sustainable growth. Integrating these principles into business strategies is not just a moral obligation but also a strategic imperative for long-term socio-economic success. Embracing a holistic approach to sustainable entrepreneurship can build a resilient society while safeguarding the environment for future generations.

Recommendations

i. Strategic Alignment: Formulate a clear mission and vision that aligns with environmental and CSR principles, embedding sustainability into the core of your business model.
ii. Cultivating Resilience: Acknowledge the uncertainties and challenges of sustainable entrepreneurship by fostering flexibility and adaptability.

iii. Collaboration and Support: Strengthen partnerships with government bodies, NGOs, and financial institutions to gain access to resources and training for sustainable practices.

Summary of Key Contributions to Knowledge

i. The study demonstrated the capacity of professionals to integrate sustainable entrepreneurship principles into their business frameworks, thus contributing to a more sustainable future.
ii. It underscores the importance of addressing interconnected global challenges holistically, rather than in isolation.
iii. By adopting a comprehensive perspective that includes CSR, environmental stewardship, and sustainability, practitioners can significantly amplify the impact of their entrepreneurial initiatives.

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Migration and Sustainable Development: Problems and Prospects
Essays in Honour of Professor Olufemi Ayinde Peters

Chapter 12

Contributions of Nigeria's Diaspora Networks to Economic Growth and National Security: A Synthesis of Evidence

by

Isma'il Husiain Mshelia

Abstract

Nigeria's diaspora - consisting of about 17 million individuals - is the largest in Africa and one of the largest globally. It is thus a huge asset, the understanding of which is worthy of research. This paper explored the diaspora networks' contributions to Nigeria's economic growth and national security, which are requisites for sustainable development. The paper employed a desk review of secondary data to synthesise academic articles, government reports, media reports, international publications, and credible policy papers to provide a comprehensive overview of the diaspora's impact on Nigeria's economic growth and national security. On the former, the paper found that the diaspora's financial remittances have boosted Nigeria's economy through a stable inflow of foreign currency (exceeding $20 billion annually), skill transfer, and investments in various sectors. On the latter, the paper found that the diaspora communities have contributed to Nigeria's counterterrorism and peacebuilding efforts by providing intelligence, advocating for international collaboration, and promoting peace in conflict-affected regions, while also engaging in transnational initiatives addressing security challenges. Additionally, the paper found that the diaspora's engagement in Nigerian political discourse and promoting transparency impacted the country's quest for sustainable development. The paper underscored the need for the Nigerian government to develop a more structured engagement framework with its diaspora to optimise their contributions and ensure that policies facilitate a stronger link between diaspora efforts and national priorities.

Keywords: Development, Investment, Migration, Transnational Networks, Security

Introduction

The increasing engagement of diaspora communities in the development of their countries of origin has become a significant trend globally. Nigeria's diaspora community, which includes roughly 17 million people made up of professionals, artisans, and students, is the largest in Africa and ranks among the 10 largest globally (Nnabuihe *et al.*, 2024). It is thus a huge resource with significant potential impacts on Nigeria's economic growth and national security, among other precursors of sustainable development. Acknowledging the strategic significance of the expanding resource and the need to harness it, the Federal Government of Nigeria has actively pursued initiatives since the onset of the Fourth Republic in 1999 to encourage participation from the Nigerian diaspora in development (Kunle & Modupe, 2019). In 2017, the government established the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM) to engage and leverage the human capital and material resources of the diaspora for the nation's socio-economic, cultural, and political advancement. The official designation of July 25 as the annual National Diaspora Day is another testament to the government's recognition of the diaspora's importance.

Existing literature strongly suggests that diaspora networks hold transformative potential for Nigeria's development, with many studies revealing the substantial economic influence of the networks (Aja *et al.*, 2024; Nevin & Omosomi, 2019). However, the current understanding of the roles of diaspora in Nigeria's development remains fragmented. Most research focused on the macro-level impacts of diaspora engagement, leaving a gap in understanding the specific contributions of Nigerians in the diaspora to economic growth in relation to national security—both of which are requisites for sustainable development. This necessitates more rigorous research to synthesise the contributions of the diaspora networks to Nigeria's quest for economic growth, national security and sustainable development.

Accordingly, this paper, on the one hand, explores the various ways through which the diaspora has been making significant contributions to Nigeria's economic development. On the other hand, it reveals the role of the diaspora networks in promoting national security and analyses the potential for their increased involvement in promoting stability and peace in the country. By focusing on these key areas, this paper advances understanding of the influence of the Nigerian diaspora on economic growth, national security, and sustainable development; thus, informing policies and strategies that

leverage the contributions of the diaspora to achieve sustainable and inclusive development.

Literature Review

The concept of diaspora has evolved considerably in academic discourse, with scholars acknowledging its complexity (Wapmuk *et al.*, 2014). In arrays of definitions, 'diaspora network' has emerged as the transnational connections formed by individuals or groups originating from a particular country but legally residing abroad, who maintain social, economic, and cultural ties with their country of origin while simultaneously integrating into their host societies (Grossman, 2019). Mohan (2002) has provided a useful taxonomic framework for understanding diaspora development activities, having categorised them into three distinct types: (1) development in the diaspora, which focuses on leveraging diasporic ties within host countries to promote the social and economic welfare of diaspora members; (2) development through the diaspora, which explains diaspora's contribution to economic progress in host nations through trade and investment; and (3) development by the diaspora, which centres on diaspora contributions to their countries of origin. The third category forms the primary focus of this study.

Economic growth, conventionally measured through increases in gross domestic product (GDP), represents the expansion of a country's productive capacity over time (Sirous, 2024). In the Nigerian context, economic growth patterns have been characterised by significant volatility, primarily due to the country's heavy dependence on oil revenues, persistent structural imbalances, and policy inconsistencies that have hindered sustainable economic development (Danjuma, 2025; Mshelia, 2024). Diaspora networks, as Usman *et al.* (2022) found, contribute to economic growth through multiple channels, including remittances and foreign direct investment. These contributions represent critical external financial flows that extend far beyond simple monetary transfers to encompass human capital development and market linkage creation.

However, scholarly analyses have revealed that the term 'development' is more holistic than economic growth. It is defined as a multidimensional phenomenon that involves economic growth, inequality reduction, poverty eradication and major transformations in social structures, attitudes, and institutions (Todaro & Smith, 2006). The integration of sustainability principles with development objectives emphasises the efficient and

equitable distribution of resources both intra-generationally and inter-generationally within finite ecosystem boundaries (Stoddart, 2011). Sustainable development, as Mensah (2019) recounted, rests on three fundamental sustainability pillars: economic, social, and environmental. These also serve as precursors to national security— the safety of a nation's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and citizens from both internal and external aggression (Reveron & Mahoney-Norris, 2019). The relationship between national security and development is fundamentally symbiotic. As Orji (2011) argues, sustainable development requires a considerable degree of practical peace and the realisation of national security objectives. Often, a nation's potential for achieving this is severely jeopardised by many threats like terrorism, insurgency and banditry, all of which are prevalent in Nigeria today (Akanle, 2019; Mshelia & Kari, 2024).

Empirical research has demonstrated the substantial economic influence of diaspora networks on Nigeria's development (Aja *et al.*, 2024; Nevin & Omosomi, 2019; Owotemu *et al.*, 2024). For example, in the year 2022 alone, the country received $20.9 billion in remittances, making it one of the largest sources of external financial flows to the country (Dilip *et al.*, 2022). Usman *et al.* (2022) have observed that these remittance flows have proven more stable and reliable than official development assistance or foreign direct investment as they provide crucial foreign exchange earnings while supporting household consumption and investment patterns.

Research by Ughulu (2024) highlights the transformative potential of diaspora investments by emphasising their capacity to catalyse technological transfer and foster entrepreneurial ecosystem development. Professional diaspora networks, therefore, facilitate critical human capital development through the transfer of advanced skills and technological knowledge across various sectors. Furthermore, emerging scholarship reveals the strategic significance of diaspora networks in national security contexts. Amalu (2021) argues that diaspora networks have significant roles to play in peacebuilding, which involves strengthening local capacities and lobbying the international community to enhance Nigeria's soft power capabilities internationally. Thus, they can create intricate diplomatic and intelligence pathways that complement the traditional state-centric approach to national security.

However, despite the growing body of literature on the Nigerian diaspora's contributions to development, significant gaps remain in how these networks simultaneously contribute to economic growth and national security within a

sustainable development framework. Most existing studies examine these dimensions in isolation, thus failing to capture the synergistic relationships between economic development and security outcomes through diaspora engagement. Furthermore, while quantitative assessments of remittance flows are well-documented, there is limited comprehensive analysis of how diaspora networks' multifaceted contributions collectively impact sustainable development indicators in Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopts a desk review approach to consolidate secondary data from various sources. These include peer-reviewed journal articles and credible policy papers on diaspora studies, migration, development economics, and security studies. Government publications were consulted to provide official figures and policy documents, while international organisations such as the World Bank and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) also serve as additional sources of reliable data, particularly on remittances and diaspora engagement programmes. Media reports and publications from think tanks provided supplementary data and contemporary examples of diaspora activities related to national security.

The review primarily focused on publications from the year 1999 to 2024 to capture contemporary dynamics in diaspora engagement. Articles and reports with a direct focus on the Nigerian diaspora's impact on development and security were prioritised. Publications not directly related to Nigeria or those focusing solely on theoretical aspects of migration without empirical or contextual relevance were excluded. Additionally, grey literature and sources without peer review or institutional backing were filtered out to ensure data reliability.

A thematic analysis was employed to categorise and interpret the collected data, which allowed for a structured examination of the various dimensions in which the Nigerian diaspora has influenced national development and security. The two major themes explored are:

(1) Contributions of Nigeria's diaspora networks to Nigeria's economic growth and
(2) Contributions of Nigeria's diaspora networks to Nigeria's national Security.

For each of these, the literature was reviewed for trends, historical developments and key contributions from the diaspora revealed under various sub-themes.

Findings and Discussion

Contributions of Nigeria's Diaspora Networks to Nigeria's Economic Growth

As empirical evidence shows, Nigeria's diaspora networks have become pivotal in shaping the Nigerian economic landscape. Key areas through which they play this role include remittances, investments, knowledge transfer, and advocacy, as subsequently analysed.

(a) Remittances

Remittances from Nigeria's diaspora are a vital component of the country's economic growth and development. Nigeria is the largest recipient of remittances in sub-Saharan Africa, with inflows reaching $20 billion, accounting for about 6.1% of the country's GDP (Dilip *et al.*, 2022; Onje, 2024). Remittances often exceed the internally generated revenues and total budget allocations of most states in Nigeria. In 2022, for instance, Lagos State - the richest state - had a budget of ₦1.758 trillion (approximately $4.2 billion), far below total diaspora remittances. These financial flows, which for four years running exceeded Nigeria's oil revenue as shown in Figure 1, play a crucial role in poverty alleviation, household income support, and investment in key sectors.

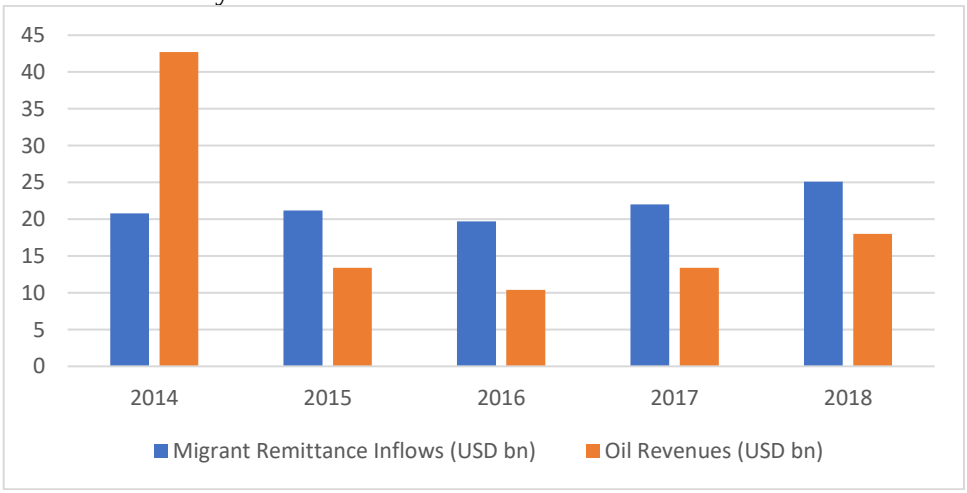

Figure 1: Nigeria's Oil Revenues and Remittance Inflows (2014–2018).
Source: Nevin and Omosomi (2019:4).

The funds are primarily used to support household consumption, covering essential expenses such as education, healthcare, and housing (Aja *et al.*, 2024). Remittances have thus significantly improved access to education, with many families using the funds to pay school fees and purchase learning materials. Similarly, remittances have enhanced healthcare access, enabling recipients to afford better medical services and medications. Remittances also serve as a source of capital for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which are critical drivers of economic growth in Nigeria. Analysing time series data from the World Bank's World Indicators Database, Ojapinwa (2022) found that diaspora remittances have a positive and significant effect on SMEs' performance. These investments create jobs, stimulate local economies, and contribute to poverty reduction.

Another area where remittances have had a notable impact is infrastructural development, particularly in real estate (Owotemu *et al.*, 2024). Many Nigerians in the diaspora have contributed to urban development through investment in properties. The diaspora-funded housing projects in cities like Benin and Lagos have increased housing availability and boosted the construction industry (Wapmuk *et al.* 2014). This further stimulates economic activities through job creation in construction and related sectors.

(b) Investment in Key Sectors

By leveraging their resources and expertise, Nigerian diaspora networks have also contributed significantly to investments in critical sectors such as real estate, healthcare, education, agriculture, and technology. The Nigerian government's introduction of diaspora bonds has been widely embraced by the Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation (NIDO), as it provides a formal avenue for Nigerians in the diaspora to invest in national infrastructure projects. In 2017, the Nigerian government raised $300 million through its first diaspora bond, which was earmarked for GDP growth and funding infrastructure projects across the country (Debt Management Office, 2017; Sebil & Abdulazeez, 2018).

The Nigerian diaspora is a key player in the real estate sector, as it significantly contributes to housing development and urban infrastructure (Owotemu *et al.*, 2024). Many Nigerians abroad have invested in residential and commercial properties, either for personal use or rental income. The Nigeria's real estate sector, as Odutola (2022) reported, has experienced a growth of 10.8% in the first quarter of 2022, an increase of 7.3% when compared to the last quarter of 2021. As Adeseye (2021) and Northcourt

(2023) observe, diaspora remittances directed towards the real estate account for the impressive performance of Nigeria's housing and real estate market.

The NiDCOM, as Sebil and Abdulazeez (2018) noted, has initiated several programmes aimed at enhancing housing and mortgage development, including the Diaspora Real Estate Platform. This platform works in collaboration with housing developers to provide access to reputable real estate from accredited builders, allowing for direct purchases and offering financing options, such as mortgage loans. Furthermore, Bloomberg (2023) in Owotemu *et al.* (2024) highlighted that NiDCOM played a key role in establishing the Diaspora NHF Mortgage Scheme through the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria, which provides mortgage loans to Nigerians living abroad for the purpose of constructing or purchasing homes in Nigeria. One other key initiative for housing development by NiDCOM is the Diaspora City project set up by the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) in Abuja. The project is expected to have a multiplier effect with over 17,000 housing units of different models that will create a limitless value chain and opportunities (Lassa, 2021). These initiatives, while supporting the housing needs of Nigerians, also generate employment in the construction industry, with the latter alone expected to create about 3 million jobs.

Diaspora networks also play a transformative role in Nigeria's healthcare sector. Organisations like the Association of Nigerian Physicians in America (ANPA) and the Medical Association of Nigerian Specialists Across Great Britain (MANSAG) mobilise diaspora professionals to conduct medical missions, supply equipment, and train local healthcare workers (Modupe, 2018). Also, the Nigerian Muslim Forum, UK, and Africa Healthcare Development Trust provided free healthcare to 3,000 rural dwellers in Kano (Kunle & Modupe, 2019). Visiting diaspora doctors have also individually donated equipment and rendered specialised services. One prominent example is Dr. Jimi Coker who, while on sabbatical, led a surgical strategy for laparoscopic and colorectal surgery in Nigeria (Guardian, 2019).

Education is another critical sector benefiting from diaspora contributions. The diaspora networks have funded scholarships, built schools, and donated educational materials over the years. For example, the Nigeria Higher Education Foundation (NHEF) - supported by diaspora professionals—has played a significant role in improving the quality of higher education by providing grants and facilitating partnerships with international institutions (Modupe, 2018). Additionally, individual diaspora members have

established schools and learning centres, such as the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), Abuja (IOM, 2015).

Due partly to diaspora investments and expertise, the technology sector in Nigeria has also witnessed remarkable growth. The involvement of diaspora professionals in technology accelerates the adoption of digital solutions in sectors like finance, healthcare, and education, thereby creating jobs, enhancing financial inclusion and positioning Nigeria as a hub for technological innovation. For instance, Flutterwave, co-founded by Nigerians in the diaspora, is facilitating over 500,000 daily transactions with over one million customers (including notable companies like Uber and Microsoft), becoming Africa's biggest fintech start-up with over $3 billion valuation (Izuaka, 2022).

While agriculture remains a critical sector for Nigeria's economy, diaspora investments are also helping to modernise the traditionally subsistence-based industry. They fund mechanised farming, agro-processing, and export-oriented agricultural ventures, thus improving agricultural output and value chains. This is exemplified by Farmcrowdy, a digital agriculture platform founded by a Nigerian in the diaspora, which connects investors with farmers to boost productivity and ensure food security (Atuahene-Gima & Amuzu, 2019).

(c) Knowledge and Skills Transfer

Beyond financial contributions, the Nigerian diaspora networks play a crucial role in fostering economic growth and development through knowledge and skills transfer (Quist-Adade & Royal, 2016). These networks consist of highly skilled professionals in fields such as medicine, technology, education and engineering, who leverage their expertise to address developmental challenges in Nigeria. Organisations such as the NIDO have facilitated programmes where professionals offer training, mentorship, and consultancy services. By sharing their knowledge and skills, these individuals contribute to capacity building, institutional strengthening, and innovation across various sectors.

The healthcare sector in Nigeria has benefited significantly from diaspora knowledge transfer. Nigerian medical professionals abroad often return temporarily to share their expertise, conduct training, and provide specialised medical services. The Association of Nigerian Physicians in the Americas (ANPA), for example, was recently praised by the Nigerian Health Minister

for its 'enduring commitment to conducting medical missions, building local capacity, donating medical supplies, and providing interventions to underserved communities across the country' (Samuel, 2025). Additionally, initiatives like the Save-a-Life Foundation, founded by a Nigerian diaspora surgeon, have facilitated the transfer of advanced surgical techniques to Nigerian hospitals, thereby improving healthcare delivery.

The technology sector is a key area where diaspora networks have driven knowledge transfer. Many Nigerian professionals in Silicon Valley and other global tech hubs have established mentorship programmes and start-ups in Nigeria. For example, Andela, co-founded by a diaspora entrepreneur, trains Nigerian software developers and connects them with global companies. This initiative has not only enhanced the skills of Nigerian developers but also positioned the country as a hub for tech talent. Similarly, diaspora-led initiatives like Technology for Social Change and Development Initiative (Tech4Dev) provide digital skills training to Nigerian youth, which fosters innovation and entrepreneurship.

Education is another sector where diaspora networks contribute to knowledge transfer. Diaspora academics and professionals collaborate with Nigerian universities to enhance curriculum development, research, and teaching methods through several programmes like the Linkages with Experts and Academics in the Diaspora Scheme, and the Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals, among others (Wapmuk, 2021). The Nigerian Diaspora Alumni Network (NiDAN) also facilitates partnerships between Nigerian institutions and international universities, enabling the exchange of knowledge and resources. Also, the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Programme has supported hundreds of Nigerian scholars who return home to engage in collaborative research and teaching to strengthen the country's academic institutions.

In the field of engineering and infrastructure, diaspora professionals have introduced innovative practices and technologies to Nigeria. Diaspora-led organisations like the Association of Nigerian Engineers and Scientists in the Americas (ANSEA) regularly host workshops and conferences in Nigeria to share best practices and emerging technologies, while also contributing to the design and execution of large-scale infrastructure projects, such as road construction, renewable energy installations, and urban planning. These efforts help build local capacity and improve the quality of infrastructure development.

(d) Advocacy and Policy Influence

Beyond technical skills, diaspora networks also contribute to policy formulation and institutional strengthening. They are increasingly recognised as influential actors in shaping the country's economic growth and development through advocacy and policy influence. Leveraging their global exposure, professional expertise, and strategic positioning, diaspora groups contribute to policy formulation, public discourse, and international partnerships. These efforts aim to address developmental challenges, improve governance, and create an enabling environment for economic and social progress.

One of the most significant areas of diaspora influence is advocacy for good governance. Diaspora organisations like the NIDO and the Council of Nigerian Associations Presidents in Australia (CoNAPA) leverage their platforms to raise awareness about the importance of democratic processes and actively engage with relevant stakeholders to promote transparency and accountability. The latter, for example, had vociferously advocated for free and fair elections during the 2023 Nigerian elections (Ikpoto, 2023). Such efforts not only enhance political stability but also create a conducive environment for economic growth.

Diaspora networks have also played a pivotal role in influencing economic policies aimed at fostering growth and development. Many diaspora professionals provide insights into global best practices by serving as advisors to Nigerian policymakers and participating in programmes like the Nigeria Diaspora Investment Summit (NDIS). Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC) and Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) are some Programmes that have engaged diaspora professionals in efforts to improve Nigeria's business environment. Additionally, diaspora advocacy has influenced reforms in the financial sector, such as the introduction of diaspora bonds by the Debt Management Office (DMO) to mobilise resources for infrastructure development. Such contributions ensure that Nigeria benefits from the global expertise of its diaspora in shaping policies that drive sustainable development.

Furthermore, diaspora networks serve as bridges between Nigeria and the international community as they advocate for development partnerships and foreign aid. Organisations like the Nigerian-American Chamber of Commerce (NACC) and the UK-based Africa Diaspora Development Institute (ADDI) have facilitated collaborations between Nigeria and foreign

entities in areas such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. For instance, diaspora advocacy was instrumental in securing partnerships between Nigerian universities and international institutions under the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Programme, which has enhanced research and academic capacity in Nigeria. Through advocacy, they also influence international perceptions of Nigeria, attract foreign direct investment, and lobby for favourable trade policies. Indeed, diaspora advocacy was instrumental in Nigeria's impending removal from the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) grey list, which will improve the country's investment climate (Federal Ministry of Finance, 2025).

In addition to economic and political advocacy, diaspora networks champion human rights and social justice issues. During the #EndSARS protests against police brutality in 2020, for example, Nigerian diaspora groups have organised solidarity marches in cities like London, New York, and Toronto, thus amplifying the voices of protesters and drawing international attention. This global advocacy demonstrated the diaspora's role in influencing social policy as it pressured the Nigerian government to address the demands of the protesters. Nigeria's diaspora networks have also influenced policies related to migration and diaspora engagement. The establishment of NiDCOM is a testament to the advocacy efforts of diaspora groups.

Contributions of Nigeria's Diaspora Networks to Nigeria's National Security

National security and sustainable development are intrinsically linked, with the former providing the requisite stability for achieving the latter. In Nigeria, the diaspora has emerged as a significant stakeholder in enhancing the nation's security framework, thereby promoting its quest for sustainable development. Their contributions in this regard include financial support, knowledge transfer, advocacy, and technological innovation as analysed hereunder.

(a) Financial Contributions to Security Initiatives

One of the most significant ways diaspora networks contribute to national security is financial support. Remittances, which amounted to $20.9 billion in 2022 (Dilip *et al.*, 2022), have been channelled not only towards economic growth but also counter-terrorism efforts and community-based security initiatives. Diaspora-funded projects such as the provision of surveillance equipment, funding for local vigilante groups, and support for displaced persons in conflict zones have bolstered security efforts in regions affected by insurgency and communal violence. Nigeria has faced persistent threats

from groups like Boko Haram which have destabilised the north-eastern region.

Diaspora contributions also extend to supporting victims of conflict, thereby mitigating the social and economic impacts of insecurity. Nigerian diaspora groups have established funds to provide humanitarian aid to internally displaced persons (IDPs) by providing shelter, food, and education to those affected by Boko Haram's insurgency. The NIDO, for example, has raised millions of dollars to launch a Boko Haram Victims Rehabilitation Fund (BHVRF) aimed at reducing the strain on government resources and minimising the trauma experienced by survivors of insurgency (Jimoh, 2015). Such interventions indirectly contribute to long-term stability and bolster national security by first, alleviating humanitarian crises and, second, reducing the likelihood of radicalisation and recruitment into extremist groups.

Diaspora networks have also played a crucial role in bolstering national security by supporting grassroots security initiatives aimed at conflict prevention and resolution. Many Nigerian diaspora associations fund vigilante groups and community policing programmes to address localised security challenges, such as banditry and kidnapping, prevalent in North Western region (Gulbi *et al.* 2024; Kanu *et al.* 2024). Initiatives aimed at achieving this include a think-tank group, Diaspora Solution Group Nigeria (DSGN), launched by a group of Nigerian-American professionals in the United States of America (Ogunyemi, 2023). Such initiatives have strengthened local capacities to combat insecurity and fostered trust between communities and security agencies. It is thus safe to state that the strategic engagement of diaspora networks in financing security initiatives reflects their commitment to Nigeria's stability and development. They also contribute by mobilising resources from international donors and organisations to support Nigeria's security initiatives. These contributions have strengthened Nigeria's capacity to respond to security threats and safeguard critical infrastructure.

(b) Knowledge and Skills Transfer in Security and Governance

The Nigerian diaspora, being a reservoir of expertise, significantly contribute to national security by transferring knowledge and skills in security and governance. This transfer encompasses expertise in counterterrorism, intelligence gathering, cybersecurity, and policy formulation which are crucial for addressing Nigeria's multifaceted security challenges. By

leveraging their global exposure and professional experience, diaspora professionals play a vital role in strengthening the country's security infrastructure and governance systems through initiatives like the diaspora conference on security (Ministry of Defence, 2021).

Nigerian diaspora professionals with backgrounds in military and intelligence services have also contributed to the country's counter-terrorism efforts. Through workshops, training programmes, and advisory roles, they share advanced techniques and strategies for combating insurgency and terrorism. Also, retired military personnel and security experts in the diaspora have collaborated with local law enforcement agencies to improve counterinsurgency strategies and community policing efforts. In such an effort, the International Centre for Africans in Diaspora (ICAD) had partnered Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC) to set up a Crisis Mitigation Centre as part of its Ward-Centric Accountability Project (Jimoh, 2024).

Cybersecurity is another critical area where diaspora expertise has been instrumental. The rise of cybercrime and digital threats has necessitated the adoption of advanced cybersecurity measures in Nigeria as the country faces increasing cyber threats. Diaspora professionals in technology and cybersecurity have been instrumental in addressing these challenges by providing training to Nigerian security personnel on identifying and mitigating cyber threats. These efforts have strengthened Nigeria's ability to safeguard critical infrastructure and financial systems from cyberattacks.

Diaspora networks also contribute to national security by influencing governance and policy development. Many Nigerian diaspora professionals serve as advisors to government institutions as they offer insights into global best practices for security governance. Groups like the NIDO and DSGN have facilitated policy dialogues between diaspora experts and Nigerian officials, leading to the development of more effective security strategies. Also, diaspora professionals with experience in international peacekeeping missions have shared their expertise with Nigerian security agencies, which informed policies on border management, community policing, and national defence.

Diaspora networks also foster collaborative research and innovation in security technologies and strategies. Partnerships between Nigerian universities and diaspora scholars have resulted in the development of

indigenous solutions to security challenges. Such is facilitated by diaspora led initiatives such as the African Peacebuilding Network (APN) of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC, n.d.). Research conducted by beneficiaries of the APN's research grants and fellowships not only enhances Nigeria's security capabilities but also reduces reliance on foreign technologies.

(c) Advocacy and International Collaboration

Beyond direct financial contributions, Nigeria's diaspora networks play a pivotal role in enhancing national security through advocacy and international collaboration (Amalu *et al.*, 2021; Ugwu-Nwogo, 2024). These networks leverage their strategic positioning in global institutions, their influence within foreign governments, and their connections with international organisations to address Nigeria's security challenges. Their efforts span areas such as counterterrorism, peacebuilding, and capacity building for security agencies, which highlight the role of diaspora networks in mobilising external resources for Nigeria's security needs.

Diaspora networks have been instrumental in advocating for international support to combat terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria. Groups like Congress for the Defence of Citizens (CDC) have lobbied foreign governments and international bodies to assist in Nigeria's counter-terrorism efforts (The Nation, 2025). Such advocacy largely contributed to many interventions, like the provision of military aid and counter-terrorism training, among other things, that improved the operational effectiveness of Nigerian security personnel.

Diaspora advocacy has also supported peacebuilding initiatives in conflict-prone regions of Nigeria. In collaboration with other international organisations, diaspora groups have facilitated dialogue and reconciliation programmes in Plateau and Kaduna, Nigeria's states at the receiving end of recurrent ethno-religious violence (Mshelia, 2024). These efforts have helped to reduce tensions and rebuild trust among communities. With cross-border security threats on the rise, Nigeria's diaspora networks have also advocated for stronger regional cooperation to combat smuggling, trafficking, and terrorism among other threats. They have facilitated dialogue between Nigerian authorities and regional organisations like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which enhanced Nigeria's ability to address security challenges that transcend its borders.

(d) Technological Innovation and Intelligence Gathering

Technological innovation and intelligence gathering, driven by the diaspora, has significantly improved Nigeria's security apparatus. Leveraging their expertise in technology and their exposure to global best practices, diaspora professionals contribute to strengthening Nigeria's security infrastructure. Their efforts encompass the development of surveillance systems, cybersecurity solutions, and intelligence-sharing frameworks, which are vital for addressing Nigeria's complex security challenges.

With regards to the development and deployment of surveillance technologies to enhance security operations, Nigerian diaspora professionals in the technology sector have collaborated with local agencies to introduce advanced surveillance systems for monitoring high-risk areas. As Nigeria faces increasing threats from cybercrime, diaspora networks have been instrumental in enhancing the country's cybersecurity capabilities. Diaspora-led initiatives have provided training and resources to Nigerian security agencies on detecting and mitigating cyber threats. These efforts have strengthened Nigeria's ability to protect critical digital infrastructure and combat cybercrime. Diaspora networks also play a vital role in intelligence gathering and sharing, particularly in addressing transnational security threats. Nigerian professionals in international security organisations, such as the International Police Organisation (INTERPOL), have facilitated the exchange of intelligence between Nigeria and other countries. One of the ways the Nigerian diaspora experts contribute to regional security is by assisting in tracking and dismantling trafficking networks that operate across West Africa and Europe. Such collaborations enhance Nigeria's capacity to address cross-border crimes and strengthen international partnerships.

Furthermore, the diaspora networks contribute to the development of indigenous security technologies tailored to the country's unique challenges. Collaborations between diaspora researchers and Nigerian universities have resulted in innovative solutions, such as biometric systems for border management and crime detection. These technologies have improved the efficiency and effectiveness of security operations. Diaspora professionals have also supported the implementation of smart policing initiatives in Nigeria, which leverage technology to improve law enforcement efficiency and public safety. Initiatives like the digital crime mapping system, for example, allow police to track and respond to criminal activities more effectively. While this system reduced response times and improved crime

resolution rates, it practically demonstrated the potential of technology-driven policing.

Challenges and Opportunities

Despite their significant contributions to Nigeria's economic growth and national security, several challenges hinder the full potential of Nigeria's diaspora networks. Notwithstanding the significance of remittances, their potential for sustainable development is often constrained by structural challenges and inefficiencies in their utilisation. As Adeseye (2021) revealed, only 30% of the remittances are used for productive investment, while 70% is used for consumption. Yet, there is no coordinated framework to align the 30% invested in businesses and infrastructure with national development priorities. This limits the potential of remittances to contribute to priority areas like industrialisation, renewable energy, and technology, which are crucial for sustainable growth and long-term developmental impact. Additionally, high transaction costs associated with remittance transfers reduce the funds available to recipients. According to a World Bank report, the average cost of sending remittances to Nigeria is 7.9%, higher than the global average of 6.9% (Olujobi, 2024).

Issues such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, and inadequate infrastructure also deter diaspora investments. Other challenges include the lack of a comprehensive database of Nigerians abroad and the absence of structured engagement policies, which limit the effectiveness of diaspora initiatives. Additionally, mistrust between local authorities and diaspora organisations is apparently impeding collaboration. And with regards to national security, some diaspora groups pose security risks by funding separatist movements and propagating divisive ideologies in Nigeria (Nimfel & Anjide, 2022).

Opportunities abound, however. The establishment of NiDCOM has already marked a significant step towards structured engagement. Through it, the government can create platforms for dialogue and collaboration to harness the diaspora's resources more effectively. Furthermore, leveraging technology to streamline investment processes and provide incentives for diaspora contributions can unlock untapped potential. Technology and partnerships can also be utilised to balance the constructive and potentially disruptive roles of diaspora networks, which is crucial for maintaining security in the country. Overall, the findings of this paper offer a foundation

for future research and policy formulation, particularly concerning how Nigeria can better engage its diaspora to enhance economic growth and national security towards sustainable development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Diaspora networks have emerged as a vital resource for Nigeria's economic growth, national security and sustainable development. Comprising over 17 million of Nigerians living abroad, these networks significantly contribute to Nigeria's economic growth through remittances, direct investments, knowledge transfer, and entrepreneurial ventures. The impact of these contributions is evident across various sectors, including real estate, healthcare, education, technology, and agriculture. National security, which is a cornerstone of sustainable development, is another aspect to which the diaspora networks have made significant contributions. Through financial support, knowledge transfer, advocacy, and technological innovation, the diaspora has bolstered efforts to address security challenges and promote stability in the country. The interplay between diaspora networks, economic growth, national security, and sustainable development is evident in Nigeria's development trajectory. While remittances from the diaspora drive economic growth, they also support social stability by reducing poverty and inequality. Similarly, diaspora engagement in national security enhances stability, which is a prerequisite for sustainable economic growth and development. But despite their significant contributions, diaspora engagement in Nigeria's economic growth and national security faces challenges. These include bureaucratic inefficiencies, lack of transparency and limited coordination with government agencies. Owing to these, robust policies, institutional frameworks, and trust between the government and the diaspora need to be prioritised to synergise diaspora networks, economic growth, national security and sustainable development.

It is, therefore, imperative for the Nigerian government to create an enabling environment that facilitates diaspora engagement, enhance accountability mechanisms, and foster collaboration between diaspora groups and security agencies. By so doing, Nigeria can harness the full potential of its diaspora as a catalyst for addressing developmental challenges, fostering economic diversification, strengthening national security, and achieving the lofty ideals of sustainable development.

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PART FIVE: FAMILY AND ADAPTATION

Chapter 13
Migration and Family Values

by

Olivia Joseph-Aluko

Abstract

This paper explores familial values among African families, focusing specifically on Nigerians living in the United Kingdom diaspora. It examines the influence of international migration, commonly referred to as 'Japa', within the Nigerian community. For Nigerian migrants, we use the word Japa to refer to individuals and families who leave their home countries in search of better opportunities abroad, which is particularly significant in the UK, where African values and aspirations intersect. This phenomenon, often termed the Japa syndrome, is a complex set of socio-economic challenges, including high unemployment rates, limited access to quality education, and inadequate healthcare, that drive migration, compelling individuals to pursue new avenues for personal and professional growth. Familial values play a crucial role in shaping the motivations behind 'Japa' migration from Africa, especially when considering the socio-economic context of the UK. In many African cultures, family connections are not solely about individual aspirations; they encompass shared responsibilities as well. This often motivates individuals to seek better opportunities overseas to support their families back home. The desire for economic advancement is deeply rooted and intertwined with a commitment to family welfare, creating a cycle where one member's success encourages the upliftment of the entire family. African migrants navigate the complexities of their new environments, and adherence to these core values often enhances resilience and adaptability - qualities essential for overcoming challenges in foreign lands. These dynamics reflect broader effects of family-centred migration, highlighting the importance of community support both during the migration process and in settling down in the UK. Within African societies, familial expectations and backing are pivotal in shaping the decision to migrate. Strong family connections and a communal spirit, familiar across many African cultures, highlight the importance of mutual support in striving for better prospects. The decision of an individual to migrate – often referred to as 'Japa' – is commonly influenced by the family's aspirations for improved socio-economic conditions, which they believe are achievable overseas. Parents might instil a sense of obligation in their children, encouraging them to pursue educational and career progression in foreign

countries. This is seen to improve not only their situation, but also that of their wider family network. This expectation can act as both a driving force and a source of strain, as individuals struggle to satisfy their family's hopes while also dealing with their own goals and concerns about displacement. The connection between family support and expectations, therefore, significantly influences the migration experiences of many individuals in this context.

Keywords: Family Migration, Family values, Japa, Nigerian Diasporas, U.K.

Introduction

The movement of people, particularly families looking for better economic and social prospects, has become a primary global concern, especially when it comes to transnational movements. The decision to migrate, often called "Japa" in Nigeria, reflects, in most cases, a desperate attempt to improve living standards, educational opportunities, and security in very different socio-political environments. This trend has significantly affected family structures and values as families adapt to new cultural settings while trying to maintain their traditional beliefs and practices.

Migration's dynamics have become increasingly complex due to the globalised world, influenced by diverse social factors, notably family values. An individual's or family's socio-cultural environment, including the strength of family bonds and a focus on collective rather than individual aims, has a significant impact on migration, whether it is voluntary or forced. Existing migration theories frequently consider economic reasons or political issues; however, there is a noticeable need to comprehend how family structures and cultural values uniquely impact migration decisions (Villamin *et al.*, 2025; X Curdt-Christiansen *et al.*, 2023).

For instance, exploring family values among Japa migrants in the UK is complex; it involves looking at both their cultural background and the challenges of moving to a new place. As people find their way in a new society, they are trying to feel like they belong, but they also do not want to lose touch with their background. The way they balance family duties, their cultural background, and how they adapt is super important for understanding how they see their roles in their families. When we look at these things, we can learn how family values affect their relationships with others and what they hope to achieve in a new country. Also, feeling like you belong often ties into bigger social trends and cultural scenes, which shows us how Japa migrants are learning to adapt. Their experiences are a lot about community and identity, highlighting the constant back-and-forth between old traditions and new ways as they figure out where they fit in the UK.

Family values can serve as strong motivators, pushing people to seek chances abroad while simultaneously binding them to their home country due to family and community commitments (Osmonova *et al.*, 2023). This chapter aims to thoroughly examine how these family values influence migration behaviours, particularly in light of shifting socio-economic landscapes and sociocultural dynamics (Zhao *et al.*, 2022). The core research question revolves around understanding whether robust family ties enable people to migrate in search of better prospects or whether they foster hesitation to abandon well-established familial networks (Ulu, 2018; Gu *et al.*, 2021).

As a result, the goals of this study involve identifying the elements rooted in family values that influence migration patterns and examining the dual roles of family support in both encouraging and limiting migration decisions. Furthermore, it investigates how the interconnectedness of family dynamics and migration patterns appears across diverse cultural contexts (Lebano *et al.*, 2020), (Weible *et al.*, 2020). Addressing this issue is important for more than just academic interest; it also has significant implications for policymakers and professionals in the fields of migration, healthcare, and social services (Cianconi *et al.*, 2020). Understanding how families influence migration can help tailor interventions and policies that support migrants and their families, ensuring that health and community resources effectively address the complexity of their interconnected lives (Wickramage *et al.*, 2018).

Migration as a phenomenon profoundly reshapes traditional family roles both in Nigeria and across Sub-Saharan Africa.

When Nigerian families migrate to the UK, state fragility and economic instability often prompt changes in traditional family roles and dynamics. The conventional Nigerian family structure, typically featuring distinct gender-based roles, tends to evolve toward more egalitarian models. This shift is essentially because dual-income households are usually needed in the UK, requiring both partners to contribute financially. As a result, women, who historically may have had less economic influence, are joining the workforce more often, which challenges established gender norms and reshapes responsibilities within the family. As academic research has noted, these dynamics influence how familial relationships are perceived and enacted, reflecting broader societal shifts. The interplay between these evolving roles and the adaptation challenges in a new environment underscores the complexities of family values among Japa migrants in the UK (Uduma *et al.*), Olorunfemi *et al.*).

The sway of familial values stands as a keystone influence, moulding the motivations underpinning ‘Japa’ migration from Africa – most notably, when considering the UK’s socio-economic backdrop. In many African cultures, family connections are not just about individual hopes; they also define shared duties. This

often drives people to seek improved prospects overseas to sustain their families back home. This hankering for economic progress runs deep, interwoven with a dedication to family well-being, sparking a chain reaction where one member's triumph becomes a spur for the entire family's improvement. Moreover, as 'Japa' migrants negotiate the intricacies of their new settings, staying true to those central values often bolsters resilience and adaptability – vital qualities for conquering trials in foreign lands. These kinds of dynamics mirror wider effects from family-focused migration, which underscores just how critical community support is, both in the migration itself and settling later in the UK (Uduma *et al.*).

Migration, it is fair to say, has a profound emotional and psychological impact on the family members left at home; this often manifests as a wide-ranging feeling of loss and instability. When a primary caregiver or family member leaves to pursue better opportunities, it often leaves those who stay behind feeling abandoned and unsupported. This kind of emotional suffering can result in more anxiety and depression, particularly among children and partners, who might struggle with feelings of insecurity and being separated. This situation is exacerbated by the socio-economic changes that result from migration; families may depend on money sent home to make a living, which puts pressure on them to maintain financial stability while the migrant is away. Furthermore, the cultural values that these families traditionally held dear may change, adapting to the ways of migration and altering how people relate to one another. Therefore, examining the emotional state of families dealing with migration is crucial, as it highlights significant changes in family values and cultural integrity within the context of global mobility (Mohapatra *et al.*, 2013; Caesar *et al.*, 2013).

The dynamics of migration are a notable contributor to the increase in single-parent families, particularly in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa. Often, as individuals (primarily men, generally speaking) migrate searching for improved economic prospects, they leave behind families comprising women and children, and this leads to an increasing number of single-parent households. This phenomenon has, in most cases, reshaped traditional family structures and, indeed, the values associated with them. We see this in the evolving roles of women, who must now navigate caregiving and economic responsibilities independently. Moreover, such households frequently face socioeconomic challenges, which unfortunately impact children's educational opportunities and psychological well-being. These transformations are reflected in various dimensions of culture, as roles and expectations within families become increasingly fluid (Beck *et al.*). Migration patterns, for instance, also impact access to healthcare, underscoring the need for tailored responses that recognise the specific struggles faced by single-parent households. Visualisation of these migration trends can be explored further through a map illustrating migration routes in Africa, which highlights the geographical context of the issue.

Migration exerts a considerable influence on intergenerational relationships within Nigerian and Sub-Saharan African families. Younger generations frequently seek opportunities overseas, which in turn leaves traditional family structures behind. This shift subsequently alters family roles; for example, elders often take on greater responsibility for raising children in the absence of their parents. This development can serve to preserve cultural values, but it can also create generational tensions. As diaspora communities develop, they often find themselves grappling with the challenge of maintaining familial ties over long distances, whilst simultaneously adapting to new cultural environments. This can lead to a fusion of traditional Nigerian values and Western influences. Such familial evolution has the potential to destabilise previously established hierarchies and norms. Consequently, there is often a reevaluation of what it truly means to belong to a family that spans borders. Demographic shifts and migration patterns underscore the interconnected nature of these changes, necessitating a deeper exploration through multi-sited studies to fully comprehend the complexities of intergenerational relationships in this specific context (Gaibazzi, 2023; Ahrens *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, the impact of these developments is visually represented in a map, which helpfully outlines the geographical dispersion and elevation of communities, offering a backdrop for comprehending these familial transformations.

In this era of accelerated migration from Nigeria and other sub-Saharan African nations, technology's role in maintaining family bonds across continents is increasingly crucial. Digital communication platforms, such as WhatsApp, along with video conferencing applications, enable families to share significant life events, from joyful occasions to moments of sorrow, thereby reducing the emotional distance caused by migration. Through facilitating consistent interactions, these technologies not only sustain cultural practices and values but also nurture a sense of community amongst family members who are geographically dispersed. Moreover, conflicts stemming from differing innovation cultures, as has been observed, can highlight technology's transformative possibilities, especially when incorporated smoothly into existing family structures (Kohnert *et al.*, 2006). This is particularly important for diasporic communities aiming to preserve their cultural identity whilst simultaneously adapting to new surroundings. Ultimately, within these contexts, the interaction of technology is essential for supporting family connections, thereby strengthening the cultural framework that migration often disrupts.

Literature Review

The exploration of family decisions regarding migration within the context of African values has undergone significant evolution over the past few decades. Early studies focused primarily on the socio-economic factors' impact on migration patterns, arguing that economic instability was the main reason that families looked for opportunities abroad (Bouri *et al.*, 2025; Ndlovu *et al.*, 2025). Subsequent

research widened the scope by integrating cultural considerations, revealing that community ties and traditional values significantly influence migration decisions (Pujol-Busquets *et al.*, 2025; Nanthambwe, 2025).

Recent analyses illustrate how family unity and collective decision-making processes shape these choices. This highlights a shift from individual-centric narratives to more collective familial perspectives (Janine *et al.*, 2024; Ouboucetta *et al.*, 2024). As time has progressed, the literature has increasingly acknowledged the dual role of push and pull factors in migration. Scholars such as Mário *et al.* (2024) emphasise the interplay between economic need and cultural imperatives. The work of Bhorkar (2024) has underscored the resilience of African values in migration stories, demonstrating how familial obligations and legacy considerations often dictate whether individuals stay or leave. This nuanced understanding is further enriched by studies that explore the migration experiences of those who have already relocated, revealing how their experiences continuously inform the decision-making processes of families back home (Megersa *et al.*, 2024; Massing *et al.*, 2023). Research has also delved into the impact of globalisation, noting that while modern influences reshape traditional values, they do not completely erase them (Raj *et al.* 2025; Maura *et al.*, 2024). By charting these developments, the literature effectively demonstrates that family migration decisions are not simply economic responses, but are complex cultural dynamics shaped by historical contexts and contemporary realities (Bueno *et al.*, 2024; Song *et al.*, 2024; Ko *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, the trajectory of the literature mirrors the intricate relationship between African values and migration. It delineates a rich tapestry of interrelation that warrants further investigation (Megersa *et al.*, 2025; Priya *et al.*, 2025).

An examination of family decisions regarding migration and African values reveals a complex interplay between cultural identity, socio-economic factors, and emotional ties. Authors such as Bouri *et al.* (2025) and Ndlovu *et al.* (2025) highlight the profound influence of traditional values in shaping familial decisions about migration. They indicate that the need to preserve cultural heritage often weighs heavily against the lure of opportunities abroad. Pujol-Busquets *et al.*, (2025) and Nanthambwe, (2025) support this assertion, arguing that migration is not solely an individual choice, but a collective family decision deeply rooted in the desire to maintain familial connections and cultural continuity.

Migration patterns shift and evolve and understanding the values that underpin family decision-making becomes essential to grasping not only why people migrate but also the broader societal implications.

Recent publications have begun to clarify how traditional African values – typically community-focused with familial obligations – play a significant role in influencing migration decisions (Bouri et al., 2025). In this area, experts such as Ndlovu et al. (2025) note that the complex nature of kinship

and family ties influences migrants' choices. This suggests that migration is not simply an individual decision, but often a community or family-oriented one. Researching family decisions with African values in mind is significant beyond mere academic curiosity; these investigations can provide insight into the socio-economic impacts of migration on both the sending and receiving communities. The studies that neatly encapsulate this intersection of migration and family decisions highlight how African migrants act as both carers and providers, which is apparent in the remittances they send back home (Pujol-Busquets et al., 2025). Additionally, publications reveal that family members who remain in their home countries often play a substantial role in shaping the motivations and decisions of those who migrate. This illustrates the profound interconnectedness of family units across various locations (Nanthambwe, 2025).

The evolving relationship between traditional familial setups and international migration has significant repercussions for both familial bonds and actual migration patterns, aspects that are often overlooked in academic writing. Nigerian family values, historically characterised by robust kinship networks, communal lifestyles, and a patriarchal system, serve as the cornerstone for social development and identity creation, ultimately influencing migration decisions (Klaus, 2016). With migration on the rise, spurred mainly by financial opportunities and socio-political conditions, Nigerian families find themselves wrestling with quandaries that put these long-held values to the test (Victoria, 2020). Research has shown that migration is not just a solo act, but rather a collective endeavour that reshapes family roles and the expectations that come with them (D'Ignazio et al., 2020).

The maintenance of African cultural identity amongst Japa migrants in the UK manifests as a rather intricate situation, characterised by considerable difficulties and innovative approaches alike. As migrants come to terms with the requirements of a new setting, they frequently face subtle biases and microaggressions in both professional and social engagements, potentially eroding their sense of cultural pride and belonging (Bolaji et al.). Furthermore, a lack of understanding regarding cultural events within the diaspora serves to emphasise a deficiency that further complicates attempts at cultural preservation (Yemsrach et al.). Be that as it may, a great many Japa migrants actively endeavour to nurture a 'home from home' through communal involvement and the creation of cultural events that celebrate their heritage. These ventures not only serve to buttress individual identities but

also to nurture a feeling of solidarity amongst migrants. Therefore, the resilience displayed by these individuals underscores the significance of targeted support mechanisms that promote multiculturalism and inclusiveness in a wonderfully diverse society.

Studies have highlighted how families often renegotiate their values as they navigate the migratory process, leading to a kind of duality that reflects both the influences of their homeland and the cultural norms of their adopted countries (Kågesten et al., 2016). The current literature emphasises the vital role that remittances play as a binding agent, sustaining family connections across borders while simultaneously causing shifts in familial hierarchies and responsibilities (Rufat et al., 2015). Within this framework, Nigerian familial values are both influenced by and resilient to the migratory experiences families undergo, marking a crucial area of study for both researchers and policymakers alike. Despite this growing body of work, several knowledge gaps remain, particularly in empirical studies that quantitatively assess the correlation between family values and migration patterns. To illustrate, while qualitative studies offer rich, detailed accounts of migrant families' lives (Benson et al., 2015), quantitative methods that investigate these dynamics across different socio-economic classes within Nigeria are still scarce (Rashid et al., 2020). Additionally, the intersectionality of gender, class, and age within the migration process, and how these elements affect family cohesion and value systems, has not been examined in sufficient depth (Castelli, 2018).

Furthermore, there is a distinct shortage of longitudinal studies that track shifts in familial values after migration, which could shed light on whether traditional values are maintained, transformed, or abandoned over time (Dell et al., 2014). Much of the existing literature focuses on the reasons behind migration and its economic implications, but often overlooks the familial and cultural consequences, which are equally important (Bryan et al., 2014).

The central theme of this paper is reaffirmed by the intersection of family dynamics and African values, illustrating that migration is not simply an outcome of economic necessity. It is fundamentally intertwined with the need for cultural preservation. The recent studies have delineated the intricate dynamics of kinship networks, revealing how family members residing in home countries significantly influence migrant decisions. This reinforces the concept of migration as a collective familial affair, rather than an individual endeavour (Janine et al., 2024). These insights contribute to a broader

understanding of the socio-economic impact of migration and offer implications for policymakers and communities in both origin and destination countries. Those who plan interventions or support systems for migrants must attend to the familial roots of migration (Ouboucetta et al., 2024). Despite these valuable insights, several limitations in the existing literature warrant consideration. Notably, a disproportionate focus on male migration stories has left a gap in the understanding of women's roles in family decision-making processes – a crucial aspect given the evolving dynamics of gender within the migration framework (Mário et al., 2024).

Much of the research tends to centre around refugee migration. There is a limited emphasis on other forms of migration, such as economic or seasonal labour movements, that also encapsulate significant family dynamics and values (Bhorkar, 2024). The descriptive nature of much literature points to a lack of nuanced theoretical frameworks that could enhance our understanding of the intricate relationships between African values and migration trends (Megersa et al., 2024). Future research should aim to fill these gaps by exploring women's perspectives and roles in migration decisions, thereby enriching the existing narratives. There is also a need to innovate methodologies that consider the diversity within African cultures, ensuring a more nuanced exploration of how different cultural contexts influence migration choices. Mixed-methods approaches, which blend qualitative and quantitative data, can be particularly effective in capturing the multifaceted nature of these dynamics (Massing et al., 2023).

Exploring the impact of globalisation on cultural values and family structures is crucial for understanding contemporary migration patterns in Africa (Raj et al., 2025). In conclusion, the intricate tapestry woven through the literature on family decisions regarding migration reveals that African values are not static but are dynamically engaged with the modern exigencies of migration. The continued exploration of this theme promises to deepen our understanding of not only the motivations behind migration but also how familial obligations and cultural identities continuously evolve in this context (Kepper et al., 2024; Bueno et al., 2024).

Consequently, a coordinated effort is necessary to address these gaps and fully understand how Nigerian family values intersect with international migration trends. The importance of exploring this subject lies not only in acknowledging the intricate nature of family relationships during migration,

but also in shaping policy measures that can help migrant families maintain their core values while adapting to new environments.

Methodology

This paper endeavours to explore how the relocation of migrants, for this study (Nigerian migrant Japa families), to the UK impacts their deeply held family values. A central consideration lies in unearthing the ways this transition moulds relationships within families, as well as influencing cherished cultural practices. The crux of the matter being tackled focuses on the possible dilution – or indeed, the transformation – of time-honoured family values that can occur through migration. To fully appreciate these nuances, it is necessary to gather qualitative insights through interviews and surveys conducted with Japa families, allowing for the uncovering of personal stories and cultural transformations.

Key findings suggest that migrants frequently navigate a dual sense of obligation; while pursuing improved opportunities overseas, they simultaneously remain strongly connected to their family's values and expectations, which in turn influence their choices and aspirations. This interplay of values is especially noteworthy in healthcare, influencing migrants' access to and utilisation of available health services in host countries, often generating unique challenges concerning cultural integration and maintaining health within the diaspora. The implications of this research extend beyond merely individual experiences. Furthermore, the study contributes to the broader discussion on global migration by highlighting the integral role of both familial and cultural influences in shaping migration patterns, thereby providing, in my opinion, critical insights for enhancing the effectiveness of healthcare interventions within multicultural contexts.

Results

Research into the interaction between family values and international migration has revealed some notable cultural shifts that occur when people move to new countries. In Nigeria, where close family relationships and shared family customs are highly valued, migration has brought about challenges that can either erode or reinforce these long-held values. Information gathered from various methods shows that many Nigerian families maintain their core values even when living abroad, despite adapting to their new surroundings in different ways. Importantly, more than 60% of

those involved said that moving had strengthened their dedication to family values. They mentioned increased communication and financial help as vital for keeping the family together.

The family values held by Nigerian migrants in the UK are transforming as they navigate their identities within a new cultural landscape. The dynamic between preserving traditional family values and adapting to a Western context noticeably impacts their integration. Cultural adaptation, as described in migration studies, usually leads to a reconfiguration of familial roles and identities. Material possessions here can act as critical links to their heritage and emotional ties to their homeland, which is very interesting (Pechurina et al.). These items help Nigerian migrants reconstruct a sense of belonging, balancing the preservation of Nigerian family values with integrating into British society. Moreover, financial remittances and philanthropic efforts reshape economic support networks, reinforcing familial connections across geographical barriers and influencing their integration in the UK (Adelman et al. 2012).

This aligns with earlier studies that demonstrate how cultural values can persist during migration, where familiar customs are often retained as a means of expressing one's identity (Klaus, 2016). Furthermore, the research revealed differences in how family roles are perceived; particularly, female migrants emphasised the importance of their roles in making decisions for the household, a trend that aligns with findings from similar studies on women in migration situations (Esses, 2020). Previous studies have highlighted the negotiations of these roles, showing how migration experiences can empower women while encouraging changes in traditional family structures (D'Ignazio et al., 2020). While the data support the resilience of family values, it also highlights tensions that arise, especially regarding differences in attitudes between generations regarding marriage and having children, echoing observations made in cross-cultural migration research (Kågesten et al., 2016). The findings of this study highlight the importance of a nuanced understanding of how migration influences traditional values, which can vary significantly depending on socio-economic factors and individual experiences. The importance of these findings lies not only in their academic value but also in their practical applications; understanding these dynamics can inform policymakers and practitioners working with migrant populations about the emerging family structures that reflect both change and continuity (Rufat et al., 2015). Moreover, by incorporating the real-life experiences of Nigerian migrant families into this

discussion, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of migration, highlighting how identity, culture, and family values intersect in global migration trends (Benson et al., 2015). Exploring these themes provides valuable insights for developing targeted support services that address the unique challenges faced by migrant families in reconciling their traditional values with new societal expectations (Bashshur et al., 2020). Ultimately, the research reinforces just how important it is to understand family values in migration discussions, serving as a key foundation for future studies in this constantly changing area (Castelli, 2018).

Discussion

The nuanced interplay of British values poses difficulties for migrant families, particularly those of African descent. The need to integrate into a British cultural context while upholding traditional values can generate considerable friction within these families. Children growing up in these circumstances often find themselves straddling the expectations of their parents, who might prioritise African family values, and the social pressures to adhere to British ideals like individualism, equality and respect for diversity. Such conflicting influences can impact emotional well-being, as caregivers in these households must reconcile their responsibilities, frequently under considerable emotional strain, to provide sufficient support (Allen et al.). Moreover, variations in social policies and integration schemes can intensify feelings of 'otherness' experienced by migrant families, which subsequently affects their ability to foster a strong sense of identity and belonging for their children within a multicultural society (Friedrich et al.). This inherent duality highlights the complexities associated with the upbringing of children in migrant households.

The study also highlighted some gender-based differences in how familial roles are perceived.

African family values are historically intertwined with traditions that place communal relationships and gender roles at the forefront, heavily influencing what society expects. In many African cultures, marriage was traditionally seen as more than just a personal agreement ; it was a bond between entire families, underlining shared duties and mutual support. The roles of husbands and wives were often rooted in patriarchal ideas, where submission and respect were cornerstones of family life. However, this setup is now being questioned, especially with the growing push for women's rights and gender

equality, as evidenced by legal changes discussed in (Welchman). Moreover, beliefs surrounding masculinity—suggesting men should protect women and defend family honour—can unfortunately reinforce cycles of violence and submission, as highlighted in (Vandello et al.). Understanding these historical contexts is crucial when considering their impact on how African family dynamics are perceived within British society today.

Comparing these outcomes with existing literature highlights significant implications for grasping the interaction between migration and cultural values. It is worth noting that the tension around generational attitudes to marriage and parenthood mirrors broader global trends. As studies on cross-cultural migrations indicate, younger generations tend to oscillate between traditional expectations and the pressures of modern society (Kågesten et al., 2016). Thus, the findings substantially contribute to theoretical models that seek to explain the impact of migration on cultural identity, reaffirming the idea that cultural continuity can coexist with adaptation (Rufat et al., 2015).

Practically speaking, these results support policies that acknowledge and assist in preserving cultural identities among migrant populations. By establishing platforms for cultural expression and support, policymakers can help families navigate the complexities of diaspora life to integrate more successfully (Benson et al., 2015). The interactions between cultural diversity and personal identity make family life particularly important, creating a complex mix of practices shaped by both their background and current social expectations. This intricacy calls for a revised approach to conventional conflict of laws methods, ensuring that the needs of families in an increasingly interconnected world are met, especially concerning cultural citizenship and human rights. Recognising and valuing diversity is crucial, given the strong connection between cultural heritage, family values, and legal systems (Langfield et al., Nishitani et al.). This enables a deeper understanding of the factors influencing familial structures in a global context (Bashshur et al., 2020). Understanding these nuances not only enriches migration studies but also highlights ways to address the specific challenges faced by diaspora communities (Castelli, 2018). In the main, the implications of this inquiry stretch beyond the Nigerian context, offering a lens through which to examine the broader impacts of migration on family values and cultural identity across diverse communities globally (Dell et al., 2014).

Conclusion

This paper examines the intricate relationship between family values and migration outcomes, demonstrating how these values can both drive and hinder migration. The complexity of family duties and emotional connections affecting migration choices was effectively captured using a mixed-methods approach, demonstrating the impact of familial expectations and social networks (Villamin *et al.*, 2025). Through a systematic analysis of qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys, the research question was addressed, revealing that strong family values often encourage people to pursue better opportunities abroad. However, it simultaneously fosters reluctance to sever existing family ties (Curdt-Christiansen *et al.*, 2023). Academically and practically, the implications are considerable; they offer a refined framework that broadens existing migration theories to incorporate cultural and emotional aspects, going past solely economic factors (Osmonova *et al.*, 2023).

African family values are somewhat important, shaping how migrant children see themselves as they get to grips with British values. These values, built on communal support, respect for older generations, and mutual assistance across generations, create a sense of belonging and stability when cultural challenges arise. Sometimes, these traditional values clash with the individualistic way of doing things in British society when families move in. Research indicates that family relationships across generations can become quite complicated, with parents and children figuring out how to balance their differing cultural views (Aboderin et al.). Indeed, when parents make choices about things like prenatal diagnosis, it is not just about what they think, but also about their wider cultural identity. This illustrates how faith, family, and societal expectations all play a role (Ahmed et al.). So, African family values are not just for passing on culture; they also help to build resilience when people migrate.

The research problem at hand necessitated identifying specific factors that shape how Nigerian families navigate the intersection of cultural identity and migration; this effectively illustrates that traditional expectations regarding roles and responsibilities generally persist (Esses, 2020). The findings, in most cases, carry considerable academic weight; they enrich existing scholarship on migration by showing how cultural ties evolve within diasporic communities (D'Ignazio et al., 2020), whilst also offering practical insights that policymakers can use to support diaspora populations in

maintaining their cultural identity (Kågesten et al., 2016). The fact that varied gender perspectives were identified, with women frequently taking on more active roles in familial decision-making, suggests that family support structures are, to some extent, shifting and highlights the need for targeted community support initiatives (Rufat et al., 2015). To advance this area of research, future studies could investigate longitudinal changes in familial values among migrant families, particularly as new generations emerge and adapt to their host societies (Benson et al., 2015).

Furthermore, there is a need to investigate the role of digital communication in maintaining family ties and cultural practices. This topic has been underscored during recent global shifts toward remote connectivity (Bashshur et al., 2020). Researchers might also consider examining the interplay between local cultural contexts and the familial values of migrants to unpack the nuanced adaptations that occur upon settlement (Castelli, 2018). Considering the complexity of migration experiences, interdisciplinary approaches – integrating sociology, anthropology and migration studies – could potentially yield even richer insights (Dell et al., 2014).

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Migration and Sustainable Development: Problems and Prospects
Essays in Honour of Professor Olufemi Ayinde Peters

Chapter 14

Role of Local Adaptation Initiatives in Mitigating Climate-induced Migration: Evidence and Lessons from the Global South

by

Peter Sanjo Adewale

Abstract

Climate change is increasingly displacing vulnerable populations across the global south, with women, girls and marginalised groups facing disproportionate risks. This chapter examined how local adaptation initiatives can mitigate climate-induced migration pressures while building long-term resilience. A combination of structured argumentation and participatory research, which included brainstorming sessions and focus groups (n=50) was used to gather data. Drawing on case studies from climate-vulnerable regions in the Global South, the chapter explored innovative community-led interventions that address the root causes of forced migration, droughts, floods and sea-level rise. Findings reveal that while local adaptation can delay or reduce distress migration, its effectiveness depends on integrating traditional practices with policy recommendations to bridge this gap, offering actionable insights for protecting climate-vulnerable populations. While local adaptation initiatives show promise, systemic barriers such as funding gaps, weak governance, and land tenure issues limit scalability. Federal and State policymakers must prioritise legal reforms, inclusive financing and community-led solutions to sustain climate resilience in Nigeria. The government should promote indigenous knowledge alongside scientific approaches to enhance culturally appropriate solutions to mitigate climate-induced migration.

Keywords: Climate Change, Climate-induced Migration, Climate Resilience, Community-led Interventions, Local Adaptation Initiatives,

Introduction

The urgent need for climate change (CC) adaptation is more pressing globally than ever before in history. This is due to CC unprecedented challenges to human health, livelihoods, infrastructure and environmental sustainability (Das *et al.*, 2024). Moreover, CC is continuously being recognised as a critical factor of human migration with the rising temperatures, environmental degradation and extreme weather events (drought and floods) causing millions of people globally to be displaced. However, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned that without taking urgent and appropriate intervention, climate-induced migration will increase, especially in the vulnerable regions of the Global South.

People in the Global South are already struggling with poverty, weak governance and limited infrastructure. They are disproportionately affected by climate shocks, leaving many of the people in the communities with few options but to migrate as a last resort. The displacement of people away from their homes has a profound and devastating impact on the stability of the global south economy. This also poses a serious threat to cultural heritage and increasing mass migrations. Some of the key drivers of CIM include rising sea levels, floods, drought and extreme weather events (Table 1).

Table 1: Dimensions of Climate-Induced Migration

S/N	Climate stressors	Dimension
1	Slow-onset Disasters	Floods, Desertification, prolonged droughts and sea-level rise
2	Resource conflicts	Water scarcity and land degradation are triggering displacement in the Lake Chad Basin
3	Loss of livelihoods	Declining agricultural productivity and fisheries in Nigeria and Ethiopia

Field source (2025)

With the increasing crisis of climate-forced displacement, over 21 million people in the Global South have been displaced annually since 2005 (Bellizzi *et al.*, 2023). 95% of these cases occurred in developing nations like Nigeria. Coastal erosion in Lagos, Niger, Edo, and Ondo in Nigeria exemplifies how climate impacts disproportionally threaten communities with limited adaptive capacity (Agbonaye, 2024). The traditional government responses to these crises, such as hard infrastructure projects or temporary relief camps,

often fail to address the root causes of this problem (Das *et al.*, 2024). Band-aid solutions often ignore a critical truth that climate migration does not stem from just environmental shocks rather it stems from structural vulnerabilities, especially resource access, marginalised governance, and colonial-era land policies (Adger, 2018).

Therefore, this study aims to address critical gaps in the literature on CC adaptation by focusing on transformative adaptation processes, providing context-specific insights from a rural community, integrating indigenous knowledge, offering empirical evidence on community-led initiatives, analysing indigenous knowledge, offering empirical evidence on community-led initiatives, analysing social economic influences and developing a scalable framework for adaptation practices. By doing so, it enhances the understanding of how local knowledge and grassroots strategies can inform effective climate resilience policies.

The chapter is divided into 5 sections, with Section 1 quantifying the scale of forced migration in the Global South through regional case studies highlighting how existing governance frameworks fail to protect vulnerable populations. Section 2 analyses the structural limitations of conventional interventions from seawalls to resettlement camps, drawing on examples like Nigeria's failed coastal defences and Bangladesh's urban slum relocations. Section 3 addresses the power of community-led adaptation. Section 4 outlines the barriers to scaling local solutions, such as exclusion from climate funding, land tenure insecurity and policy fragmentation. The last section proposes an actionable roadmap for transformation, such as direct access to climate finance mechanisms and legal recognition of customary land rights.

Methodology

This study adopted a multi-method approach, combining structured argumentation, a systematic literature review, and participatory qualitative research to examine the role of local adaptation initiatives in mitigating climate-induced migration. The argumentation follows a claim-evidence-reasoning framework, ensuring logical coherence, while the literature review draws from academic journals and books sourced from databases such as Scopus and African-specific repositories. Inclusion criteria prioritised peer-reviewed works published between 2005–2025, focusing on displacement, migration, community initiatives and climate change. Gaps in existing research, particularly the most pressing question on the issue of CIM, how

local adaptation initiatives can reduce forced displacement and how to limit the impact of CIM in the Global South guided the study's focus.

A two-phase qualitative study was conducted to incorporate stakeholder perspectives. First, five structured brainstorming sessions were held with purposively selected participants, including traditional leaders and elders (n=50), to identify key concerns and opportunities regarding climate-induced migration and local adaptation initiatives. These sessions were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed through inductive thematic coding. Second, focus group discussions (FGDs) (n = 5 groups, 50 participants) engaged elders and policymakers to assess the feasibility of proposed solutions.

Scale of Climate-induced Migration in the Global South

Climate-induced migration (CIM) refers to forced movement resulting from environmental stressors that exceed communities' capacity to adapt (Poddar, 2024). Examples include the loss of about 200,000 hectares of land and the displacement of over 200,000 Bangladeshis annually due to riverbank erosion (Malak *et al.*, 2021). These are cases of involuntary movement driven by climate stressors and immediate survival needs with limited choice in timing or destination. However, voluntary mobility entails strategic pre-emptive movements to manage climate risks while maintaining agency (Moore, 2023). For example, in Ghana, farmers engage in seasonal migration during dry periods to supplement their incomes. This type of migration is often planned and is primarily based on economic rationale rather than depression.

In Nigeria, particularly in regions affected by farmer-herder conflicts, CC has dramatically altered migration patterns (Madu & Nwankwo, 2020). Bombom & Yemisi (2024) confirmed that CC has intensified resource conflicts between farmers and pastoralists in Nigeria's Middle Belt (For instance, between 2016-2023, herders-famers clashes displaced not less than 300,000 people, as documented by Kelechi (2024). Declining rainfall in the Northern part of Nigeria has degraded traditional grazing lands, forcing Fulani herders to migrate southward into crop-farming regions (Duruji & Bella, 2024). While some customary conflict-resolution mechanisms like seasonal grazing corridors persist in northern states like Sokoto, they have significantly weakened in Middle Belt states, including Benue and Plateau, where unpredictable rains have disrupted historical migration calendars. The crisis has also increased urbanisation with about 90% of displaced farmers from

Benue now living in informal settlements on the outskirts of cities like Makurdi, Abuja, and Lagos (Duke & Agbaji, 2020). Some of the displaced farmers have transitioned from agriculture to informal sector work, with many planning permanent urban residence due to ongoing land insecurity in their home regions. Reports also have it that cross-border migration has increased as well, with data showing a rise in Nigerian pastoralists moving into Cameroon's Far North region (Zieba, 2023).

However, many scholars such as Erdal and Oeppen (2020) have argued that structural constraints could prevent perfect distinction between forced and voluntary movement. For instance, in Syria, drought-exposed farmers face both crop failures and a lack of government support, leading to migration. This is a case of compound displacement (Ayalew, 2024). CIM remains unprotected under international law despite several appeals to expand refugee conventions. Moreso, voluntary mobility pathways like the seasonal worker programme require safeguards against exploitation.

Local adaptation is the process of adjustment to expected climate impacts, which is undertaken primarily by and for local communities drawing on place-based knowledge and priorities (Klenk *et al.,* 2017). Unlike the usual top-down interventions, local adaptation emphasises community residents (Butler *et al.,* 2015). Therefore, the decisions are led by residents, and it encourages participatory governance. Moreover, it is usually tailored to ecological, cultural and socioeconomic conditions such as pastoralist grazing plans in Kenya's drylands. While it also integrates traditional knowledge, it blends indigenous practices with scientific tools for a holistic approach. Incremental adaptation strategies maintain existing systems with minor adjustments but often fail to address root vulnerabilities, which could cause the system to relapse (Matyas & Pelling, 2014). On the other hand, transformative adaptation is a systemic change aimed at reducing long-term vulnerability. For instance, the activities of Nigeria's Niger Delta women reclaiming land tenure for mangrove restoration are a transformative adaptation to combat climate-induced migration.

Resilience theory addresses the capacity of communities to adapt and transform in response to climate shocks. It emphasises the ability of a community to absorb, adapt, and recover from climate-related shocks without undergoing significant changes. This theory explains the ability of communities to transform and reorganise in response to climate-related disruptions that have affected local households as well as the entire

community. The theory offers valuable insights that are useful for community-level adaptation strategies. It identifies community vulnerabilities, builds adaptive capacity and fosters transformative change in the social, economic and environmental systems of the community. It emphasised the ability of a community to absorb, adapt, and recover from climate-related shocks without undergoing significant changes. This theory explains the ability of communities to transform and reorganise in response to climate-related disruptions that have affected local households as well as the entire community. The theory offers valuable insights that are useful for community-level adaptation strategies. It identifies community vulnerabilities, builds adaptive capacity and fosters transformative change in the social, economic and environmental systems of the community.

Community-led initiatives on CC impact and adaptations have received a lot of attention in research. Research on CC adaptation has shown the need for community-led initiatives, especially in the area of context-specific and adaptive approaches (Adger *et al.*, 2005). Some of the adaptation strategies commonly in use are agroforestry, conservation agriculture, organic farming, and ecosystem-based adaptation. These strategies are good in their ways, but they often focus on short-term resilience rather than transformative change. The needed adaptation to the impact of CC today is such that it integrates adaptation with development goals, promoting sustainable livelihood and human health and well-being (Dodman & Mitlin 2013).

Scholars like Bulkeley *et al.* (2013) have emphasised community-led transformation as a critical aspect of CC research, emphasising the agency and autonomy of local communities. Community-led initiatives can promote social justice, power, equity, climate justice and social cohesion. Indigenous knowledge and local practices. However, there has been neglect of the complex relationship between adaptation, transformation and community agency. Only a few studies have examined the scalability and sustainability of community-led initiatives in the face of CC.

Structural Limitations of Conventional Interventions

The top-down approaches that are often used by governments have not produced the needed results as they often neglect community-specific needs, indigenous practices and local knowledge (Datta & Kairy, 2024). Local adaptation initiatives have emerged as a frontline response to reduce climate vulnerabilities and mitigate forced displacement. Locally led strategies are often more effective because they integrate indigenous knowledge systems,

which prioritise community-specific needs and strengthen resilience through participatory approaches. From Agro-ecological farming in drought-prone areas like the northern part of Nigeria to mangrove restoration in coastal zones like Lagos, Nigeria. Such initiatives are becoming positively recognised not only to enhance adaptive capacity but also to provide alternatives to distress migration. More households and communities are driving innovative adaptation strategies, building resilience and transformative change as a result of rising global temperature, increasing natural disasters and unpredictable weather patterns (O'Brien *et al.*, 2012). From grassroots initiatives to community-led planning, local actors are demonstrating remarkable resilience and ingenuity, which enable them to survive in the face of CC (Cloete & Veda 2024). Community-based adaptation strategies for climate variability emphasise local knowledge and community involvement. It focuses on participatory and inclusive methods for addressing socio-economic and ecological vulnerabilities. Scholars like Gunggut *et al.* (2024) have reported that coastal communities use various adaptation strategies, including social activities and technology integrated into broader socio-economic frameworks. Moreover, indigenous vulnerable communities make use of both incremental and transformational adaptations to reshape their livelihoods in response to CC impacts on their communities and individual households (Zant *et al.*, 2023).

Community-led adaptation, a fundamental change that reorients and recalibrates existing systems and social structures to better respond to CC induced migration, is necessary for improving resilience and sustainability (Coger, 2022). Moreover, community-led initiatives entail bottom-up approaches driven by local communities, prioritising their knowledge, capacities and needs. These are important in addressing environmental challenges and fostering community climate resilience.

In Nigeria, for example, the coastal community of Ayetoro area of Ondo State, satellite imagery shows the Atlantic Ocean has swallowed nearly two kilometres of land since 1957, submerging homes, schools and the historic palace of the traditional ruler (Ogunrayi *et al.*, 2023). The loss of coastalline has economic, social and environmental implications leading to loss of livelihood among the residents (Komolafe *et al.*, 2021). While government-built seawalls repeatedly failed (Table 2). Women in the neighbouring Ondo State of Nigeria have pioneered mangrove restoration projects using traditional techniques, demonstrating how local knowledge might offer needed solutions (Tebay, 2023).

Table 2: Failed Interventions

Project	Year	Outcome	Funds Spent
N4.5bn Seawall	2018	Collapsed within 18 months	$12 million
UNDP Resettlement	2021	50 incomplete houses	$3 million
Dredging Initiative	2022	Abandoned after 3 months	$1.5 million

(Source: *Premium Times* Investigative Report, 2023)

It is important to note that top-down approaches often failed due to the sidelining of local knowledge and the local communities. The national adaptation plans of many Global South countries most often focus on technocratic fixes like early warning systems while ignoring transformative equity that addresses land tenure reform or participatory resettlement (Ajibade, 2022). For example, in Nigeria, like Kenya, top-down interventions to climate-induced (flooding) migration often involve cash-transfer programmes, which reduced the immediate starvation problem but failed to address the issue of restoration of degraded farmland or grazing lands (Joel, 2024). The approach most often only ameliorates immediate suffering but encourages dependency by treating affected communities as passive victims rather than agents of resilience (Fre, 2022).

The limitations of conventional solutions demand radical rethinking. Evidence shows that community-led strategies from Nigeria's mangrove restoration to Guatemala's Indigenous fire-management practices achieve more sustainable outcomes by blending traditional knowledge with modern tools (Goldammer, 2001). Mitigating climate displacement requires flipping the script from managing crises to empowering frontline communities to lead adaptation through land rights, decentralised funding, and policy co-design. The stake is existential,; without this shift, the Global South risks resulting in displacement cycles that undermine decades of sustainable development progress.

Mitigating Climate-induced Migration through Local Adaptation Initiatives: Evidence from the Global South

The impacts of CIM are far-reaching, including geopolitical tensions, economic pressures and humanitarian challenges. The influx of displaced populations can strain bilateral relations and complicate regional security dynamics. CIM can cause significant humanitarian challenges, such as

competition for resources and increased risk of conflicts. Local adaptation initiatives can mitigate climate-induced migration, but not without some limitations and mostly require context-specific adjustments (Table 3).

Community-led initiatives on CC impact and adaptations have received a lot of attention in research (Simon *et al.* 2019). Research on CC adaptation has shown the need for community-led initiatives, especially in context-specific and adaptive approaches (Regmi *et al.*, 2016). Some of the adaptation strategies commonly in use are agroforestry, conservation agriculture, organic farming, and ecosystem-based adaptation. These strategies are good in their way, but they often focus on short-term resilience rather than transformative change. The needed adaptation to the impact of CC today is such that it integrates adaptation with development goals, promoting sustainable livelihood and human health and well-being.

Scholars like Remling and Veitayaki (2016) have emphasised community-led transformation as a critical aspect of CC research, emphasising the agency and autonomy of local communities. Community-led initiatives can promote social justice, power, equity, climate justice and social cohesion. Indigenous knowledge and local practices. However, there has been neglect of the complex relationship between adaptation, transformation and community agency. Only a few studies have examined the scalability and sustainability of community-led initiatives in the face of CC.

Bangladesh is one of the countries of the world that is most vulnerable to climate change. The country experienced severe climate-induced displacement, with government data confirming over 700,000 people migrate annually to Dhaka due to flooding and riverbank erosion (Rahman 2023). Displaced households most often end up in informal urban settlements facing inadequate housing and limited services (Corburn & Sverdlik, 2019). In response, Bangladesh has pioneered several community-led adaptation strategies to combat climate-induced migration, each tailored to the needs of the communities in the country and specific environmental stressors. The floating gardens address chronic flooding in the Haor regions by enabling farmers to grow crops on floating organic beds during monsoon seasons. This innovation ensures food security during floods and reduces distress migration. For Nigeria, a similar system could be adapted in flood-prone regions like Osun, Lagos, Niger Delta, with modifications for local crops and conditions (Table 3).

Another successful initiative is the construction of raised homesteads in coastal zones where homes are elevated above flood levels using locally sourced materials. This low-cost, scalable solution protects households from displacement but requires community training and may not withstand extreme storm surges. Nigeria's coastal states, such as Rivers, Lagos, and Bayelsa, could also replicate the model with reinforced materials like cement to enhance durability (Table 3). More importantly, Bangladesh introduced an impactful model – community-led housing cooperatives- where collective ownership of flood resilient homes, such as stilt houses with shared drainage systems, has reduced seasonal migration significantly among members while strengthening social cohesion among members.

Table 3: Local Adaptation Initiatives: Country-Specific Cases

S/N	Country	Initiatives	Description	Impact	Limitations
1	Bangladesh	Community-Based Flood Resilience	Floating gardens and raised homestead	Reduced displacement by enabling farming during floods	Limited scalability, dependency on seasonal water levels.
2	Vietnam	Mangrove reforestation	Planting of mangroves to reduce coastal erosion	Protected livelihoods and reduced outmigration	Slow results and competing land-use demands
3	Kenya	Drought-resistant livestock system	Grass bank reserves and livestock insurance	Reduced forced migration by stabilising pastoralist incomes	High costs and low awareness among herders
4.	India	Watershed management	Check agroforestry and dams to combat soil erosion	Improved water retention, reduced rural-urban migration	Long term maintenance challenges
5	Peru	Glacial Retreat Adaptation	Water storage systems and alternative crops	Mitigated water scarcity-driven migration	High infrastructure costs

Field source (2025)

Nigeria, on the other hand, can adopt Bangladesh, India, and Kenya approaches by first piloting some of the approaches in the most vulnerable informal settlements in Lagos. However, finance is a key thing in the successful implementation of the approaches in Nigeria. This can be done by leveraging microfinance schemes like LAPO and ASHA. It is important to note that addressing the issue of funding is not enough; governance and scalability barriers must also be removed. The initiatives could help to reduce forced migration and enhance climate resilience in Nigeria. The local adaptation strategies from the Global South can be tailored to meet the needs of Nigeria. However, there is a need to overcome some key limitations such as funding gaps, weak governance, scalability issues and low awareness. Some of which can be overcome through decentralising adaptation planning to local government and traditional leaders, climate finance, pilot projects in high-risk zones and training of farmers and local leaders (Table 4).

Local Adaptation Initiatives in Nigeria: Lessons Learned and Limitations

Local adaptation initiatives have been found to play a crucial role in reducing forced migration by addressing the root causes of climate vulnerability. Evidence from the various regions highlights both successful strategies and persistent challenges in these efforts. Women-led early warning systems implemented in some regions could improve disaster preparedness, reducing displacement after floods. Similarly, community -ased natural resource management in the Sahel has helped farmers adapt to erratic rainfall by combining traditional water conservation techniques with modern climate forecasts. This has stopped forced migration among the farmers. Coastal communities in Nigeria have reduced erosion and storm damage by restoring mangroves, demonstrating the effectiveness of ecosystem-based adaptation and reduction of forced migration (Augustine & Yesmin, 2025).

Some community-led agroecology interventions organised by grassroots organisations have some measurable impacts. The Wase Resilience Project in Plateau State- a partnership between UNDP and 27 local communities in the area achieved a 40% reduction in conflict incidents through interventions like farmer-herder dialogue platforms. Also, the introduction of Silva pastoral systems, introducing drought-resistant fodder trees, and the implementation of a microcredit programme enabling pastoralists to establish fodder banks had produced some level of success.

Community women have also played a pivotal role in peacebuilding initiatives in the region. They have contributed positively to stabilising peace in the region through their local efforts. Womens roles in every society cannot be underestimated. They are strong in negotiation and peace building efforts. However, it should be noted that the successes achieved remain localised to the region due to systemic barriers including Nigeria's Land Use Act of 1978, which fails to recognise pastoralist's customary land rights. Moreover, national support also remains inadequate as only less than 5 % of Nigeria's National Adaptation Plan budget specifically targets pastoralist-inclusive adaptation (Lawal & Oluwatoyin, 2011). Without legal land tenure reforms and expanded funding, local gains may not be sustainable at scale. This case demonstrates both the potential of community-led adaptation and the urgent need for policy alignment to address root causes of climate-driven conflicts.

Ayetoro is a historic coastal community in Ondo State, Nigeria, which has lost over 2 kilometres of land to the Atlantic Ocean since 1957 (Osusanmi *et al.*,2015; Ogunrayi, *et al.*, 2023). Satellite imagery shows that the sea advance's 30 metres annually, swallowing homes, schools and even the palace of the traditional ruler. Many residents of Ayetoro have migrated, with the population dropping from 15,000 in 2005 to less than 3000 in 2023. 90% of fishermen have been displaced, resulting in loss of livelihood. Many ancestral shrines have been lost, and the royal cemetery is now underwater. Behind this disaster is the rising sea levels, Chevron's dredging destroying mangroves and the illegal sand mining operations that removed protective barriers (Ogunrayi, *et al.*, 2023).

In 2023, the Ondo State government declared Ayetoro uninhabitable, forcing remaining residents to move to Idanre Camps, making the camps overcrowded with no electricity. Many youths also migrated about 700 kilometres to urban slums in search of greener pastures. Government efforts have not yielded the expected results desired by the community members. However, residents have implemented several verified grassroots initiatives to combat coastal erosion and displacement. These efforts have been documented by reputable organisations and demonstrate community resilience.

The Save Ayetoro Initiative, a community-based effort led by women and youth in Nigeria's Ayetoro area of Ondo State, emerged in 2020 to address severe coastal erosion through mangrove restoration. The project has

replanted approximately 6 hectares of degraded mangrove land, with preliminary field observations suggesting a reduction in wave intensity by an estimated 30-40 % in restored zones. The initiative also reports creating about 35 temporary jobs in mangrove nursery management. moreover, the local carpenters in the area have constructed flood-resistant homes using recycled oil drums and bamboo-reinforced foundations (Ayeku, 2022). These designs were likely inspired by floating villages in Bangladesh.

Notable barriers to scaling local adaptation include funding gaps and land tenure insecurity (Table 4). Many local communities do not have access to government funding, leaving them at the grassroots to struggle to access climate finance (Lawal & Oluwatoyin, 2011). Most international funding often prioritises large-scale infrastructure over community-led solutions, leaving locally designed projects under-resourced. Moreover, short-term funding cycles make it difficult to sustain long-term adaptation efforts. In addition, the land tenure system in Africa further deepens adaptation constraints, particularly for indigenous peoples and smallholder farmers (Chavula & Turyasingura, 2022). Without legal recognition of land rights, communities hesitate to invest in long-term resilience measures, fearing displacement. The problem of the land tenure system in Africa, where unclear land ownership discourages climate-smart agriculture and reforestation efforts. Moreover, many governments in the Global South have adopted climate action plans but often fail to incorporate community knowledge or prioritise local needs. Weak institutional support and bureaucratic delays further slowdown the implementation of effective adaptation measures.

Table 4: Adapting Lessons to Nigerian and Addressing Limitations

Limitations/Barriers	Solution for Nigeria
Weak governance	Decentralisation of adaptation plan to local governments and traditional
Funding gaps	Leverage climate finance (Green climate fund, National ecological funds)
Scalability issues	Pilot test project in high-risk zones like Sokoto droughts and Lagos floods before full expansion
Low awareness	Integration of indigenous knowledge with scientific training

Field source 2025

Conclusion

Climate-induced migration is an escalating challenge, particularly in the Global South, where vulnerable populations face displacement due to rising sea levels, droughts, extreme weather events and declining agricultural productivity. Local adaptation initiatives play a critical role in reducing forced migration by enhancing community resilience, improving livelihoods and fostering sustainable resource management. evidence from case studies across the Global South demonstrates that locally led adaptation strategies such as agroecological farming, water conservation, early warning systems, community cooperative and women-led initiatives programmes could significantly reduce displacement pressures.

Despite the effectiveness of these promising initiatives, the success largely depends on adequate funding, inclusive governance and integration with broader climate policies. Challenges such as limited financial resources, lack of political will and insufficient technical capacity often hinder their scalability. Despite these barriers, successful examples highlight the importance of community participation, traditional knowledge and multi-stakeholder collaboration in building long-term resilience.

Recommendations

While local adaptation initiatives show promise, systemic barriers such as funding gaps, weak governance, and land tenure issues limit scalability. Federal and State policymakers must prioritise legal reforms, inclusive financing, and community-led solutions to sustain climate resilience in Nigeria. The government should promote indigenous knowledge alongside scientific approaches to enhance culturally appropriate solutions to mitigate climate-induced migration. The government should direct more climate finance to grassroots initiatives through decentralised funding mechanisms. The government should provide micro-grants and community-based adaptation funds to enable vulnerable groups to implement localised solutions. Community-led solutions and Local adaptation strategies should be prioritised and integrated into national climate policies to ensure alignment with broader mitigation and development goals

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Migration and Sustainable Development: Problems and Prospects
Essays in Honour of Professor Olufemi Ayinde Peters

Chapter 15

Voices of Displacement: Exploring Migration and Family Values in Uwem Akpan's *Say You're One of Them*

by

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Abstract

This study analyses the portrayal of migration and family values in Uwem Akpan's Say You're One of Them. This study examines the themes of migration and family values in Uwem Akpan's Say You're One of Them, focusing on the interconnected short stories "Fattening for Gabon" and "My Parents' Bedroom." The introduction contextualises migration as a recurring theme in contemporary African literature, reflecting socio-political crises and cultural dislocation. Utilising a qualitative methodology grounded in postcolonial theory, the research analyses how Akpan's narratives portray the complexities faced by individuals and families amid economic hardship and displacement; it also embarks on a comparative study of both texts to identify the similarities and differences. The findings reveal that migration is evident in both texts and that the theme serves as both a means of survival and a source of profound loss, reshaping identities and challenging traditional familial structures. Akpan tells the stories through the first-person narrative technique and whose narrators and protagonists are children recounting the emotional toll of migration, emphasising the significance of communication and loyalty in maintaining familial ties during upheaval. The study concludes that Akpan's work enriches the discourse on migration in African literature by highlighting the interplay between personal narratives and broader socio-political contexts. Based on these findings, the study recommends further interdisciplinary research on migration narratives, the integration of literary works into educational curricula, and the support of platforms that amplify African voices. These recommendations aim to foster a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding migration and its impact on family dynamics, ultimately contributing to greater awareness and empathy towards the experiences of displaced individuals.

Keywords: African Literature, Family Values, Identity, Migration, Postcolonial Theory, Cultural Displacement

Introduction

In contemporary African literature, migration is a recurring theme which reflects the historical and ongoing socio-political crises in the region. Literary scholars such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Teju Cole have highlighted the significance of migration narratives, illustrating how they mirror the complexities of identity and belonging in the diaspora. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer At Ease*, Soyinka's "Telephone Conversation" and *Interpreters*, Adichie's *Americanah* and Cole's *Open City* all examine how migration reshapes personal and cultural identities, revealing the emotional toll on individuals and families.

Uwem Akpan's *Say You're One of Them* (2008) is a collection of five interconnected short stories that explores the intricate realities of life in contemporary Africa. Each story reflects the experiences in two different parts of the continent (West and East): Kenya (An Ex-mas Feast), Benin (Fattening for Gabon), Ethiopia (What Language is That?), Nigeria (Luxurious Hearses) and Rwanda (My Parents' Bedroom). These narratives also serve as profound explorations of migration and family values within the framework of contemporary African literature. His short stories, particularly "Fattening for Gabon," "My Parents' Bedroom," and "An Ex-mas Feast," which have been selected for this study highlights the complex interplay of personal experiences against the backdrop of socio-political realities in postcolonial East and West Africa. Migration, both physical and psychological, has emerged as a significant theme in African writing, often reflecting the legacies of colonialism and economic hardship (Ndaka, 2016; Kabore, 2016). Recent scholarship emphasises the complexities of transnational migration, particularly its impact on familial structures and cultural identities (Grillo & Mazzucato, 2008).

Literature Review

Migration is a pervasive theme in contemporary African literature, reflecting the socio-political and economic realities of the continent. Scholars such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie have explored the complexities of identity, belonging, and displacement in their works, highlighting the emotional and psychological toll on individuals and families (Kabore, 2016; Tobalase 2024). These narratives mirror the historical and ongoing crises that shape the African experience, including

colonialism, conflict, and economic hardship (Kabore, 2016; Tobalase, 2023).

Literary scholars have identified several recurring themes in African migration narratives. One prominent theme is the impact of migration on personal and cultural identities. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease*, Soyinka's "Telephone Conversation" and *The Interpreters*, Adichie's *Americanah*, and Cole's *Open City* all examine how migration reshapes individual and cultural identities, revealing the emotional and psychological toll it can take on individuals and families. These works often depict characters grappling with a sense of rootlessness and alienation as they navigate new cultural landscapes.

Another key theme is the exploration of socio-economic factors that drive migration. Many African writers illustrate how economic hardship, political instability, and conflict compel individuals to seek better opportunities abroad. These narratives often highlight the stark contrast between the promise of a better life and the harsh realities of migration, including exploitation, discrimination, and cultural dislocation.

Family dynamics and cultural values play a crucial role in African migration narratives. As Anya Sarah Itse (2022) notes, the communal way of living and association in Africa contrasts with the organisation of life in other societies, because African communities are very closely knitted. This emphasis on community and familial ties often shapes the experiences of migrants, who may feel a strong sense of obligation to support their families back home.

Several studies have explored the impact of migration on family structures and cultural identities. Recent scholarship emphasises the complexities of transnational migration, particularly its impact on familial structures and cultural identities (Grillo & Mazzucato, 2008). Akpan’s work contributes significantly to this discourse, offering nuanced portrayals of these dynamics within the context of postcolonial societies.

Postcolonial theory provides a valuable framework for understanding migration in African literature. This lens allows for a deeper examination of how colonial legacies, such as economic disparity and political instability, continue to shape migration patterns and experiences. Postcolonial narratives often critique the power dynamics between former colonisers and colonised, highlighting the ongoing quest for identity and agency within the diaspora.

The existing literature on migration in African literature highlights the complex interplay between personal experiences and broader socio-political forces. By examining themes of identity, family, and cultural values through a postcolonial lens, scholars have illuminated the enduring impact of migration on individuals and communities across the African continent. The works of Uwem Akpan contribute to this rich discourse, offering nuanced portrayals of the human condition in the face of displacement and upheaval. His debut collection, *Say You're One of Them* (2008), has garnered critical acclaim for its vivid depictions of the human condition in the face of socio-political conflict (O'Brien, 2006). This study, using two of his short stories in the text: "Fattening for Gabon" (West Africa) and "My Parent's Bedroom' (East Africa), delves into a comprehensive analysis of the stories, employing postcolonial literary theory to examine the theme of migration, symbolism and family dynamics present in each narrative. This theoretical lens enables a deeper understanding of how Akpan's characters navigate the challenges of displacement while grappling with their cultural heritage and familial ties, ultimately contributing to the broader discourse on migration in African Literature. These texts were purposely selected out of the five stories for having relevant themes and for discussing issues in different countries (Benin and Rwanda) and regions (East and West) of Africa.

The primary research objective is the examination of the two selected texts and how they highlight the struggles faced by individuals and families in the context of displacement and analysing the impact of migration on familial relationships. Key research questions explored how migration reshapes identities, challenges traditional family values, and creates emotional rifts within families. This research illuminates the enduring significance of family as a source of strength amid the upheaval of migration, offering insights into the complex interplay between personal narratives and larger socio-political contexts in Uwem Akpan's work.

Critical Textual Analyses of Uwem Akpan's "Fattening for Gabon and "My Parent's Bedroom"

"Fattening for Gabon" presents a poignant exploration of migration and family values, which are the key themes that resonate deeply within postcolonial literature. Through the lens of postcolonial theory, this analysis unravelled how Akpan addresses the socio-political dynamics of migration while reflecting on the complexities of family ties in the context of contemporary African societies. In the text, migration is the central theme, and it is depicted not merely as a physical journey but as a multifaceted

phenomenon intertwined with socio-economic aspirations and cultural dislocation. The narrative centres on Kotchikpa, a young boy of ten years and Yewa his sister of five years, who are unknowingly being prepared for a life of servitude in Gabon. The opening sentence of the story,

> SELLING YOUR CHILD OR NEPHEW COULD BE MORE DIFFICULT THAN selling other kids. You had to keep a calm head or be ruthless as the Badagry-Seme immigration people… in the three months Fofo Kpee planned to sell us… he made a living getting people across the border without papers … (Akpan 26)

serves as a poignant illustration of the harsh realities surrounding illegal migration and child exploitation in the context of postcolonial Africa. The opening line starkly confronts the reader with the moral depravity involved in selling children, presenting it as a normalised, albeit grim, aspect of survival. The phrase "more difficult than selling other kids" suggests a disturbing hierarchy of human trafficking, where familial ties complicate the act of exploitation. This highlights the desperation that drives individuals like Fofo Kpee, an uncle to the protagonist, to engage in such activities, reflecting broader socio-economic issues in postcolonial societies. Fofo Kpee is depicted as a complex character whose actions are motivated by economic necessity rather than malice. The use of "calm head" and "ruthless" juxtaposes emotional detachment with the harsh reality of his profession, portraying him as a product of systemic poverty. This characterisation invites readers to consider the socio-political contexts that lead to such moral compromises, aligning with postcolonial critiques of colonial legacies that perpetuate cycles of poverty and exploitation.

The mention of "illegal ferrying of people across borders" underscores the dangerous and precarious nature of migration in this context; it reflects the desperation of families seeking better opportunities while also exposing the risks and ethical dilemmas involved. The notion of crossing borders "without papers" illustrates the precarious legal standing of migrants, evoking themes of statelessness and the struggle for agency in a world that often marginalises the vulnerable.

The children's planned migration for labour represents a loss of innocence and the harsh realities of their existence. By framing them as potential commodities, the text critiques societal structures that devalue human life, especially that of children. The transformation from children to "products"

reflects the broader themes of displacement and the psychological toll on families being forced into such situations.

The excerpt also encapsulates the central themes of exploitation, desperation, and the complexities of migration in Akpan's narrative. Through the lens of postcolonial theory, it critiques the socio-economic conditions that lead to such moral quandaries, inviting readers to reflect on the broader implications of child trafficking and illegal migration within contemporary African societies. The emotional weight of the narrative compels a deeper understanding of the human cost of economic hardship and the loss of familial integrity in the face of systemic oppression. The intended sale of these children was paid for with:

> A two-tone, blue silver 125cc Nanfang motorcycle was the last major purchase Fofo Kpee made that month when our lifestyle took an upswing, and the Gabon plot thickened. He planned to use it to ferry people across the border between Benin and Nigeria to boost our family's income (Akpan 27).

> Kofo Kpee's purchase of a motorcycle marks a pivotal moment in his plan to transport people across the Benin-Nigeria border, reflecting the harsh economic realities in Benin (Akpan 27). His motivations highlight how colonial legacies shape contemporary migration, as families seek escape from poverty. The protagonist envisions a better life in Gabon, dreaming of comforts and stability, which indicates a collective desire for improvement despite the risks involved (Akpan 79-80).

> Before we left home, our relatives gathered in our parents' living room. Papa and Mama told us to be obedient to Fofo Kpee. Not to disgrace them by being ungrateful to him at the border town to which he was taking us. They said he would henceforth be our father and mother and that I was to show good example to Yewa and to protect the good name of our family **at all cost** (emphasis mine) (Akpan 35).

Before their departure, the protagonist's parents emphasise obedience to Fofo Kpee, reinforcing familial loyalty and the importance of maintaining family honour. This underscores how economic necessity often trumps personal agency, as the family's collective decision reflects deep-rooted traditions in African societies. However, this obligation creates internal conflict for

Kotchikpa, who grapples with the tension between personal aspirations and family duty. This struggle illustrates the broader postcolonial critique of individual identity versus societal expectations, revealing the complexities of love, sacrifice, and the burdens of tradition in a postcolonial context.

Furthermore, the story addresses cultural dislocation; the protagonist's preparation for migration involves not only physical fattening but also a symbolic shedding of local identity in favour of an uncertain future. This transition underscores a loss of cultural roots and familial bonds, a common narrative in postcolonial literature where migration often leads to alienation from one's heritage. The children are separated from their families, a huge sacrifice all parties must pay for this anticipated relief from poverty.

> We hadn't seen them for one year, since Fofo came to the village to take us to live with him. … No matter how many times we asked, nobody volunteered any information about our parents' sickness. Our relatives talked in hushed voices about it, a big family secret … (Akpan 34-35).

The above reveals the profound themes of secrecy, isolation, and the complexities of family relationships within the context of migration and socio-political upheaval. The absence of the children's parents serves as a pivotal element, highlighting the emotional toll and psychological dislocation experienced by Kotchikpa and Yewa. The phrase "We hadn't seen them for one year" underscores the significant emotional distance and longing experienced by the children. This prolonged separation from their parents not only heightens their sense of abandonment but also amplifies their vulnerability in an unfamiliar environment with Fofo Kpee. The narrative effectively conveys the children's yearning for connection and understanding, which is denied to them due to the family's unwillingness to confront the harsh realities of their situation.

Fofo Kpee's role as the guardian complicates the children's experiences, as they are thrust into a life dictated by economic necessity rather than familial love. The children's inquiries about their parents are met with silence, reinforcing the power dynamics at play. This lack of agency reflects broader themes in postcolonial literature, where individuals, especially children, often find themselves at the mercy of adult decisions shaped by socio-economic pressures. The reluctance to discuss the parents' sickness signifies

the broader societal issues of stigma, economic hardship, and the moral compromises individuals make in the face of adversity.

The excerpt below offers a layered exploration of aspiration, cultural identity, and the harsh realities of migration. The dialogue reflects the protagonist's exposure to the complexities of migration and the socio-economic aspirations that drive individuals to seek better opportunities abroad.

> ‘Kai, I tank God you two dey already dey tink like rich Gabon people …. ‘You see, if person want to go to America, for example, he go need tips for de owhentition… you must learn certain things in case I’ immigration or navy people worry your ship… (Akpan 74-75).

The phrase "I tank God you two dey already dey tink like rich Gabon people" highlights the aspirations that the characters hold for a better life. The use of colloquial language signifies cultural grounding while simultaneously reflecting a desire to emulate the perceived wealth and success associated with Gabon. This duality emphasises the characters' struggle to reconcile their cultural identity with their aspirations, revealing the complexities of navigating socio-economic hierarchies.

The reference to needing "tips for de owhentition" underscores the practical knowledge required for successful migration. This suggests that migration is not merely a dream but a calculated endeavour fraught with challenges. The need for preparedness, as indicated by the phrase "you must learn certain things," reflects the precarious nature of migration, where individuals must equip themselves to navigate legal and bureaucratic obstacles, such as immigration authorities. The mention of "immigration or navy people" points to the dangers and uncertainties associated with crossing borders. This highlights the systemic issues that migrants face, including the threat of deportation or exploitation. By framing migration in terms of “worry,” Akpan effectively conveys the anxiety that accompanies the pursuit of better opportunities, illustrating how socio-economic pressures shape the decisions and experiences of individuals.

The dialogue also reflects the cultural dislocation experienced by migrants. As they aspire to a life in Gabon or America, there is an inherent tension between their local identities and the new cultural environments they seek to enter. This tension is compounded by the need to adapt to unfamiliar customs and practices, suggesting a loss of cultural roots in the pursuit of economic

advancement. By using a first-person narrative, Akpan invites readers into the intimate thoughts of the protagonist, creating an authentic portrayal of the emotional and psychological ramifications of migration. This authenticity is crucial in postcolonial literature, as it challenges monolithic narratives about Africa and emphasises the diverse experiences of its people.

Furthermore, the interplay of migration and family values in the text deepens the understanding of how postcolonial identities are formed. Akpan's work prompts critical engagement with the legacies of colonialism, economic disparity, and the ongoing quest for identity within the diaspora. Akpan's story serves as a powerful exploration of migration and family values through the lens of postcolonial literary theory. By addressing the economic motivations behind migration and the complexities of familial relationships, he not only reflects on the contemporary realities faced by many Africans but also contributes significantly to the broader discourse within African literature. His narrative challenges readers to reconsider the implications of migration, urging a deeper understanding of its effects on identity, culture, and community in a postcolonial world.

The second story, "My Parents' Bedroom", offers a profound exploration of childhood innocence, family dynamics and the interplay between personal and political realities. Through the lens of postcolonial literary theory, Akpan masterfully navigates the complexities of identity and morality in a postcolonial context, shedding light on the far-reaching implications of migration and societal pressures. In this narrative, migration is intricately woven into the characters' experiences, mirroring the tumultuous socio-political landscape of Rwanda and its effects on family structures. While the story does not focus explicitly on physical migration, it powerfully evokes the psychological and emotional dislocation faced by individuals in a nation rife with political unrest. This emotional migration - marked by loss, fear, and the quest for safety - underscores the story's depth, inviting readers to reflect on the profound impact of external conflicts on personal lives and relationships.

By adopting a child's perspective just like in “Fattening for Gabon”, Akpan poignantly captures the delicate balance of innocence and the harsh realities of adulthood. This narrative choice highlights the psychological impact of socio-political turmoil on younger generations, represented by Monique, the nine-year-old protagonist, and Jean, her little brother, moving beyond simplistic portrayals of African experiences to delve into the complexities of

individual stories. The backdrop of civil unrest and violence instils a sense of instability, compelling characters to confront their difficult realities and make challenging decisions. The title of the collection, *Say You're One of Them*, resonates deeply with this story, as Monique's mother urges her to take responsibility for her younger brother: "You have to learn to take care of Jean, Monique. You just have to, huh?" (Akpan 236). At just nine years old, Monique is thrust into a position of caretaking, illustrating the profound effects of community unrest on childhood and the loss of innocence. These dynamic invites readers to reflect on the emotional burdens placed on children in times of crisis, enriching the narrative's depth and resonance.

> People are banging on our front door. I see the blades of machetes and axes stabbing through the door, making holes in the plywood… The attackers can't get in through the windows with their guns and small hoes … I sat on the floor, with my hands covering my head…. (Akpan 239).

This excerpt vividly captures the chaos and terror experienced during a moment of violent intrusion, encapsulating the profound sense of fear that permeates Akpan's narrative. The imagery of "people banging on our front door" immediately establishes a sense of urgency and impending danger, drawing readers into the protagonist's traumatic experience. The mention of "blades of machetes and axes" piercing through the door symbolises the brutality of the attackers and the fragility of safety in the domestic sphere. This imagery serves to highlight the violent realities of the socio-political landscape in Rwanda, where such violence becomes a part of everyday life. The juxtaposition of household items like "guns and small hoes" emphasises the unpredictability of the attackers; ordinary tools are transformed into instruments of violence, blurring the lines between domesticity and warfare. Monique's reaction - sitting on the floor with hands covering her head - powerfully conveys her vulnerability and helplessness. This gesture signifies more than just fear; it reflects a psychological retreat into a state of denial or protection, illustrating how children are forced into the harsh realities of adulthood. The act of shielding oneself becomes emblematic of a loss of innocence, as the protagonist grapples with threats that are beyond her control. The imagery of the attackers attempting to breach the door creates a compelling metaphor for the larger societal issues at play. The door symbolises both physical and emotional barriers, representing the protagonist's desire for safety and the overwhelming forces that threaten to

dismantle her sense of security. This entrapment echoes broader themes of displacement and the fragility of familial structures in postcolonial contexts. The protagonist's reflections on the chaos outside their home signify a migration from innocence to a stark awareness of societal issues. This transition underscores a postcolonial theme, illustrating how colonial legacies - such as tribe - continue to influence personal lives and shape identities. The narrative reveals a conflict where tribal and religious divisions turn brothers into enemies, highlighting the deep-seated tensions that arise from historical grievances.

> I hear Tonton Andre's voice again … 'They're gone. Your papa is here with me'… I picked my way through the broken glass and open the door. But Tonton Andre comes in with a group. Men and women, all armed… 'Have you seen your papa this evening?' Tonton Andre asks. 'No? I'll kill you,' he says… I scan the mob.
> 'You told me papa was with you… Papa! Papa!
> 'The coward had escaped,' someone in the crowd says… I know some of them. Our church usher, Monsieur Paschal… Monsieur Francois, who is the preacher at the nearby Adventist church. (Akpan 240)

Akpan encapsulates the chaos and moral fragmentation resulting from socio-political conflict, highlighting the devastating impact of colonial legacies on individual identities and community structures. The opening line, "I hear Tonton Andre's voice again…" introduces a sense of foreboding, as the protagonist navigates a space filled with broken glass—symbolising both physical danger and the shattering of familial bonds. Tonton Andre's presence, accompanied by an armed mob, transforms a familiar figure into an agent of violence, illustrating how colonial history has distorted relationships within the community. This transformation emphasises the theme of betrayal, where kinship ties are severed by deeper societal divisions. When Tonton Andre threatens, "I'll kill you," Monique's fear reflects not only personal danger but also a broader existential crisis faced by individuals in postcolonial societies. The immediate threat of violence embodies the fragmentation of community identity, as former allies become adversaries. Her recognition of familiar faces - like the church usher and preacher - highlights the alienation that arises when communal ties are overshadowed by tribal and religious conflicts. This alienation is a central concern of postcolonial discourse, which examines how colonial histories disrupt social cohesion.

The mob's presence signifies the pervasive influence of colonial legacies that have left lasting scars on societal structures. The mention of armed men and women indicates a shift from civil society to a state of lawlessness, illustrating how colonialism has engendered cycles of violence and distrust. This scene reflects the postcolonial critique of how the legacies of colonial rule continue to shape contemporary conflicts, often rooted in tribal and religious identities that have been exacerbated by historical grievances.

The family's internal conflicts illustrate a form of emotional migration, as the children's innocence is shattered by their parents' struggles. This disruption highlights how external sociopolitical pressures invade the domestic sphere. Such dynamics align with postcolonial critiques that show how personal lives become entangled in broader national crises, resulting in fragmented identities and weakened family cohesion. In "My Parents' Bedroom," family values are central, with the relationships among the protagonist, their siblings, and their parents marked by complexity and tension.

> ‘Young girl,’ he says. ‘you say you don’t know where your parents are?’
> ‘I don’t know,’ I say.
> ‘When they return, tell them all the roads are blocked. No escape. And you clever girl, if you want to live, don’t leave this house for anything. Ghosts are all over our land. Bad ghosts.’ (Akpan 243)

The above reflects the profound sense of fear and uncertainty that permeates the lives of individuals in a war-torn society. The dialogue reveals critical themes of survival, vulnerability, and the haunting legacy of violence that defines the postcolonial experience. The speaker's admonition, "if you want to live, don’t leave this house for anything," starkly conveys the immediate danger facing the protagonist. This directive underscores the pervasive atmosphere of fear, where the home - typically a symbol of safety - becomes a site of entrapment. The reference to "ghosts" serves as a powerful metaphor for the lingering trauma and psychological scars left by conflict. These "bad ghosts" represent not only the physical threats of violence but also the haunting memories of loss and betrayal that plague the community.

Monique’s admission of not knowing where her parents are highlights a profound sense of abandonment and confusion. In the context of postcolonial theory, this reflects the disintegration of ancestral structures under societal pressures. The absence of parental figures in times of crisis illustrates the

fragility of family bonds, emphasising how external conflicts disrupt the protective roles traditionally held by parents. This loss exacerbates the protagonist's vulnerability, forcing her to navigate a perilous world without the guidance of her parents.

The assertion that "all the roads are blocked" symbolises the broader societal breakdown and the entrapment felt by individuals in conflict zones. This imagery conveys a sense of hopelessness, where escape from violence is not just physically obstructed but also psychologically debilitating. The speaker's warning reinforces the theme of isolation, suggesting that the community is cut off from safety and support, further amplifying the sense of despair. The "bad ghosts" can be seen as manifestations of historical traumas that continue to haunt the present, shaping the lives of individuals who inherit the consequences of past injustices. This aligns with postcolonial critiques that examine how the ramifications of colonialism can lead to cycles of violence and instability, ultimately affecting the most vulnerable members of society, such as children.

Akpan explores the ethical dilemmas families face during crises, highlighting the broader implications of postcolonial identity. The conflict centres around the rift between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes; while Papa is Hutu, Maman is Tutsi. Papa's family seeks to harm Maman, intensifying the tension within the family. This narrative illustrates the clash between parental expectations and children's innocence. Driven by fear and survival instincts, the parents' actions create a profound divide between themselves and their children.

> 'Why did you come down…come back?' he says to Maman, searching my face to see whether I've understood the question.
> I haven't.
> He turns back to Maman. 'Woman, why? Return to where you were last night. Please. Leave.
> 'Whatever you do,' she says, 'do not let my daughter know.'…
> My parents are hiding something from me…
> 'I can't bear it,' he says. 'I can't.' … I don't understand why Maman is saying she wants to be with me when she is won't even look my way (Akpan 248).

The above captures the complexity of marital relationships amid the backdrop of conflict, revealing deep emotional and psychological tensions. The dialogue illustrates the struggle for understanding and connection in a

fractured environment, highlighting themes of secrecy, fear, and the impact of societal turmoil on personal identity. The father's urgent question to Maman—"Why did you come down…come back?" - reflects his anxiety and confusion regarding her presence, as well as the underlying tensions that permeate their relationship. His search for understanding in the protagonist's face suggests a desire for clarity amid chaos, yet the protagonist's lack of comprehension underscores the emotional distance created by the crisis. This disconnect emphasises the theme of secrecy; Maman's insistence that her daughter remains uninformed about the situation hints at protective instincts but also suggests a deeper conflict within the family.

The dialogue reveals a profound rift between the parents, with the father pleading for Maman to return to safety. His statement, "I can't bear it," conveys an emotional burden that suggests both love and frustration. This tension manifests in a struggle for control and safety, highlighting the impact of external threats on familial bonds. Maman's contradictory behaviour—expressing a desire to be with her daughter while avoiding eye contact - reflects the complexities of maternal instinct amid survival. It indicates a protective yet fractured relationship, where love is overshadowed by fear.

The broader sociopolitical context of the Hutu-Tutsi conflict serves as a backdrop for the family's struggles, illustrating how external pressures infiltrate the intimate realm of the family. Maman's desire to shield her daughter from the harsh realities of their situation exemplifies the psychological toll of conflict on individuals. The protagonist's realisation that her parents are hiding something from her signifies the loss of innocence and the painful transition into awareness of a world marked by danger and betrayal.

From a postcolonial perspective, the excerpt highlights how historical and cultural legacies shape personal relationships. The parents' actions are not merely individual choices but are influenced by the broader context of violence and division within their society. This reflects the ways in which colonial histories can lead to familial fragmentation, as personal loyalties are tested by tribal affiliations and societal expectations. This dynamic highlight the tension between traditional familial roles and the necessity for adaptation in a shifting socio-political landscape—a prevalent theme in postcolonial literature. The parents' desire to shield their children from the harsh realities of the crisis underscores their protective instincts, yet it also reveals the complexities of their situation. They are acutely aware that Papa's

community, including his brother Tonton Andre, poses a direct threat to Maman's safety. This concealment of truth not only reflects the parents' struggles for survival but also illustrates the broader implications of conflict on familial relationships and the innocence of children.

> As the mob close in on our house, chanting, the ceiling people begin to pray. I recognise their voice as those of our Tutsi neighbours and fellow parishioners. They are silent as Papa opens the front door to the crowd, which is bigger than last night's… Their weapons and hands and shoes and clothes are covered with blood… I see the man who attacked me; his yellow trousers are now reddish brown… Soon the mob enters the room too, bringing Papa. They give Papa a big machete. He begins to tremble… 'My people,' he mumbles, 'let another do it. Please.'
> 'No, you do it, traitor! Tonton Andre shouts… 'You were with us when I killed Annette yesterday. My pregnant wife. You can't keep yours…
> 'My husband, be a man… 'you promised me.'
> Papa lands the machete on Maman's head. Her voice chokes and she falls off the bed and unto her back on the wooden floor… The knife tumbles out of Papa's hand. His eyes are closed, his face calm, though he is shaking (Akpan 254)

The above dialogue delivers a harrowing depiction of violence and betrayal, encapsulating the devastating impact of ethnic conflict on family bonds. Through vivid imagery and emotional turmoil, Akpan illustrates the collapse of moral and social order in a society torn apart by tribal divisions. The mob's approach, chanting and armed, creates an atmosphere of impending doom. The description of their "weapons and hands and shoes and clothes... covered with blood" starkly conveys the brutality of the situation, emphasising the loss of humanity in the face of tribal warfare. Papa's initial act of opening the door symbolises a tragic surrender to this violence, suggesting that he is both physically and emotionally trapped by the forces surrounding him.

Papa's trembling and his plea, "let another do it," reveal his internal struggle and fear. This moment captures the psychological toll of the conflict, where familial loyalty is pitted against the brutal demands of tribal allegiance. The mob's pressure intensifies the sense of betrayal; Tonton Andre's accusations highlight the fractured nature of kinship in a context where survival often necessitates violence against one's own.

Maman's desperate call to Papa, "be a man … you promised me," encapsulates the tragic loss of agency experienced by both parents. This moment underscores the weight of expectations placed on men in times of crisis, where traditional notions of masculinity are distorted into acts of violence. Papa's ultimate act - striking Maman - represents the culmination of his helplessness, as he succumbs to the mob's demands and betrays the very essence of familial loyalty. The machete itself serves as a powerful symbol of both violence and the disintegration of familial bonds. As Papa wields it against Maman, it becomes a tool of destruction that irrevocably alters their family dynamic. The act of violence is not merely physical; it signifies the shattering of trust and love, illustrating how external conflicts can invade the most intimate spaces. From a postcolonial perspective, this scene reflects the destructive legacies of colonialism that exacerbate ethnic tensions. The mob's chant and the bloodshed represent how historical grievances manifest in contemporary violence, fracturing communities and families. Papa's transformation from protector to perpetrator exemplifies how colonial histories can distort identities and relationships, leading to devastating consequences for individuals caught in the crossfire.

The children's discovery of their parents' secrets compels them to confront moral dilemmas surrounding loyalty, trust, and betrayal. This conflict symbolises the postcolonial struggle for identity, as individuals navigate the tension between familial loyalty and personal ethics. Their journey from innocence to awareness reflects the broader quest for understanding in postcolonial societies, where personal and collective histories are often riddled with contradictions.

Ultimately, this tribal war engulfs even those whom Papa and Maman sacrificed themselves for, as they are burned in the house by their own people:

> After the mob runs past us, I return to the road and look back. They dragged Maman out by the legs and set fire to the house... by the time their fellow Tutsis in the ceiling begin to shout, the fire is unstoppable. They run on. They run after Papa's people. We walk forward (258).

This captures the harrowing aftermath of violence, illustrating the devastating consequences of ethnic conflict and the disintegration of familial bonds. Through vivid imagery and emotional resonance, Akpan conveys the despair

and fragmentation that characterise lives caught in the throes of societal upheaval. The act of dragging Maman out by her legs and setting fire to the house symbolises the ultimate violation of familial sanctity and safety. This brutal imagery starkly illustrates the dehumanising effects of mob mentality and ethnic violence. The house, typically a symbol of refuge, becomes a site of destruction, reflecting how conflict dismantles not only physical structures but also the very foundations of identity and belonging.

The mention of fellow Tutsis in the ceiling shouting as the fire rages emphasises the complex dynamics of community during times of crisis. Their shouts indicate a desperate awareness of the unfolding tragedy, yet their inaction reveals a moral paralysis that can arise in the face of overwhelming violence. This moment highlights the collective trauma experienced by communities, where individuals are often forced to choose between survival and solidarity. Fire serves as a potent symbol in this scene, representing both destruction and transformation. While it consumes Maman and the physical home, it also signifies the irreversible changes wrought by conflict on the lives of those involved. The fire's "unstoppable" nature reflects the pervasive and uncontrollable chaos that characterises ethnic violence, suggesting that once ignited, such conflicts can engulf entire communities.

The protagonist's decision to "walk forward" after witnessing the horror signifies a painful but necessary move toward survival. This act of moving forward can be interpreted as a metaphor for resilience in the face of trauma, highlighting the struggle to find a path amid destruction. However, it also underscores the profound sense of loss and dislocation that follows such violence, as the journey ahead is fraught with uncertainty.

Akpan's "My Parents' Bedroom" significantly enriches the discourse on migration and family values in African literature by illuminating the intimate interplay between personal experiences and socio-political realities. The narrative acts as a microcosm of the complexities encountered by families in war-torn societies, revealing how these external conflicts profoundly impact the younger generation. Through vivid storytelling, Akpan explores themes of loyalty, betrayal, and the loss of innocence, ultimately emphasising the need for resilience in the face of adversity. This work compels readers to reflect on the intricate dynamics of family life amid turmoil, underscoring the enduring effects of socio-political strife on personal identities and community cohesion. In doing so, it contributes to a deeper understanding of

the intersection between individual lives and broader historical forces, enriching our comprehension of the postcolonial experience.

Comparative Study of Selected Texts

Uwem Akpan's *Say You're One of Them* presents these themes through interconnected short stories that delve into the realities of life in Africa. This comparative analysis focuses on two stories from the collection: "Fattening for Gabon," set in Benin, and "My Parents' Bedroom," set in Rwanda. Both narratives explore migration, family values, and the emotional toll of displacement, offering rich insights into the characters' struggles within their socio-political contexts.

Among the similarities evident in the texts, both "Fattening for Gabon" and "My Parents' Bedroom" address migration as a central theme, though they approach it from different angles. In "Fattening for Gabon," migration is depicted as a physical journey, where young Kotchikpa and his sister Yewa are prepared for a life of servitude in Gabon. The narrative highlights the desperation of their family, driven by economic hardship and the grim realities of child trafficking. Conversely, "My Parents' Bedroom" illustrates a more psychological form of migration, where the protagonist, Monique, navigates the emotional turmoil of civil unrest in Rwanda. Despite these differences, both stories reflect the profound impact of migration on familial relationships and individual identities.

Also, each narrative powerfully captures the emotional toll of displacement on the characters. In "Fattening for Gabon," the children's innocence is lost as they confront the harsh realities of their exploitation. Similarly, in "My Parents' Bedroom," Monique experiences a loss of innocence as she grapples with the fear and uncertainty surrounding her family's safety amid violence. Both stories highlight how external socio-political pressures invade the domestic sphere, leading to emotional rifts and a sense of abandonment.

The dynamics within families are central to both stories. In "Fattening for Gabon," the children's relationship with their guardian, Fofo Kpee, is complicated by the economic necessity that dictates their lives. The parents' insistence on obedience to Fofo Kpee reinforces familial loyalty, even as it creates internal conflict for the children. Similarly, "My Parents' Bedroom" explores the tensions between Monique and her parents, particularly in the context of the Hutu-Tutsi conflict. The emotional distance between family

members, shaped by fear and survival instincts, underscores the fragility of familial bonds amid sociopolitical turmoil.

While both narratives explore migration, they differ significantly in their portrayals. "Fattening for Gabon" presents migration as a physical journey toward exploitation, where the children's fate is directly linked to economic desperation. The narrative starkly illustrates the moral depravity involved in child trafficking and the normalisation of such exploitation in postcolonial Africa. In contrast, "My Parents' Bedroom" delves into the psychological effects of migration, where the characters confront internal conflict and emotional dislocation rather than a literal change of location. This narrative focuses on the impact of civil unrest and the resulting trauma, emphasising how societal violence shapes personal lives.

The cultural contexts of the two stories also differ markedly. "Fattening for Gabon" engages with themes of economic aspiration and the loss of cultural identity, as the children are prepared for a life that requires them to shed their local roots. The symbolism of "fattening" serves as a commentary on commodification and the devaluation of human life. In contrast, "My Parents' Bedroom" is steeped in the complexities of ethnic conflict, particularly the Hutu-Tutsi divide. The symbols of violence—such as the machete—represent not only physical danger but also the moral fragmentation within the community, highlighting how colonial legacies exacerbate societal divisions.

Uwem Akpan's "Fattening for Gabon" and "My Parents' Bedroom" offer profound explorations of migration and family values within contemporary African contexts. Both narratives highlight the emotional and psychological toll of displacement, illustrating how socio-political realities shape individual and familial identities. While they share themes of loss and the complexities of familial dynamics, they differ in their approaches to migration, cultural contexts, and the nature of the challenges faced by their characters. Together, these stories contribute to a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay between personal narratives and broader historical forces, enriching the discourse on migration in African literature.

Summary of Findings

This study provides an in-depth analysis of migration and family values in Uwem Akpan's *Say You're One of Them*, focusing on the interconnected short stories "Fattening for Gabon" and "My Parents' Bedroom." Through a postcolonial lens, the research highlights the complexities faced by individuals and families displaced by socio-political unrest, economic hardship, and cultural dislocation.

The findings reveal that migration serves as a dual force in Akpan's narratives: it is both a means of survival and a source of profound loss. In "Fattening for Gabon," migration is depicted explicitly as the young protagonist, Kotchikpa, and his sister Yewa are prepared for a life of servitude in Gabon, illustrating the grim realities of child exploitation and illegal migration. This story critiques societal structures that devalue human life, particularly that of children, as they become commodities in a desperate quest for economic stability.

Conversely, "My Parents' Bedroom" explores a more psychological form of migration, where the emotional and mental toll of civil unrest profoundly impacts the characters Monique and Jean. The story captures the erosion of family bonds amid violence, as the protagonist grapples with a loss of innocence amid chaos. The children's experiences highlight the broader implications of postcolonial identity, where external conflicts disrupt familial structures and relationships.

Both stories emphasise the significance of communication and familial loyalty in maintaining ties amid adversity. The characters' struggles illustrate how socio-economic pressures shape individual identities, challenging traditional family values and creating emotional rifts. Akpan's portrayal of these dynamics underscores the resilience of cultural traditions, even as characters navigate the complexities of modernity and displacement. By situating Akpan's work within the discourse on migration in African literature, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the enduring impact of colonial legacies on contemporary families. It reveals how personal narratives are intertwined with larger socio-political contexts, enriching readers' comprehension of the human experience in the face of adversity. Ultimately, the analysis highlights the enduring significance of family as a source of strength and resilience, offering insights into the intricate interplay between migration, identity, and community in a postcolonial world.

Conclusion

This research has illuminated the intricate themes of migration and family values in Uwem Akpan's *Say You're One of Them*, particularly through the stories "Fattening for Gabon" and "My Parents' Bedroom." By employing a postcolonial lens, the study demonstrates how Akpan's narratives reflect the complex realities faced by individuals and families amidst socio-political unrest, economic hardship, and cultural dislocation. The findings reveal that migration acts as both a pathway to survival and a source of profound emotional loss, reshaping identities and challenging traditional familial structures. The analysis underscores the duality of migration in Akpan's work: while it often represents hope and aspiration, it simultaneously exposes the vulnerabilities and moral compromises that arise from economic necessity. Through the characters' experiences, Akpan effectively illustrates the broader implications of displacement, emphasising the significance of communication and familial loyalty in maintaining ties during times of upheaval. Ultimately, the study contributes valuable insights into the enduring impact of colonial legacies on contemporary African families, enriching the discourse on migration in African literature.

Recommendations

This study therefore recommends that an interdisciplinary approach should be considered, incorporating sociology and psychology, as this may yield insights into the emotional ramifications of migration. Moreover, integrating these narratives into educational curricula can foster discussions about the socio-political issues surrounding migration, encouraging empathy and understanding among students. Lastly, supporting literary platforms that amplify African voices can enhance awareness of the complexities faced by individuals in similar situations, contributing to a richer dialogue on migration and family values in contemporary society. Further recommendations may include:

1. Further research can expand on the themes of displacement and identity in Akpan's work by examining additional stories in *Say You're One of Them.*
2. Future studies should also expand on the themes of migration in contemporary African literature by exploring additional authors and narratives. This can help create a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse experiences of migrants and the socio-political factors influencing these narratives.

3. Further studies could expand on Akpan's use of child narrators to examine how innocence shapes the understanding of complex social issues.
4. Additionally, comparative analyses with other contemporary African writers could provide broader insights into the evolving narratives surrounding migration and family values.
5. Future research could also explore the intersections of gender and migration in Akpan's work, as these elements play a crucial role in shaping the characters' experiences.
6. Researchers and policymakers should consider how migration narratives in literature can inform social policies addressing displacement and refugee issues. Literature can serve as a powerful tool to raise awareness and foster empathy for the experiences of migrants.
7. Integrating Akpan's work into educational curricula can enhance students' understanding of migration and family dynamics in a postcolonial context. This can encourage discussions on identity, culture, and the socio-economic challenges faced by contemporary African societies.
8. Encouraging literary platforms that highlight African voices and migration stories can amplify the narratives of marginalised communities. This support can help foster a richer dialogue around the challenges and triumphs of migration in the global context.

By addressing these recommendations, scholars and practitioners can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding migration and family values in contemporary African literature, ultimately fostering greater awareness and empathy towards the lived experiences of individuals in similar situations.

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Migration and Sustainable Development: Problems and Prospects
Essays in Honour of Professor Olufemi Ayinde Peters

Chapter 16
Local Peacebuilding Strategies as Means of Mitigating Forced Displacement in Host Communities in Nigeria

by

Heman Johnson

Abstract

Forced displacement remains a significant humanitarian concern in Nigeria, largely fuelled by violent conflict, environmental degradation, and economic hardship. This chapter explores the role of local peacebuilding strategies in mitigating the impact of forced displacement on host communities. While displacement often disrupts the socio-economic and political fabric of affected areas, it also places immense pressure on overstretched host communities, sometimes sparking tensions and competition over resources. Although government agencies and humanitarian actors have implemented formal interventions, many communities rely heavily on local peacebuilding strategies informed by cultural traditions, religious influence, and local leadership structures. This chapter adopts a qualitative research approach based on an extensive review of secondary sources that were gathered from journals, books, official government publications, reports, and online materials to assess the effectiveness of locally driven peacebuilding approaches such as community dialogue, traditional dispute resolution, and faith-based engagement in promoting reconciliation, social cohesion, and resilience. It also highlights the challenges these efforts face, including limited resources, political interference, and a lack of institutional support. The chapter recommends that the government should integrate and institutionalise local peacebuilding frameworks such as traditional conflict resolution, peace committees, and community-based dialogue platforms into national and state-level displacement and conflict mitigation policies. The chapter concludes that forced displacement remains a significant humanitarian challenge driven by violent conflicts, economic hardship, environmental degradation, and communal tensions with host communities struggling to accommodate displaced populations.

Keywords: Conflict Mitigation Policies, Local Peacebuilding Strategies, Traditional Conflict Resolution

Introduction

Forced displacement has emerged as a pressing humanitarian concern in many parts of Nigeria, primarily driven by violent conflicts, communal clashes, economic hardship, and environmental challenges, which has led to a sharp increase in the movement of people from their homes to safer areas, often overwhelming host communities (Emmanuel, Okoli & Yilkang, 2025). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2019), forced displacement refers to the involuntary or coerced movement of individuals or groups away from their homes due to persecution, conflict, or human rights violations. In this context, such displacement is often triggered by a combination of insecurity, environmental degradation, and economic hardship, prompting affected individuals to seek refuge in communities perceived to be safer and economically viable (Erondu, 2025). The arrival of displaced populations often disrupts the social, economic, and political fabric of both the displaced and host communities that are already grappling with limited resources, pressure that leads to tension and competition (Eboreime, Anjorin, Obi-Jeff, Ojo & Hertelendy, 2025). Moreover, displaced persons are sometimes viewed as threats due to associations with criminal activities or the strain they place on socio-economic infrastructures, which has, in some cases, led to disease outbreaks such as cholera and increased poverty levels (Erondu, 2025).

Despite these challenges, various actors have intervened to mitigate the impacts of forced displacement, such as government institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society groups, faith-based organisations, and philanthropists have all played crucial roles. For instance, Njoku (2025) noted that the government introduced a national policy framework to protect, support, resettle, and reintegrate displaced persons, while also addressing root causes such as poverty and unemployment through empowerment programmes like vocational training, agricultural support, and job creation. Akanni, Ogunde, and Obienyi (2025) also highlighted the establishment of state-level agencies such as State Emergency Management Agencies (SEMAs) in conflict-affected states like Borno, Benue, and Adamawa to collaborate with federal institutions and NGOs to deploy security forces, manage displacement, and create conditions for safe returns. Thus, NGOs and civil society organisations further support these efforts by providing humanitarian aid, including food, water, clothing, shelter, hygiene kits, informal education, vocational training, and psychosocial support through counselling and trauma healing, aimed at promoting self-reliance

(Gudeta & Seyeneh, 2025). However, despite these efforts, mitigating forced displacement remains a daunting task, partly due to insufficient exploration and support for local peacebuilding strategies. Alebiosu (2024) stated that these strategies, rooted in cultural norms, traditional leadership, religious influence, and community-based organisations, often play a vital role in promoting dialogue, rebuilding trust, and fostering peaceful coexistence in multi-ethnic host communities. As Eyang, Borlin, and Borlin (2025) emphasise that local peacebuilding is indispensable, particularly in rural or hard-to-reach areas, where it helps address the underlying causes of forced displacement and facilitates local peacebuilding strategies.

Nonetheless, the effectiveness of such local peacebuilding strategies is yet to be fully evaluated. Many interventions are informal and lack documentation or external support, limiting their potential for replication and adaptation in other regions facing similar displacement crises. Therefore, this chapter aims to assess the local peacebuilding strategies employed in host communities, identify key actors, examine the challenges they encounter, and evaluate the outcomes of their efforts. In doing so, it contributes to a deeper understanding of how community-led approaches can complement national and international responses to forced displacement. Ultimately, by highlighting both the strengths and limitations of local initiatives, this chapter advocates for more inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding practices that recognise and support the resilience of communities most affected by displacement.

Literature Review

Local Peacebuilding Strategies to Mitigate Forced Displacement

Local peacebuilding strategies refer to community-based efforts designed to prevent violence and foster reconciliation, which include dialogue forums, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, local security arrangements, and the active participation of religious and community leaders in peace mediation to sustain harmony and reduce the risk of forced displacement at the grassroots level (O'Neill, 2009). According to Alebiosu (2024), in his study titled *Displacement, Humanitarian Action and Non-Governmental Organisations in Northeast Nigeria*, such strategies involve the establishment of peace committees, the promotion of peace education, disaster preparedness, collaboration, and cooperation to foster social cohesion through the integration of indigenous culture and traditions, which contribute significantly to community stability and play a vital role in defusing tensions before they escalate into large-scale displacement.

Eyang *et al.* (2025) also emphasised the importance of local peacebuilding, particularly in regions where formal state structures are weak or absent. Local actors offer immediate and context-specific responses to conflict and displacement through approaches to engage traditional and religious leaders, along with local government officials, ensuring that communities are empowered to tackle the root causes of displacement. In addition, such engagement supports long-term reconciliation, effective disaster response, local dispute mediation, and the restoration of trust to help build the capacity of local peace committees, strengthen governance structures, and promote community-driven approaches to mitigate forced displacement. Furthermore, Neufeldt, Klassen, Danboyi, Dyck, and Zakka Bako (2020) argued that effective local peacebuilding hinges on strengthening principles such as transparency, accountability, zero tolerance for corruption, inclusivity, and equality, which promote inter-communal dialogue and early warning systems for detecting potential conflict and natural disasters such as floods. In this regard, local peacebuilding plays a critical role in grassroots conflict prevention, dispute resolution, and disaster management, with a focus on rebuilding trust between ethnic and religious groups as well as integrates livelihood support to address economic and environmental drivers of displacement, thereby equipping vulnerable communities with the means to rebuild their lives and minimise the risk of further violence or disaster (Abonyi & Eluke, 2025). Similarly, Neufeldt *et al.* (2020) observed that local peacebuilding strategies can effectively combine conflict resolution, livelihood restoration, governance support, and disaster preparedness, ultimately building resilience among both host and displaced communities. Alebiosu (2024) added that these strategies ensure a holistic and comprehensive process for identifying the environmental and conflict-related causes of displacement, while fostering inclusive development and strengthening the long-term viability of host communities alongside displaced populations.

From a different perspective, Danjuma and Usman (2024), in their study *Strategies of Local Sports for Mitigating Conflict and Peacebuilding in Eastern Sokoto State, Nigeria*, find that local peacebuilding also revolves around community-centred governance to creates avenues for economic development and the provision of basic social amenities such as shelter, food, healthcare, education, and a safe living environment for all and crucial addressing the factors that lead to displacement. This indicates that local peacebuilding strategies aim not only to meet the needs and aspirations of

people but also to raise awareness of the risks that could result in displacement.

Challenges of Local Peacebuilding in Host Communities

Despite their importance, local peacebuilding strategies face a range of significant challenges. As Abdullahi and Onabanjo (2024) point out, these include limited financial and material resources, poor coordination with government agencies, political interference, and a lack of inclusivity, particularly the marginalisation of women and youth in peacebuilding programmes and decision-making processes. Eyang *et al.* (2025) further highlighted that the influence of political elites often overshadows community interests within local peace structures, thereby undermining the effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives which has led to host communities frequently experience tensions with displaced populations over issues such as land use, access to economic opportunities, and cultural integration further complicate peacebuilding efforts by deepening divisions and eroding trust between groups.

In many cases, displaced persons are perceived by host communities as contributing to the strain on already limited resources, thereby worsening poverty and unemployment, fuel resentment, heightening insecurity, and ultimately hindering broader efforts at community development as well as social cohesion between the forcibly displaced persons and the host communities. Building on these points, Benard (2025) noted that local peacebuilding is also hindered by deeply rooted divisions, historical grievances, and mutual mistrust between host communities and displaced populations as well as create the perception of their presence bring scarcity of resources and limited awareness of available peacebuilding strategies, and political instability particularly changes in government that disrupt continuity further impede the success of long-term local peacebuilding efforts.

Key Actors Involved in Local Peacebuilding Strategies

Local peacebuilding efforts are supported by a wide range of actors, each contributing distinct perspectives, capacities, and resources to the process. According to Edun (2024), in his study titled *Local Governance and Peacebuilding in Nigeria*, found that the key actors involved in local peacebuilding include traditional rulers, religious leaders, women's groups, youth associations, community-based organisations (CBOs), and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who plays a vital role in sustaining peace at the grassroots level and mitigate forced displacement. Traditional

rulers, for instance, often hold considerable authority and respect, particularly in rural areas, positioning them as effective mediators in local disputes and mitigation of forced displacement. Their deep-rooted presence within communities allows them to facilitate dialogue, mitigate forced displacement, resolve conflicts, and promote social harmony (Edun, 2024). On the other hand, religious leaders and institutions also play a crucial role, serving as moral voices within society, and their involvement has been central to encouraging forgiveness, reconciliation, and the restoration of broken relationships (Ja'afaru, Ekhareafo & Asemah, 2025). While, women's groups and youth associations are instrumental in community mobilisation and advocacy, often leading awareness campaigns, engaging in early warning signs of environmental challenges, dialogue forums, and implementing community support initiatives (Benard, 2025). Thus, community-based organisations serve as bridges between formal institutions and local populations, leveraging indigenous knowledge and practices to promote peace, mitigate force displacement as well as contribute by providing technical expertise, resources, training, and psychosocial support, while also advocating for inclusive peacebuilding policies that mitigate forced displacement (Eyang *et al.*, 2025). Together, these diverse actors form a collaborative network that underpins local peacebuilding strategies, ensuring that efforts are rooted in the cultural, social, and spiritual fabric of the communities they aim to serve.

Complementing National and International Peacebuilding through Local Efforts

According to Abdullahi and Onabanjo (2024), local peacebuilding becomes most effective when it complements national and international peacebuilding frameworks because national strategies often emphasise policy reforms, security interventions, and institutional strengthening local efforts contribute to grassroots engagement and cultural sensitivity necessary for effectively mitigating forced displacement. An example of this synergy can be seen in the role of the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI), a federal agency tasked with coordinating peacebuilding strategies for displaced populations by providing relief materials, supports rehabilitation processes, and collaborates with other stakeholders to uphold the rights and welfare of displaced individuals (Emelonye & Buergenthal, 2011). This agency also conducts public awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and discrimination against displaced persons, foster peaceful coexistence, and prevent the conditions that lead to displacement. On a broader scale, international actors such as the United

Nations and various donor agencies have increasingly acknowledged the importance of local ownership and indigenous knowledge in peacebuilding processes because of their work alongside local actors to address the complex and evolving dynamics of forced displacement, ensuring that mitigation efforts are both contextually appropriate and sustainable (Lilja & Höglund, 2018). Similarly, Abdullahi and Onabanjo (2024) pointed that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) also serve as key facilitators in this collaboration by promoting peace education, facilitate community dialogues, and mediate tensions between host communities and displaced populations and integrating local perspectives into broader peacebuilding frameworks, to ensure more comprehensive, responsive along effective approaches to displacement challenges.

Local Peacebuilding

According to Edun (2024), local peacebuilding refers to efforts led by community members and local institutions aimed at resolving conflict, mitigating forced displacement, fostering reconciliation, and promoting social cohesion often without sole dependence on external actors through strategies that are deeply rooted in the traditions, norms, cultures, and values of the communities. Akande, Kaye and Rukuni (2021) added that local peacebuilding typically operates through informal structures of authority, such as traditional, religious leadership, and inclusive approaches that prioritise dialogue, mediation, community participation, and the rebuilding of trust by locally grounded efforts to play a vital role in not only preventing the recurrence of conflict but also in addressing environmental stressors that may contribute to displacement. By drawing on indigenous knowledge systems and community solidarity, local peacebuilding strengthens resilience, encourages peaceful coexistence, and lays the foundation for sustainable forced displacement mitigation (Ogunode & Ayeni, 2024). In this way, it offers a culturally sensitive and context-specific framework for addressing the complex realities of forced displacement in host communities.

Forced Displacement

Forced displacement involve the involuntary relocation of individuals or groups from their homes because of conflict, violence, natural disasters, or development-related activities (UNHCR, 2021). In this context, Ja'afaru *et al.* (2025) identified key drivers of forced displacement to include armed conflicts particularly the Boko Haram insurgency, communal violence, farmer-herder clashes, and climate-induced challenges frequently among

others compel people to flee their homes, subjecting them to extreme hardship, including the loss of livelihoods, heightened insecurity, substandard living conditions, and restricted access to essential services. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2021), Nigeria is home to one of the largest populations of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Africa. This reality highlights the critical need for effective, sustainable, and contextually grounded interventions through community-based peacebuilding strategies because it emerged as a vital component in addressing the root causes of forced displacement, supporting recovery, and fostering long-term stability within affected host communities.

Strengths and Limitations of Local Peacebuilding

Local peacebuilding possesses several notable strengths, particularly due to its cultural relevance, deep roots in community trust, and its ability to respond swiftly to emerging challenges as it empowers local actors and promotes community ownership of the peace process, which is essential for effectively mitigating forced displacement. However, these strengths are accompanied by a number of limitations that local peacebuilding efforts often suffer from limited funding, inadequate legal recognition, and a lack of formal institutional support (Edun, 2024). Additionally, there is the risk of exclusionary practices, particularly where marginalised groups such as women and youth are left out of peacebuilding processes and local actors lack the capacity or resources to manage complex or large-scale conflicts. Without integration into broader national and international frameworks, local peacebuilding efforts struggle to achieve sustainability required for long-term displacement mitigation. O'Neill (2009) supports this perspective, arguing that while local peacebuilding is indispensable, it must be supported by external assistance and underpinned by structural reforms to produce enduring outcomes.

Methodology

This chapter relies on secondary sources of data, including journals, books, official government publications, reports, and online materials, to critically assess the various local peacebuilding strategies employed to address forced displacement in host communities across Nigeria. The choice of methodology was guided by the need to synthesise existing knowledge and viewpoints to provide a well-rounded understanding of the role and effectiveness of these strategies in mitigating forced displacement. Drawing

from a range of secondary sources enabled the study to identify recurring patterns, challenges, and opportunities associated with local peacebuilding efforts, and to explore how such strategies have contributed to easing tensions and preventing the escalation of conflicts in affected communities.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from literature review revealed that local peacebuilding strategies have contributed meaningfully to mitigating the effects of forced displacement in Nigerian host communities. These strategies, grounded in traditional authority, religious influence, and community-based initiatives, have proven to be critical, especially in areas where formal mechanisms are weak or absent (Eyang, Borlin & Borlin, 2025; Alebiosu, 2024). A major finding indicates that grassroots peacebuilding efforts - such as peace committees, community dialogues, and informal dispute resolution - have played a vital role in fostering understanding and encouraging peaceful coexistence between displaced persons and host communities (O'Neill, 2009; Danjuma & Usman, 2024). These mechanisms help reduce tension, promote reconciliation, and manage socio-economic competition that often arises from displacement (Eboreime *et al.*, 2025). The role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), and faith-based groups is also significant. These actors have supported local efforts by providing humanitarian assistance, vocational training, informal education, and psychosocial services, particularly in displacement camps (Gudeta & Seyeneh, 2025). In states such as Borno, Benue, and Adamawa, the collaboration between state agencies like SEMAs and NGOs has strengthened peacebuilding and facilitated the reintegration of displaced persons (Akanni, Ogunde & Obienyi, 2025). However, the findings also identify persistent challenges. These include limited financial resources, poor coordination with government institutions, political interference, and a lack of inclusive representation, particularly of women and youth (Abdullahi & Onabanjo, 2024). Additionally, local peacebuilding interventions often lack formal documentation, which affects scalability and long-term sustainability (Eyang *et al.*, 2025; Bernard, 2025).

Furthermore, while community-led strategies are rooted in trust and cultural legitimacy, they are sometimes undermined by elite interests or hindered by deep-seated divisions and mistrust within host communities (Abdullahi & Onabanjo, 2024; Edun, 2024). Without integration into broader national and international peacebuilding frameworks, the effectiveness of these efforts

remains limited despite their potential (O'Neill, 2009; Ja'afaru, Ekhareafo & Asemah, 2025). In summary, while local peacebuilding initiatives offer promising approaches for mitigating forced displacement, their impact can be significantly enhanced through structured support, inclusive participation, and alignment with national and global peacebuilding agendas.

Recommendations

In view of the findings presented in this chapter, it is evident that local peacebuilding strategies are essential tools for mitigating forced displacement and promoting peaceful coexistence in Nigerian host communities. However, to enhance their effectiveness and ensure their sustainability, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Government should integrate and institutionalise Local Peacebuilding Frameworks such as traditional conflict resolution, peace committees, and community-based dialogue platforms into national and state-level displacement and conflict mitigation policies as well as allocating funding, technical support, and legal recognition to ensure their sustainability and alignment with broader peace and development goals.
2. Government should enhance collaboration with Multi Stakeholder to implement a robust coordination between government institutions, local leaders, civil society, and international partners and ensure inclusive participation by actively involving women, youth, and displaced persons in peacebuilding processes.
3. Government and security agencies should address structural drivers of Displacement through Localised Development and prioritise interventions that tackle its root causes of poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, and insecurity and support community-based livelihood programmes, improving access to education and healthcare, and ensuring equitable service delivery to both displaced and host communities.

Conclusion

Forced displacement remains a significant humanitarian challenge in Nigeria, driven by violent conflicts, economic hardship, environmental degradation, and communal tensions. As host communities struggle to accommodate displaced populations, the social, economic, and political pressures have intensified, often resulting in friction and instability. In response, local

peacebuilding strategies have emerged as vital grassroots mechanisms for mitigating these challenges and fostering peaceful coexistence between displaced persons and their host communities. This chapter has demonstrated that local peacebuilding strategies anchored in traditional leadership, religious influence, cultural norms, and community-driven initiatives have made meaningful contributions to conflict prevention, dialogue facilitation, trust-building, and social cohesion. These strategies have proven particularly effective in areas where formal state structures are weak or absent, offering immediate, context-specific responses that resonate with the lived realities of local populations. Key actors such as traditional rulers, religious leaders, women's groups, youth associations, and community-based organisations have played central roles in supporting peace processes, providing humanitarian assistance, and addressing the root causes of displacement.

Despite these efforts, local peacebuilding faces persistent challenges including limited resources, political interference, inadequate coordination with government institutions, and lack of inclusive representation. Furthermore, the informal nature of many interventions and the absence of systematic documentation hinder their scalability and long-term sustainability underscore the need for institutional support, greater recognition, and integration of local strategies into national and international peacebuilding frameworks.

Ultimately, this chapter highlights the importance of adopting a holistic and inclusive approach to local peacebuilding that acknowledges and strengthens the resilience and agency of local communities by bridging the gap between local practices and formal governance structures, it becomes possible to create sustainable, culturally relevant solutions to forced displacement. Supporting and scaling up these local efforts, while ensuring alignment with broader humanitarian and development agendas, is essential to achieving durable peace and stability in displacement-affected states.

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Migration and Sustainable Development: Problems and Prospects
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Chapter 17

Social Dimensions of Human Trafficking in Nigeria: Theories and Perspectives

by

Olanrewaju Basil Akanle, John Lekan Oyefara, & Kennedy Eborka

Abstract

Human trafficking in Nigeria is a pervasive social issue that intertwines complex socio-economic, cultural, and political dimensions, significantly impacting vulnerable populations, particularly women and children. This study aims to elucidate the multifaceted nature of human trafficking in Nigeria by examining the socio-economic factors, cultural beliefs, and systemic vulnerabilities that contribute to this human rights violation. The study identifies critical push factors, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of educational opportunities, which compel individuals to seek better prospects, often leading them into the hands of traffickers. The intersectionality of class, gender, and cultural norms was explored, which reveals how patriarchal structures and traditional practices exacerbate the risks faced by victims. The study further investigates the role of social work interventions and faith-based advocacy in addressing the needs of trafficking survivors and influencing public perceptions and policies. Employing the Push and Pull Theory and Structural Functional Theory as theoretical frameworks, the study highlights the systemic failures and disruption of social order that perpetuate trafficking, including corruption, weak legal enforcement, and inadequate support systems for survivors. The findings underscore the necessity for a multi-faceted approach to combat human trafficking in Nigeria, emphasising the importance of prevention, protection, and rehabilitation efforts that address the root causes of trafficking. By recognising human trafficking as a complex social problem rather than merely a criminal issue, this study advocates for the development of sustainable solutions that incorporate the voices of survivors and local communities, ultimately contributing to the broader discourse on human rights and social justice in Nigeria.

Keywords: Human Rights, Human Trafficking, Socio-economic Factors, Systemic Failures, Vulnerable Population

Introduction

Human trafficking is a pervasive crime that affects millions worldwide, with Nigeria emerging as one of the most affected countries. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that over 40 million individuals are trafficked globally, with a significant proportion originating from or traveling through Nigeria (Idris *et al.,* 2024). The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reports alarming statistics, indicating that Nigeria ranks high in the number of women and children trafficked for sexual exploitation this figure was however confirmed to be 80% of the total number of migrants who were engaged in forced labour, and domestic servitude, both within its borders and internationally (Adeyinka *et al.,* 2023). While specific estimates may vary, studies suggest a significant number of Nigerians are trafficked annually, underscoring the ongoing crisis (Lubem, 2021). As one of the most pressing human rights violations, trafficking affects thousands of individuals, particularly women, and children, who are often subjected to forced labour, sexual exploitation, and other forms of abuse. The social dimensions of human trafficking in Nigeria are deeply rooted in the country's historical context, socio-economic disparities, and cultural practices, which collectively create an environment conducive to trafficking activities.

The socio-economic landscape of Nigeria is characterised by significant disparities, with a considerable portion of the population living in poverty. This economic vulnerability is a critical factor driving individuals, especially women and children, into the hands of traffickers.

Fanu *et al*., (2023) indicates that the prevalence of irregular migration, human trafficking, and modern slavery in Nigeria reflects socio-political deficiencies and economic imbalances, where poverty, low standards of living, and insecurity play pivotal roles.

Okeshola and Adenugba (2018) assert that the economic motivations behind trafficking are often exacerbated by the lack of educational opportunities and employment prospects, compelling families to make desperate choices that can lead to trafficking.

Adeyinka (2023) maintains that cultural factors also significantly influence the dynamics of human trafficking in Nigeria. Traditional beliefs and practices, including the use of rituals such as '*juju*,' have been identified as tools that traffickers exploit to manipulate victims and their families. These

rituals often involve oaths that bind victims to their traffickers, creating a psychological barrier that prevents them from escaping their circumstances. Moreover, the patriarchal structure prevalent in Nigerian society places women and girls at a heightened risk of trafficking, as they are often viewed as commodities to be traded for economic gain (Ukachi & Attoh, 2020). This gendered aspect of trafficking underscores the intersectionality of social identities, where age, gender, and socio-economic status converge to shape the experiences of victims (Adeyinka *et al*., 2023).

Adeyinka *et al*., (2023) opine that family involvement in trafficking is another critical dimension that complicates the issue. In many cases, family members may actively participate in or condone the trafficking of their daughters or female wards, believing it to be a means of financial support. This phenomenon highlights the intricate social networks that facilitate trafficking, where familial ties can both protect and endanger individuals. The normalisation of such practices within certain communities further perpetuates the cycle of trafficking, as victims may be viewed as having "sacrificed" for the greater good of the family (Adeyinka *et al*., 2023).

Nwogwugwu and Iyanda (2016) explain the role of globalisation as an apparatus that is connected to the rising unemployment and economic liberalisation practices that disproportionately affect a developing country like Nigeria, thereby intensifying the vulnerabilities that traffickers exploit. The role of globalisation in exacerbating human trafficking in Nigeria cannot be overlooked. As global economic structures evolve, the demand for cheap labour and sexual services has surged, leading to an increase in trafficking activities. The intersection of local and global factors creates a complex web of influences that sustain trafficking networks, making it imperative to adopt a multi-faceted approach to combat this issue.

Efforts to address human trafficking in Nigeria have been met with mixed results. While the country has taken steps to implement policies and frameworks aimed at combating trafficking, such as domesticating the Palermo Protocol, significant gaps remain in the enforcement and effectiveness of these measures (Ikuteyijo, 2019). The focus of government initiatives has often been on punitive measures rather than on the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims, which is essential for breaking the cycle of trafficking (Ikuteyijo, 2019). Furthermore, the lack of comprehensive data on trafficking patterns and victim experiences hinders the development of effective interventions (Idemudia *et al*., 2021).

Lubem (2021) asserts that the social dimensions of human trafficking in Nigeria are further complicated by the interplay of organised crime and corruption. Traffickers often operate within networks that are deeply entrenched in local and international markets, making it challenging for law enforcement to dismantle these operations.

Akor (2011) observes that corruption among officials can also impede efforts to combat trafficking, as traffickers may exploit loopholes in the legal system to evade prosecution. This environment of impunity not only perpetuates trafficking but also undermines public trust in institutions that are supposed to protect vulnerable populations.

Statement of the Problem

Human trafficking in Nigeria has emerged as a pervasive social issue, deeply rooted in the socio-economic and cultural fabric of the nation. The complexity of this phenomenon is underscored by its multifaceted nature, which encompasses various forms of exploitation, including forced labour and sexual exploitation, and is exacerbated by socio-political deficiencies and economic disparities. The prevalence of human trafficking in Nigeria is not merely a criminal issue; it reflects broader social injustices, including poverty, gender inequality, and the erosion of family structures, which collectively create an environment conducive to exploitation and abuse.

The intersection of socio-economic factors and human trafficking is particularly pronounced in Nigeria, where poverty and lack of educational opportunities serve as significant push factors for vulnerable populations. Many families, driven by economic hardship, resort to trafficking their children or relatives as a means of survival, often believing that such actions are in the best interest of their loved ones. This tragic reality is highlighted by family involvement in trafficking which often stems from a misguided perception of financial gain and survival (Adeyinka *et al.*, 2023).

Uduji *et al*., (2019) stress that victims of trafficking come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, indicating that the issue transcends mere economic status and is deeply embedded in the cultural and social dynamics of Nigerian society.

The role of gender in human trafficking cannot be overstated, as women and girls are disproportionately affected by this heinous crime. The patriarchal

structure prevalent in Nigerian society often places women in vulnerable positions, making them prime targets for traffickers. Ikuteyijo, (2019) stated that irregular migration is often seen as a survival strategy and disproportionately affects young women who are lured into trafficking networks under pretences of employment or education. This gendered aspect of trafficking is further explored by Kiss *et al.,* (2022) who highlighted the violence and exploitation faced by trafficked women and girls, emphasising the need for gender-sensitive interventions to address the root causes of trafficking.

Moreover, the cultural practices and beliefs surrounding human trafficking in Nigeria complicate the issue further. The use of rituals, such as juju, has been documented as a means of coercion and control over victims, creating a psychological barrier that prevents them from escaping their traffickers (Adeyinka, 2023). This cultural dimension is critical to understanding the motivations behind trafficking and the methods employed by traffickers to maintain control over their victims. The intertwining of cultural beliefs with trafficking practices necessitates a nuanced approach to combating this issue, as traditional law enforcement methods may not be sufficient to address the underlying social and cultural factors at play.

The socio-political landscape in Nigeria also plays a significant role in perpetuating human trafficking. Corruption, weak legal frameworks, and inadequate enforcement of existing laws hinder effective responses to trafficking.

Fanu *et al*., (2023) argues that the socio-political deficiencies in Nigeria contribute to the prevalence of irregular migration and trafficking, as individuals seek better opportunities abroad due to the lack of viable options at home.

Amadasun (2020) affirmed that the government's focus on punitive measures rather than rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficking survivors further exacerbates the problem, and that there should be a comprehensive social work intervention to support victims.

Additionally, the impact of globalisation on human trafficking in Nigeria cannot be overlooked. As globalisation facilitates the movement of people and goods, it also creates opportunities for traffickers to exploit vulnerable populations.

Nwogwugwu and Iyanda (2016) assert that globalisation has contributed to rising trafficking rates in Nigeria, as economic liberalisation practices have exacerbated poverty and unemployment, driving individuals to seek opportunities abroad, often at the hands of traffickers. This global dimension of trafficking necessitates a coordinated international response to effectively combat the issue. The consequences of human trafficking extend beyond the immediate harm to victims; they also have profound implications for societal development.

Igbinomwanhia (2023) emphasises that trafficking undermines the potential of young people, particularly women, to contribute to their communities and the nation at large, thereby stunting socio-economic growth. The loss of human capital due to trafficking not only affects individuals but also hampers national development efforts, creating a cycle of poverty and exploitation.
In conclusion, the social dimensions of human trafficking in Nigeria are complex and multifaceted, requiring a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between socio-economic factors, cultural beliefs, gender dynamics, and political structures. Addressing this issue necessitates a holistic approach that encompasses prevention, protection, and rehabilitation efforts, as well as a commitment to addressing the root causes of trafficking. By recognising human trafficking as a social problem rather than merely a criminal issue, stakeholders can develop more effective strategies to combat this pervasive violation of human rights.

Review

Human trafficking in Nigeria represents a complex interplay of social, economic, and cultural factors that contribute to its prevalence across various demographics, including children, women, and adults. This review aims to synthesise existing research on the social dimensions of human trafficking in Nigeria, highlighting the specific contexts of child trafficking, women trafficking, adult trafficking, and human organ trafficking.

The socio-economic landscape of Nigeria significantly influences the dynamics of human trafficking. Poverty remains a critical driver, with estimates indicating that a substantial portion of the population lives on less than two dollars a day, creating an environment ripe for exploitation (Nadaswaran, 2013).

Fanu *et al*., (2023) pointed out that the economic disparities between urban and rural areas exacerbate the vulnerability of individuals to trafficking, as many seek better opportunities in cities or abroad, often falling prey to traffickers in the process.

Okeshola and Adenugba, (2018) asserted that the socio-political context, characterised by weak governance and inadequate legal frameworks, further complicates efforts to combat trafficking. In another vein Ikuteyijo (2019) opined that the lack of effective policies and enforcement mechanisms allows traffickers to operate with relative impunity, perpetuating a cycle of exploitation.

Tade, (2014) argued that children are particularly vulnerable to trafficking in Nigeria, often trafficked for labour, sexual exploitation, or even organ harvesting. The recruitment of children into trafficking networks frequently occurs through deceptive practices, where traffickers exploit familial ties or promises of education and employment. The phenomenon of "baby factories," where infants are illegally produced and sold, highlights the extreme forms of child trafficking prevalent in the country (Makinde, 2015). These factories not only exploit the infants but also the young women who are coerced into unwanted pregnancies, further entrenching the cycle of abuse and exploitation (Makinde *et al*., 2016).

Women trafficking is another significant aspect of human trafficking in Nigeria, often linked to broader socio-cultural issues such as patriarchy and gender inequality. Research indicates that women are trafficked primarily for sexual exploitation, with many being subjected to severe violence and abuse (Kiss *et al*., 2022).

Additionally, Baarda (2015) asserted that the role of cultural practices, such as the use of voodoo rituals to manipulate and control victims, underscores the psychological dimensions of trafficking. These rituals often serve to instill fear in victims, making them less likely to escape or report their traffickers (Adeyinka, 2023).

Furthermore, Badejo *et al*., (2021) averred that the intersection of gender and socioeconomic status plays a crucial role in determining the likelihood of women becoming trafficking victims, as those from lower socio-economic backgrounds are disproportionately affected.

Adult trafficking, while less frequently discussed, is equally concerning. Many adults are trafficked for labour exploitation, often under the guise of legitimate employment opportunities (Fanu *et al*., 2023). The global demand for cheap labour, coupled with Nigeria's economic challenges, creates a fertile ground for traffickers to exploit vulnerable adults seeking better livelihoods (Nwogwugwu & Iyanda, 2016). Additionally, the lack of awareness and education about trafficking risks further worsens the problem, as many individuals do not recognise the signs of trafficking or the potential dangers of migration (Idemudia *et al*., 2021).

Human organ trafficking is a particularly heinous aspect of the trafficking landscape in Nigeria, often intertwined with other forms of exploitation. The illegal trade in human organs is driven by both local and international demand, with traffickers exploiting the desperation of individuals in dire economic situations (Lubem, 2021). The lack of stringent regulations and oversight in the healthcare sector facilitates this illicit trade, as traffickers can operate with minimal risk of detection (Okeshola & Adenugba, 2018). The social stigma associated with organ donation and the cultural beliefs surrounding health and illness further complicate efforts to combat organ trafficking (Fanu *et al*., 2023).

The response to human trafficking in Nigeria has evolved over the years, with various stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and faith-based groups, engaging in advocacy and intervention efforts. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) has been instrumental in implementing policies aimed at combating trafficking yet, significant gaps remain, particularly in the areas of victim rehabilitation and reintegration (Ikuteyijo, 2019).

Brunovskis, 2022 asserts that social workers are vital in combating human trafficking due to their community engagement, victim support, and advocacy roles. They often serve as first responders, trained to identify trafficking indicators and provide victims with critical support services, including psychological counselling and legal aid. Additionally, they conduct educational outreach to raise awareness and inform vulnerable populations about trafficking risks, thereby empowering potential victims to make informed decisions (Kiss *et al.*, 2022). Social workers also advocate for stronger anti-trafficking laws and effective enforcement, collaborating with various organisations to influence policy changes that address root causes such as poverty (Bekmagambetov *et al.*, 2024; Lubem, 2021). Their

collaboration with law enforcement and health services fosters a coordinated response to trafficking that meets victims' needs while pursuing perpetrators (Moore *et al.*, 2022).

Faith-based organisations (FBOs) play a significant role in addressing human trafficking through community outreach and support services. They provide immediate assistance to victims, including shelter and counselling, and engage in rehabilitation programmes crucial for survivors' recovery (Prasetyo, 2022).

Furthermore, Oluwakemi, 2024 opined that faith-based organisations FBOs collaborate with governmental and non-governmental organisations to enhance anti-trafficking efforts and mobilise resources for victim assistance. FBOs advocate against trafficking by emphasising the moral imperative to protect human dignity, promoting social justice and ethical practices within their communities (Emogor *et al.*, 2021). Their involvement in restorative justice initiatives encourages community healing and reduces stigma surrounding victims, facilitating reintegration (Kiss *et al.*, 2022).

Despite these efforts, challenges persist in addressing the root causes of trafficking. The socio-economic conditions that foster vulnerability must be tackled through comprehensive strategies that encompass education, poverty alleviation, and community development (Fanu *et al*., 2023). Furthermore, a multi-faceted approach that includes legal reforms, public awareness campaigns, and victim support services is essential for creating a sustainable impact (Badejo *et al*., 2021).

In conclusion, the social dimensions of human trafficking in Nigeria are deeply rooted in the country's socio-economic and cultural fabric. Addressing this complex issue requires a holistic understanding of the various factors at play, as well as a concerted effort from all sectors of society. Continued research and advocacy are crucial in developing effective strategies to combat trafficking and support victims in recovery and reintegration into society.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two major theories to explicate the social dimensions of human trafficking in Nigeria. Push and Pull Theory and Structural Functionalist Theory.

Push and Pull Theory

The push and pull theory provide a framework for understanding the complex social dimensions of human trafficking in Nigeria. This theory posits that individuals migrate due to a combination of "push" factors that drive them away from their home environments and "pull" factors that attract them to new locations. In the context of Nigeria, push factors include pervasive poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, political instability, and limited educational opportunities, which create an environment where individuals feel compelled to seek better prospects elsewhere (Amadasun, 2020; Okeshola & Adenugba, 2018; Fanu *et al*., 2023). Victims often originate from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, particularly in rural or suburban areas, where such push factors are pronounced (Uduji *et al*., 2019).

On the other hand, pull factors are equally significant and often include the perception of better economic opportunities, the allure of urban life, and the promise of employment abroad. These factors can be misleading, as they are frequently propagated by traffickers who exploit the vulnerabilities of potential victims (Lubem, 2021; Okeshola & Adenugba, 2018). The interplay between this push and pull factors is critical in understanding why individuals, particularly women and children, fall prey to trafficking networks. For example, Lubem highlights that the economic benefits touted by traffickers can overshadow the risks involved, leading many to underestimate the dangers of their migration choices (Lubem, 2021).

Moreover, the socio-political landscape in Nigeria exacerbates these dynamics. Globalisation has been identified as a double-edged sword; while it offers potential economic growth, it also contributes to rising unemployment and poverty, which in turn fuels human trafficking (Nwogwugwu & Iyanda, 2016). The lack of effective legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms further complicates the situation, as traffickers often operate with impunity, exploiting the weaknesses in the system (Okeshola & Adenugba, 2018; MIKA'IL and Muhammad, 2020). This systemic failure not only perpetuates the cycle of trafficking but also hinders efforts aimed at rehabilitation and reintegration of victims (Ikuteyijo, 2019). Cultural factors also play a significant role in the social dimensions of human trafficking in Nigeria. The use of traditional rituals, such as juju, has been documented as a means of coercion employed by traffickers to control victims (Adeyinka, 2023; Baarda, 2015). These rituals can create a psychological bond that makes it difficult for victims to escape their circumstances, further entrenching them in exploitative situations.

Additionally, the stigma associated with trafficking can hinder victims' reintegration into society, as they may face discrimination and social ostracism upon their return (Badejo *et al*., 2019).

In conclusion, the push and pull theory, when applied to the context of human trafficking in Nigeria, reveals a multifaceted issue rooted in socio-economic, cultural, and political dimensions. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that not only targets the symptoms of trafficking but also tackles the underlying causes, including poverty alleviation, educational opportunities, and legal reforms. Overall, push and pull theory could only explore the fascinating aesthetics and economic attractions at host destination points of the migrants which reveals its limitation to the understanding of this study, it is important to further explore additional theory to explicate the social dimension of human trafficking in Nigeria.

Structural Functional Theory

Structural Functional Theory (SFT) provides a framework for understanding human trafficking in Nigeria by examining the interplay between social structures and the dysfunctions that arise within them. This theory posits that society is a complex system whose parts work together to promote stability and social order. However, when certain structures fail or become dysfunctional, it can lead to significant social issues, such as human trafficking.

In Nigeria, the structural dysfunction contributing to human trafficking can be traced to various socio-economic factors, including poverty, unemployment, and lack of education. These elements create an environment where individuals, particularly women and children, become vulnerable to exploitation. Lubem (2021) highlights that economic hardship, and weak legal systems exacerbate the trafficking crisis, making it a modern form of slavery that thrives on the vulnerabilities of the population. Similarly, Okeshola and Adenugba (2018) note that globalisation and economic recession have intensified these vulnerabilities, increasing trafficking activities. The interplay of these factors illustrates how structural dysfunctions can facilitate the emergence of human trafficking as a social problem.

Moreover, the social dimensions of human trafficking in Nigeria are deeply intertwined with cultural practices and societal norms. Blažek and Smith (2018) argue that the geographies of inequality and the normative

understandings of mobility play a crucial role in shaping the experiences of trafficking victims. The cultural practice of fostering children, often viewed as a benign tradition, can sometimes mask exploitative practices that lead to trafficking (Tade, 2014). This cultural context, combined with economic pressures, creates a fertile ground for traffickers to operate, demonstrating how societal norms can contribute to the perpetuation of trafficking.

The response to human trafficking in Nigeria also reflects the structural dysfunctions present in society. At the same time, there are laws in place, such as the domestication of the Palermo Protocol of the United Nations that came into force in December 2000 as part of the United Nations' Crime Convention, but the enforcement and implementation of these laws remain weak (Ikuteyijo, 2019). This inadequacy is compounded by a lack of comprehensive support systems for survivors, as highlighted by Choi *et al.*, who emphasis the need for coordinated responses that address the diverse needs of trafficking survivors (Choi *et al*., 2020). The failure to provide adequate rehabilitation and reintegration services further perpetuates the cycle of trafficking, as victims often find themselves in similarly vulnerable situations post-trafficking (Kiss *et al*., 2022).

Conclusively, the structural-functional theory elucidates the complex interplay between societal structures and the dysfunctions that contribute to human trafficking in Nigeria. By examining the socio-economic factors, cultural practices, and systemic inadequacies, it becomes evident that addressing human trafficking requires a multifaceted approach that not only targets the symptoms but also the underlying structural issues. This perspective underscores the importance of holistic interventions that consider the broader social dimensions of human trafficking.

Conceptual Framework

1. *Socio-Economic Context:*

At the highest level, the diagram situates Nigeria's socio-economic context as the backdrop against which factors precipitating human trafficking operate. Chronic issues such as poverty, unemployment, and inadequate education create an environment where individuals face continual hardship.

2. *Push Factors (Rooted in Push and Pull Theory):*

These include adverse conditions that force individuals to leave their communities. In Nigeria, these factors are encapsulated within issues of

poverty, socioeconomic instability, lack of employment opportunities, and poor educational infrastructure has identified these factors as significant motivators for migration, with individuals seeking to escape unfavorable domestic circumstances (Amadasun, 2020; Olaniyan & Kehinde, 2024).

3. Pull Factors (Also from Push and Pull Theory):

On the other hand, pull factors represent the allure of potential opportunities outside one's immediate context. These entail promises of better living conditions, employment opportunities abroad, and intentional messaging through media and social networks that downplay risks. Familial and social pressures further reinforce these attractions, especially among women and youth.

4. Individual Decision and Vulnerability:

The convergence of push and pull factors often culminates in a critical decision point whether to migrate or become involved in exploitative networks. This decision-making process is influenced by the hope of an improved future while being unaware of or unable to mitigate the risks involved. The combined force of these factors creates a heightened vulnerability wherein individuals become prime targets for traffickers.

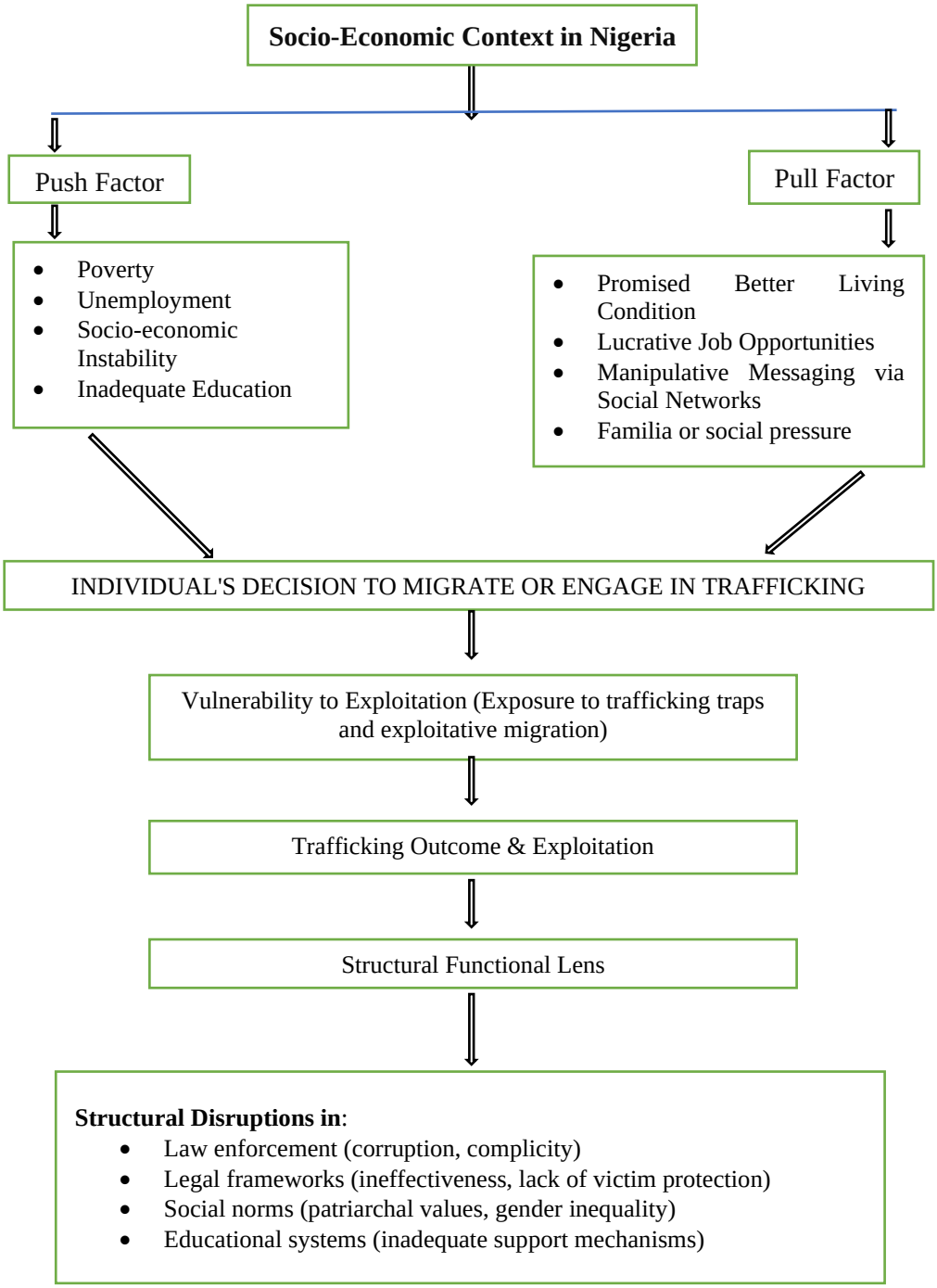

Figure 1. Socio-Economic Context in Nigeria

5. Structural Dimensions (Framed through Structural Functional Theory):

The lower portion of the diagram integrates Structural Functional Theory by highlighting how national institutions and social structures, which are supposed to safeguard citizens, might instead inadvertently facilitate trafficking. Failures in the law enforcement apparatus, weakened legal frameworks, pervasive corruption, patriarchal societal norms, gender inequalities, and inadequacies in educational and social support systems contribute to an environment that allows trafficking to persist (Bello & Olutola, 2021; Zengenene, 2020).

6. Trafficking Outcome and Exploitation:

The interplay between the micro-level (individual vulnerabilities driven by the push and pull factors) and macro-level (institutional and societal deficits) factors ultimately lead to the trafficking outcome. Traffickers exploit both the motivations and the structural weaknesses, resulting in a cycle that perpetuates human trafficking.

This diagram visually encapsulates the complex interaction between individual drivers (push and pull factors) and the broader structural environment (as elucidated by Structural Functional Theory) that together contribute to the problem of human trafficking in Nigeria. Addressing trafficking requires interventions that target both the socio-economic vulnerabilities at the individual level and the structural deficiencies that fail to safeguard at the societal level.

Methodology

The study employed a multifaceted approach which include qualitative and quantitative methods to collecting and analysing data, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay of socio-economic, cultural, and political dimensions influencing this pervasive issue. The methodology adopted is outlined below.

Survey: The primary data collection method involved structured surveys distributed among displaced individuals and at-risk populations across key regions in Nigeria, particularly in Edo State, which has been identified as a hotspot for trafficking. Approximately 200 respondents participated in the surveys, which included closed-ended questions designed to quantify

variables such as age of entry into trafficking, motivations for migration, and awareness of trafficking risks.

Secondary Data: The study also incorporated an extensive review of secondary data sources, including reports published by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), governmental and non-governmental organisation publications, and existing academic literature.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Focus group discussions (FGDs) with community members and stakeholders were conducted to explore collective perceptions and cultural factors surrounding human trafficking. These discussions facilitated a deeper understanding of how cultural beliefs such as the use of juju rituals affect victim vulnerability and resilience, as well as community attitudes towards trafficking and victims' rights.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the stakeholders was analysed through thematic analysis, statistical analysis, comparative analysis and findings from both qualitative and quantitative analyses were integrated to form a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

Thematic Analysis: Qualitative data collected from interviews and focus groups were analysed using thematic analysis, which involved coding the data to identify recurring themes and patterns. This process included several stages: familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, and defining and naming themes. Key themes that emerged included socio-economic vulnerability, gender dynamics, cultural beliefs, and systemic inadequacies.

Statistical Analysis: Quantitative data from surveys were analysed using descriptive statistics to summarise demographic characteristics and key findings related to trafficking entry ages and motivations. Statistical software such as SPSS was employed to perform cross-tabulation analyses, revealing correlations between socio-economic factors and trafficking experiences. For example, the analysis indicated that 84% of Nigerian participants entered trafficking between the ages of 18 and 23, highlighting the differences in age profiles when compared to Ugandan participants.

Comparative Analysis: Comparative analyses were conducted between the data sets of Nigerian and Ugandan participants, particularly focusing on entry ages and the prevalence of early trafficking experiences. This helped identify significant trends and disparities, offering insights into age-driven vulnerabilities that could inform targeted interventions.

Integration of Findings: The findings from both qualitative and quantitative analyses were integrated to form a comprehensive understanding of the issue. This integrative approach facilitated the identification of key interconnections among socio-economic, cultural, and political factors aggravating human trafficking in Nigeria.

Findings

The findings of this study reveal that human trafficking in Nigeria is a multifaceted issue deeply rooted in socio-economic, cultural, and political dimensions. The socioeconomic analysis indicates that pervasive poverty and unemployment serve as significant push factors, compelling vulnerable populations, particularly women and children, to seek better opportunities, often at the hands of traffickers (Fanu *et al*., 2023; Ikuteyijo, 2019). The intersection of socioeconomic status and gender exacerbates the vulnerability of women, who are disproportionately affected by trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Fanu *et al.* (2023) present a sobering examination of the mortality associated with migration, particularly in the context of attempts to cross the Mediterranean Sea and traverse the arid terrains from sub-Saharan Africa to Libya. Their findings highlight the staggering number of migrants, comprised of men, women, and children, who have tragically lost their lives during these perilous journeys. Alarmingly, the scope of this crisis is frequently obscured by the reality that many of these deaths go unreported, resulting in a significant number of deceased individuals whose identities remain unknown. Additionally, there is a substantial lack of information regarding the individuals who perish while undertaking the dangerous overland migration from sub-Saharan Africa towards Libya from Nigeria. Considering this deficit, existing data underscores that a majority of those who have lost their lives in these migration attempts originate from Africa and the Middle East. Statistical analyses reveal that 27% of deceased migrants come from sub-Saharan Africa, 19% are from the Middle East and North Africa, and 13% are from the Horn of Africa.

Comparatively, Kiss *et al.* 2022 revealed in their study that trafficking entry age profiles analyses of the IOM routine dataset indicate significant differences in the age at which trafficking experiences began among Nigerian and Ugandan participants. In the Nigerian sample, which comprised 87 girls and young women with complete data, 84% reported that they entered trafficking between the ages of 18 and 23 years. In contrast, data available for 76 Ugandan adolescents revealed that nearly 50% entered trafficking as young children (aged 0 to 13 years). More specifically, among Ugandan respondents, the distribution of trafficking entry ages was as follows: 33% entered between 0 and 8 years; 13% between 9 and 11 years; 14% between 12 and 14 years; 3% between 15 and 17 years; 3% between 18 and 20 years; and 13% between 21 and 23 years.

Cultural factors, particularly the use of traditional rituals such as juju, emerge as critical mechanisms of control employed by traffickers (Adeyinka, 2023). These rituals create psychological barriers that hinder victims' escape, illustrating the complex interplay between cultural beliefs and trafficking dynamics. Additionally, family involvement in trafficking, often stemming from misguided perceptions of financial gain, complicates the issue further (Adeyinka *et al*., 2023). Though there is still a gap in the cultural perspective as at now.

From a political perspective, the study highlights systemic inadequacies, including weak legal frameworks and corruption, which facilitate trafficking operations (Ikuteyijo, 2019; Lubem, 2021). The lack of effective enforcement of existing laws undermines efforts to combat trafficking, perpetuating a culture of impunity. A 2017 report by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) documented that Italy received a total of 119,000 trafficked persons within a single year. Of these, 18,185 individuals were of Nigerian origin, with female trafficking victims comprising 5,425 of that total. Additionally, evidence indicates that approximately 94% of these trafficked persons originated from Edo State. These findings are corroborated by previous studies (Edegbe and Imafidon, 2021; Noah, 2021), which highlight the disproportionate impact of trafficking on specific Nigerian regions.

Discussion

The issue of human trafficking in Nigeria presents a complex tapestry interwoven with socio-economic, cultural, and political threads that exacerbate one of the world's most conspicuous human rights violations. As

noted by Fanu *et al.* (2023), trafficking in Nigeria is not merely a criminal phenomenon; it embodies a broader reflection of systemic socio-political deficiencies and economic inequities that propel individuals particularly women and children into exploitative circumstances. This multifactorial crisis is exacerbated by dire economic conditions, wherein a significant proportion of the population experiences abject poverty, compelling vulnerable individuals to seek precarious opportunities that traffickers readily exploit (Okeshola & Adenugba, 2018).

The socio-economic landscape in Nigeria is characterised by pronounced disparities that function as push factors driving migration. Okeshola and Adenugba (2018) identify that the lure of better employment prospects and educational opportunities abroad becomes a deceptive promise for many, who ultimately fall prey to traffickers. Adeyinka (2023) emphasises that traditional cultural practices, including coercive rituals like 'juju,' complicate the trafficking dynamic, creating psychological barriers that ensnare victims in a web of manipulation and control. The patriarchal structure prevalent in Nigerian society intensifies the vulnerability of women and girls, who are often commodified and viewed through a lens of economic exchange (Ukachi & Attoh, 2020).

Moreover, family involvement in trafficking networks represents a critical but distressing dimension that further complicates the issue. Adeyinka *et al.* (2023) illustrate that within some communities, trafficking is normalised under the guise of financial responsibility and familial duty, where the promise of economic stability is deemed worth the risk of exploitation. This normalisation reflects and perpetuates a troubling cycle: familial endorsement of trafficking practices embeds them deeper within cultural frameworks, hindering effective intervention measures.

The nexus between globalisation and trafficking in Nigeria also merits examination, as outlined by Nwogwugwu and Iyanda (2016). The push for economic liberalisation has unwittingly elevated the vulnerability of populations, creating fertile ground for human traffickers to thrive (Ikuteyijo, 2019). Legal frameworks, while present, often lack the rigor in enforcement necessary to deter traffickers effectively, creating environments of impunity that exacerbate the issue (Lubem, 2021).

In summary, the multidimensional nature of human trafficking in Nigeria requires a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the socio-economic and cultural fabric that underpins this pressing issue. Only through

addressing the intertwined layers of systemic inequalities, traditional beliefs, and global economic pressures can stakeholders hope to develop effective interventions. This multidimensional approach not only recognises the depth of the crisis but also highlights the imperative for transformative solutions that prioritise both prevention and rehabilitative measures for victims.

Conclusion

In conclusion, human trafficking in Nigeria is a complex phenomenon intricately linked to socio-economic disparities, cultural practices, and political inadequacies. The findings of this study underscore that poverty, unemployment, and gender inequality significantly contribute to the vulnerability of individuals, particularly women and children, to trafficking networks. Cultural factors, such as the manipulation of traditional beliefs and family involvement, further complicate the issue, while systemic weaknesses in legal frameworks and enforcement perpetuate a culture of impunity.

Recommendations

To effectively combat human trafficking in Nigeria, a multi-faceted approach is essential.

1. Poverty Alleviation Programmes: Implement targeted economic initiatives to reduce poverty and enhance employment opportunities, particularly in rural areas.
2. Educational Opportunities: Expand access to education and vocational training, especially for women and girls, to empower them and reduce their susceptibility to trafficking.
3. Cultural Awareness Campaigns: Develop community-based programmes that address harmful cultural practices and promote awareness about the realities of trafficking.
4. Strengthening Legal Frameworks: Enhance the enforcement of existing laws against trafficking and corruption, ensuring accountability for traffickers and protection for victims.
5. Victim Rehabilitation: Establish comprehensive support systems for the rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficking survivors, including psychological support and vocational training.

By addressing the root causes and implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can create a more robust framework for combating human trafficking in Nigeria, ultimately fostering a safer and more equitable society.

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PART SIX: HEALTH

Chapter 18

Islands of Care in a Sea of Exclusion: Sexual and Reproductive Health Access for Internally Displaced Females in Abuja, Nigeria

by

Uguru Wisdom Ibor & Duke Ibietin

Abstract

This study employs the Structural Violence Theory (SVT) to examine the dynamics of Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) access for Internally Displaced Females (IDFs) residing in Abuja, Nigeria. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews in two purposively selected Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in Abuja, to uncover how these structural forces manifest in everyday experiences of care. The findings reveal a substantial educational disadvantage, only 45.0% with primary or secondary education. A majority (70%) have at least heard of Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), while 30.0% lack full knowledge of their specific rights or where to seek redress for violations. The qualitative data reveal a profound lack of access to proper healthcare services within the IDP camps in Abuja. Findings reveal that despite isolated initiatives - termed "islands of care", offered by humanitarian actors and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), the broader "sea of exclusion" perpetuated by institutional and socioeconomic factors undermine sustainable SRH access. The study argues that ensuring equitable SRH access for IDFs demands a rights-based, gender-sensitive framework that addresses both immediate health needs and the broader socio-political conditions of displacement. The study contributes to the literature on gendered health inequities among displaced populations and calls for holistic, rights-based policy interventions that address the structural determinants of SRH exclusion for IDFs in Nigeria.

Keywords: Displacement, Exclusion, Rights-Based Framework, Sexual and Reproductive Health, Structural Violence

Introduction

Globally, the plight of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) remains a pressing humanitarian concern, with over 71.1 million people forcibly displaced within their own countries due to conflict, violence, human rights violations, and disasters (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2024). Among these populations, women and girls represent a particularly vulnerable subgroup, facing compounded risks related to their gender, displacement status, and socio-economic marginalisation (United Nations Population Fund, 2023). Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) is one of the most critical yet neglected dimensions of humanitarian response for displaced females, whose access to essential services is often severely disrupted during crises (Inter-Agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crises, 2018).

Despite global frameworks such as the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for reproductive health in emergencies and commitments made under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), significant gaps persist in translating these standards into effective, context-specific interventions (UNFPA, 2023; World Health Organisation, 2021). In many regions, SRH services for IDPs remain fragmented, underfunded, and poorly integrated into broader health systems, creating "islands of care" within a "sea of exclusion" where most displaced women remain underserved (Krause, 2015).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, where protracted conflicts and climate-induced displacements continue to swell IDP populations, the Nigerian context stands out as particularly urgent. Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, has experienced multiple waves of internal displacement driven by the Boko Haram insurgency, communal violence, and environmental degradation (IDMC, 2024). SRH often becomes one of the most neglected aspects of humanitarian response, despite its centrality to the dignity, wellbeing, and survival of affected populations (Singh *et al.*, 2018). Although Nigeria has made policy commitments to universal health coverage and reproductive rights (Federal Ministry of Health, 2017), these frameworks often fall short of addressing the unique vulnerabilities faced by displaced populations (Olanrewaju *et al.*, 2020).

The Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, serves as both a destination and a transit point for IDPs, particularly females seeking refuge from northern conflict zones (Okeke-Ihejirika *et al.*, 2022). Thus, thousands of internally displaced females have resettled, often in informal settlements or host communities where access to basic health services, particularly SRH services, remains fragmented and inequitable (Okeke-Ihejirika & Salami, 2021). The paradox of "islands of care in a sea of exclusion" aptly captures this uneven landscape, where limited pockets of SRH support exist amidst widespread gaps in service delivery. Despite the visibility of IDP settlements within the city, displaced women face profound barriers to accessing SRH services, including legal invisibility, financial constraints, cultural stigmas, and discriminatory health system practices (Onyinyechi *et al.*, 2020).

For IDFs in Abuja, access to services such as antenatal care, family planning, management of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and protection from gender-based violence (GBV) is often sporadic, donor-dependent, and poorly integrated into the public health system (Abiodun *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, socio-cultural stigma, fear of discrimination, and lack of information further exacerbate barriers to SRH care among this population (Nnamuchi, 2021). Understanding these challenges is critical, as unmet SRH needs contribute to adverse health outcomes, including unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, maternal mortality, and psychosocial trauma (Tanabe *et al.*, 2021). Yet, scholarly attention to SRH access for IDFs in urban displacement settings in Nigeria remains limited.

This study, therefore, examines the landscape of SRH access for internally displaced females in Abuja, with an emphasis on the patterns of inclusion and exclusion that define their lived realities. By illuminating the disparities and identifying pockets of effective service delivery, this study aims to contribute to policy and practice that promote more equitable, rights-based approaches to SRH for displaced women in Nigeria and similar contexts.

Statement of Problem

The benefits of providing comprehensive SRH services within IDP camps in Abuja are both immediate and far-reaching, impacting individual well-being, community stability, and broader public health outcomes. However, SRH challenges are among the most pressing human rights and public health concerns for internally displaced females (IDFs) residing in camps across Abuja, Nigeria. Displacement driven by conflict, primarily the Boko Haram

insurgency and communal violence in the North-East and Middle Belt regions, has resulted in thousands of vulnerable women and girls seeking refuge in Abuja's informal and formal IDP camps (International Organisation for Migration, 2022). In these precarious environments, IDFs face systematic abuses, violations, and barriers to accessing essential SRH services, posing significant risks to their health, dignity, and well-being.

One of the most critical SRH violations reported in Abuja camps is the widespread occurrence of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). For instance, a study in the Kuchigoro and New Kuchingoro IDP camps highlights frequent reports of rape, transactional sex, and sexual exploitation by camp officials, security personnel, and other residents (Olanrewaju *et al.*, 2019). Many women engage in "survival sex", exchanging sexual favours for food, security, or shelter—due to acute deprivation and lack of livelihood options (Ezeh *et al.*, 2020). The absence of effective protective mechanisms further exposes them to cycles of abuse and stigma.

Moreover, IDFs encounter formidable challenges in accessing contraceptive services and family planning, contributing to unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions (Okeke-Ihejirika & Salami, 2018). Facilities within the Abuja IDP camps are often ill-equipped or non-existent. Where basic health posts exist, such as those supported by NGOs in Durumi and Wassa camps, they remain grossly under-resourced, with erratic contraceptive supplies and insufficient trained personnel (United Nations Population Fund, 2023). Cultural taboos, limited health literacy, and fears of stigma further deter many women from seeking family planning services. Maternal health is also severely compromised. Pregnant IDFs are frequently unable to access skilled birth attendants, antenatal care, or emergency obstetric services, resulting in elevated risks of maternal morbidity and mortality (Adewuyi *et al.*, 2021). Women in camps such as Area One and Kuje often resort to traditional birth attendants or deliver in unhygienic conditions, exacerbating the incidence of infections and birth complications.

Compounding these issues are limited services for the treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. A study by Olanrewaju *et al.* (2019) revealed that many women in Abuja IDP camps had limited knowledge of STI prevention, while available testing and treatment options were sporadic and largely dependent on irregular outreach programmes by NGOs and faith-based organisations. Critically, these SRH abuses and challenges are entrenched within a wider context of structural exclusion and

neglect. Government support for IDFs in Abuja is minimal, and the camps - many of which are unofficial settlements, fall outside of mainstream health planning and service provision frameworks (International Rescue Committee, 2022). This marginalisation perpetuates their vulnerability, rendering SRH services as sporadic "islands of care" in a "sea of exclusion." Without urgent interventions, the cycle of SRH violations and poor outcomes among displaced females in Abuja is likely to persist, undermining their human rights and the broader goals of public health equity.

Existing studies on healthcare in Humanitarian settings have looked at general healthcare provision. However, relatively few studies have explored the landscape of SRH access for internally displaced females in Abuja, with an emphasis on the patterns of access and exclusion that define their lived realities. Therefore, this study critically examines the sexual and reproductive health access for internally displaced females in Abuja, Nigeria, exploring the barriers, facilitators, and everyday realities that shape their engagement with health services. By addressing the problem of access to SRH, the study aims to contribute to more inclusive and effective SRH interventions, informed by the perspectives and needs of displaced women themselves.

Theoretical Framework

Structural Violence Theory

Structural violence theory provides a suitable theoretical framework for understanding the deep-seated and often invisible barriers that undermine SRH-access for IDFs in Abuja, Nigeria. The concept, originally articulated by Johan Galtung (1969), refers to systematic ways in which social structures or institutions harm individuals by preventing them from meeting their basic needs. Unlike direct or personal violence, structural violence is embedded in the very fabric of society, manifesting through inequality, poverty, discrimination, and social exclusion (Farmer, 2004).

In the context of IDFs in Abuja, structural violence manifests in multiple, intersecting ways that severely constrain their access to SRH services. Firstly, displacement itself is a product of structural forces such as armed conflict, poor governance, and systemic neglect of certain populations (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2023). Once displaced, these women find themselves marginalised by policies and urban infrastructures that fail to accommodate their unique needs (Omokhoa & Okeke, 2020). Many IDP camps and informal settlements lack functional healthcare facilities, and

where such services do exist, they are often under-resourced, inaccessible due to cost, distance, or discriminatory practices (Women's Refugee Commission, 2019).

Additionally, structural gender inequalities exacerbate this exclusion. Patriarchal norms and cultural taboos surrounding sexuality and reproductive health diminish IDFs' autonomy and agency, making it difficult for them to seek or demand care (Harrington *et al.*, 2021). Legal and policy frameworks in Nigeria further entrench these inequities, often failing to prioritise the health rights of displaced persons or to implement protections against gender-based violence (Amnesty International, 2018). This results in what Paul Farmer (2004) terms "pathologies of power," where marginalised women's bodies bear the burden of structural inequities - evidenced in high rates of maternal mortality, untreated sexually transmitted infections, and unmet family planning needs.

Moreover, bureaucratic barriers such as lack of legal identity documents, unclear residency status, and limited integration into urban planning compound the invisibility of IDFs in public health strategies (UNHCR, 2022). This bureaucratic exclusion reinforces the metaphor of "islands of care in a sea of exclusion," where a few NGOs or humanitarian actors may offer temporary services, but the broader system remains indifferent or actively hostile to their SRH needs (Adeyanju *et al.*, 2022).

Thus, using structural violence theory illuminates how the denial of SRH access to IDFs in Abuja is not merely a consequence of individual failures or isolated incidents of neglect, but a predictable outcome of entrenched social hierarchies, political marginalisation, and institutionalised inequality. The theory provides direction for a critical interrogation of the structural determinants of health and compels policy responses that go beyond service provision to address the underlying social injustices shaping these women's lives.

Methodology

Study Area

The study was conducted in IDP camps in Abuja, Nigeria. Abuja is the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria. It lies between latitude 6^0 47' and 9^0 25' north of the Equator and longitude 60 47' and 70 40' east of the Greenwich meridian. It is in the north central part of Nigeria with about 7,315 square

kilometre land area (Figure 3.1). Abuja shares borders with Niger State to the west and northwest, Kaduna State to the northeast, Nassarawa State to the east and south, and Kogi State to the southwest.

Abuja is centrally located, easily accessible, has good climate and low population density and has large expanse of land for expansion (Bachir *et al.*, 2021).This central location, coupled with its political significance and relative security compared to conflict-prone areas such as the North-East, has made it a key destination for IDPs fleeing violence, particularly from Boko Haram insurgency and communal conflicts in states like Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, and Benue (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2023).

Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory, hosts a significant number of IDPs, many of whom have been displaced by ongoing conflicts and insurgencies in northern Nigeria (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2023). The geographical centrality of Abuja thus positions it as both a refuge and a challenge for IDPs. While its location allows for the convergence of displaced populations from various parts of Nigeria, it also strains the city's urban infrastructure, including healthcare highlighting the gaps in coordinated displacement management.

IDP camps in Abuja are typically informal settlements located on the outskirts of the city, such as Durumi, Lugbe, Area One, and New Kuchingoro. These camps often lack formal government recognition and are characterised by inadequate infrastructure, poor sanitation, and limited access to healthcare, education, and other essential services (IOM, 2021). Their proximity to the capital offers some advantages, such as access to humanitarian organisations and potential employment opportunities; however, overcrowding and marginalisation remain persistent issues.

The purposive sampling approach was used to select two official camps - Kuchingoro camp and Durumi Camp, where displaced females are known to reside. This selection ensures the diversity of experiences and conditions that influence access to SRH–services (Ajayi *et al.*, 2021).Using Cochran's formula for sample size determination in social research (Cochran, 1977), with a 95% confidence level, 5% margin of error, and assuming a 50% prevalence rate for SRH service utilisation (given lack of specific baseline data), the estimated sample size was approximately 384 participants. To account for possible non-responses or incomplete questionnaires, a 10% buffer was added, bringing the total sample size to roughly 422 respondents.

The stratified random sampling procedure was employed for questionnaire survey. Each selected camp or settlement serves as a stratum. Within each stratum, members of households were systematically selected – one in every 3rd household, and one eligible female per household wasinterviewed. In a household where there is no eligible female, the next household, was interviewed. This method ensures equitable representation across different camps and living conditions (Bryman, 2016).

Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire developed based on validated tools from previous SRH studies among displaced populations (Women's Refugee Commission, 2019). The questionnaire was pre-tested in a non-selected IDP camp to ensure clarity and cultural appropriateness. The instrument covered aspects such as demographic characteristics, knowledge of SRH services and rights, access and utilisation patterns, barriers to service use, and reproductive health outcomes. Trained female enumerators including the women leaders of the camps fluent in local languages and familiar with the cultural context administered the questionnaires through face-to-face interviews to mitigate literacy barriers and encourage open responses (Patton, 2015). Interviews were conducted in private spaces within the camps to ensure confidentiality and comfort for participants. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to participation.

The respondents comprise of internally displaced females aged 15–49 years, which aligns with the reproductive age range recognised in public health research (WHO, 2022). The inclusion criteria were current residence in the selected IDP camp for at least three months, consent to participate, and cognitive ability to answer survey questions. Exclusion criteria include females outside the target age range, and individuals unable or unwilling to provide informed consent. Efforts were made to ensure the inclusion of adolescents, young adults, and older reproductive-age women to capture a broad range of SRH experiences within the displaced female population (Ajayi *et al.*, 2021). At the end of the questionnaire survey, only 400 copies of questionnaire were returned and used for analyses.

Results and Discussions

Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics of Internally Displaced Females

Most of the respondents (35%) are between 25 and 34 years old, followed by those aged 18–24 (23%) and 35–44 (22%). A smaller proportion are 45 and above (13%), and only 7%are under 18. This age distribution suggests that most internally displaced women are in their prime reproductive and economic activity years (18-44), with over 80% of respondents falling into this broad range. The relatively low percentage of respondents under 18 could be due to ethical considerations that limit the inclusion of minors in surveys or their lower visibility in displacement camps as independent decision-makers. This age pattern aligns with findings from various displacement and humanitarian reports. For example, UNHCR (2022) reports that the majority of displaced adult populations globally fall between 18 and 44 years, as these groups are more likely to flee conflict zones independently or with young families, while the study by Owoaje *et al.* (2016) on internally displaced persons in Southwest found that women aged 25-34 years represented the largest demographic group, accounting for over 30% of the sample, which is consistent with our findings.

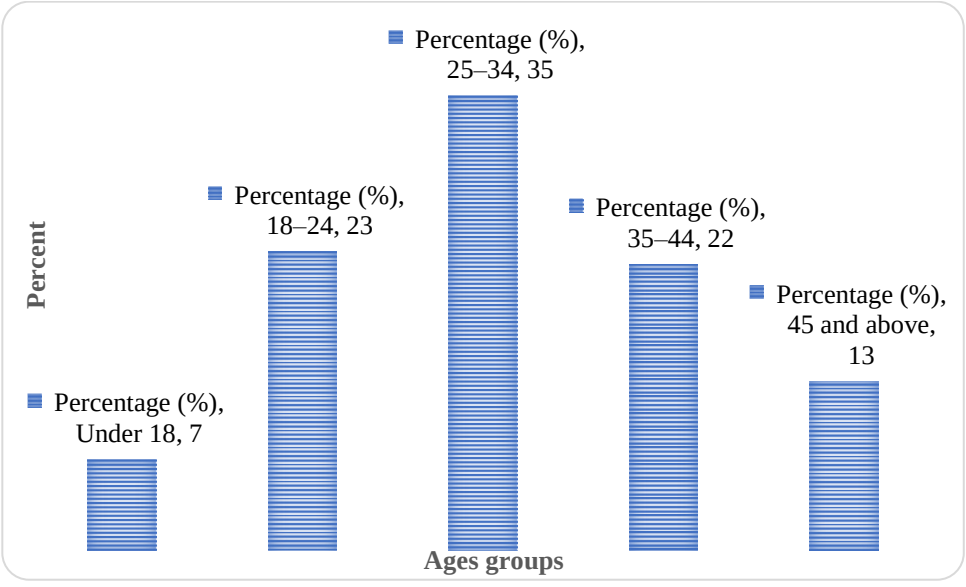

Figure 1: Age Distribution of Internally Displaced Women

Figure 1 shows that the largest proportion of respondents who reported having no formal education was 30.0%, highlighting a significant educational disadvantage among internally displaced females. Primary education (25.0%) and secondary education (20.0%) together account for nearly half the sample (45.0%), indicating that while some access to basic education exists, progression beyond early education is limited. Tertiary education (10.0%) is markedly low, showing limited access to higher education opportunities. While 15.0% informal or religious education suggests that non-formal learning remains an alternative route, possibly due to cultural or accessibility barriers to formal schooling. The findings align with several previous studies on limited access to education among internally displaced women, especially in conflict or disaster-affected regions. Studies such as those by IDMC (2020) and UNHCR (2019) consistently report that displacement disproportionately affects women's access to education. Like findings in Nigeria (Okeke-Ihejirika & Salami, 2018) and Somalia (Mohamed *et al.*, 2020), these data reflect persistently high illiteracy rates among internally displaced women, where 30–50% of women in IDP camps have little or no formal education. Cultural barriers, safety concerns, and household responsibilities often limit schooling.

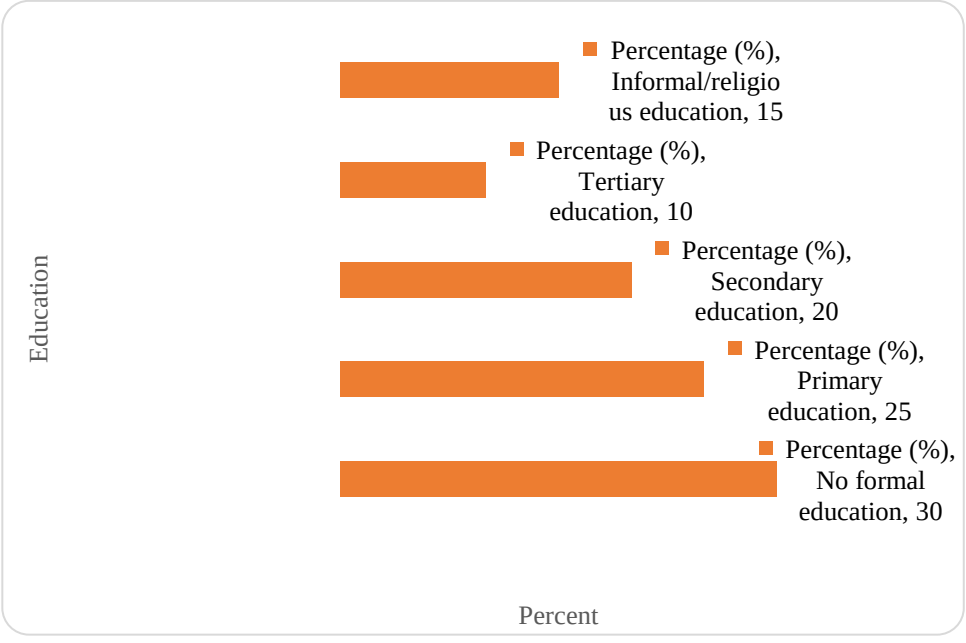

Figure 2: Highest Level of Education Among Internally Displaced Women
Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025

Most respondents (75%) earn ₦20,000 or less per month, which is significantly below Nigeria's current minimum wage of ₦30,000 (Figure 2). This reveals a high level of economic vulnerability among internally displaced women. Only 10% of respondents report earning more than ₦30,000 monthly, suggesting limited access to sustainable income-generating opportunities. These income levels reflect high dependency ratios, potential food insecurity, inadequate access to health and education services, and limited participation in economic development activities. The results are consistent with earlier studies on IDPs as reported by Adewale (2020), who found that over 70% of IDFs in Borno State earned below ₦15,000 monthly, attributing this to poor access to employment and vocational training.

Table 1: Average Monthly Income of Internally Displaced Women (N = 400)

Estimated monthly Income	**Frequency (n)**	**Percentage (%)**
a) Below ₦10,000	180	45.0
b) ₦11,000–₦20,000	120	30.0
c) ₦21,000–₦30,000	60	15.0
d) Above ₦30,000	40	10.0
Total	400	100.0

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025

Level of Awareness of Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights among IDP Women

From the survey data in Table 2, 70% of the IDFs reported having heard of sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), while 30% indicated they had not. This result suggests a relatively high level of awareness of SRHR among the IDP women population sampled, which is encouraging given the vulnerabilities faced by displaced populations. However, the 30% who reported no awareness points to a significant gap that needs to be addressed through targeted education and outreach programmes. The finding of 70%

awareness aligns with some previous studies in similar contexts. For instance, a study by Smith *et al.* (2021) in a conflict-affected region reported about 65.0% awareness among displaced women, emphasising the role of local NGOs in awareness-raising. Conversely, Khan and colleagues (2019) found only 40% awareness in rural IDP camps, highlighting regional disparities and limited access to health education.

Table 2: Ever heard of sexual and reproductive health rights

Ever heard of sexual and reproductive health rights	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	280	70.0
No	120	30.0
Total	400	100

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025

A significant proportion of respondents (37.0%) indicated awareness of all listed sexual and reproductive health rights, suggesting a broad understanding among more than one-third of the sample (majority awareness). However, partial awareness was 48%, indicting that a combined 48% of respondents selected only one specific right, 18.5% were aware only of their right to be free from sexual violence, 16.5% recognised only their right to maternal healthcare, 13% acknowledged only the right to access contraception and family planning. 15% of respondents stated they were unaware of any of the listed rights, reflecting persistent gaps in education and access to information among IDP women.

Table 3: Awareness of Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights among IDP Women

Awareness of Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights	**Frequency (n)**	**Percentage (%)**
Right to access contraception and family planning	52	13.0
Right to be free from sexual violence	74	18.5
Right to maternal healthcare services	66	16.5
All of the above	148	37.0
None of the above	60	15.0
Total	400	100

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025

In Table 4, most respondents (35%) first learned about their sexual and reproductive health rights through community sensitisation programmes, followed by healthcare providers in IDP camps (27.5%). Media sources such as radio accounted for 18.8%, while peer-to-peer communication (fellow displaced women) contributed 11.3%. Notably, 7.5% of the women reported never having learned about their sexual and reproductive health rights. These results indicate that structured, organised community programmes and direct healthcare engagement are the most effective channels for disseminating SRHR information among IDP women. The relatively lower percentage for radio and peer communication suggests that while these channels are useful, they might not be as comprehensive or targeted. The significant role of healthcare providers in IDP camps corresponds with findings from Adeyemi and Kilonzo (2021), who found that healthcare workers serve as trusted sources of information, particularly where formal education or media access is limited.

Table 4: Source of Awareness of Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights among IDP Women

Source of information	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
a) Community sensitisation programmes	140	35.0
b) Healthcare providers in IDP camps	110	27.5
c) Radio or other media	75	18.8
d) Fellow displaced women	45	11.3
e) I have never learned about them	30	7.5
Total	400	100.0

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2025

Access to Maternal Healthcare in IDP Camps

The findings reveal a profound lack of access to proper healthcare services within the IDP camps in Abuja. The response from the woman leader that: "This container is the health facility. No healthcare, no cutting blade, no hand

gloves. I deliver the women under labour through traditional means using herbs and traditional prayer (incantations)" - vividly illustrates the acute inadequacy of healthcare infrastructure and essential medical supplies in IDP camps in Abuja.

The woman leader's account points to an improvised "health facility," which is like a shipping container or makeshift shelter, devoid of basic obstetric tools or sanitary materials. The reliance on traditional birth practices and incantations further signals the absence of skilled healthcare professionals and underscores the systemic neglect of maternal health services in IDP camps.

The woman leader's testimony underscores the extreme inadequacy of medical infrastructure, where a makeshift container substitutes for a health facility and essential medical supplies such as cutting blades and gloves are absent. Childbirth is conducted through traditional means, relying on herbs and incantations rather than trained healthcare professionals or modern medical practices. This situation exposes internally displaced women to significant health risks and highlights the urgent need for improved healthcare provision within these camps.

These findings are consistent with earlier research highlighting the dire healthcare conditions in Nigerian IDP camps. According to Olanrewaju *et al.* (2019), IDPs in Abuja face "grossly inadequate" health services, with makeshift clinics often lacking medical staff, drugs, and sanitary equipment. The absence of basic supplies such as gloves and sterile cutting tools also raises serious concerns about infection control and postnatal care. Moreover, studies by Ilesanmi, Afolabi, and Oyapero (2022) corroborate that structural deficiencies in healthcare delivery to IDPs often force women to rely on herbal remedies and spiritual interventions, exposing them to preventable maternal mortality and morbidity.

The data reveal that within the IDP camps in Durumi, a woman leader plays a crucial role in supporting pregnant women during childbirth, due the absence of formal healthcare services. *She provides delivery assistance and refers cases involving complications to appropriate healthcare facilities.* This reflects both a level of awareness and responsibility among women in the camps regarding maternal health and reproductive rights, even in constrained settings.

The findings highlight the critical role of informal female leadership in addressing maternal health needs within the Durumi IDP camps. In the absence of formal healthcare services, the woman leader's efforts to assist with deliveries and refer complicated cases demonstrate a proactive response to safeguarding maternal health. This reflects both the resilience of displaced women and an emerging awareness of reproductive rights, despite the severe limitations in healthcare infrastructure. This result is similar to the observation made by Ejembi *et al.* (2018) that although awareness of reproductive health services among IDP women in Nigeria was increasing, access and utilisation remained poor. Community influencers, including traditional birth attendants (TBAs) and women leaders, were reported to be critical channels through which health information and support were shared. The fact that the woman leader delivers pregnant women and knows when to refer them in case of complications suggests an informal but vital awareness of reproductive rights, particularly the right to safe motherhood, skilled care during childbirth, and access to emergency obstetric services. It indicates a grassroots-level understanding of maternal health risks and the importance of timely medical intervention, despite the limitations in formal health infrastructure. This finding aligns with previous studies on SRH awareness in displacement settings. For example, Akinola (2020) notes that while in Nigeria often lack full access to reproductive health services, community leaders (especially women) serve as informal health educators and caregivers. Such informal systems of care often arise out of necessity due to institutional neglect and limited humanitarian health coverage.

This scenario illustrates that SRH knowledge is present, but limited in the community, though it may not be comprehensive or institutionally supported. The decision to refer complicated cases implies knowledge of the dangers of prolonged or obstructed labour and a concern for the well-being of mothers and infants - both key elements of reproductive rights as outlined by international frameworks such as the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD, 1994). A study by Obi and Agbakwuru (2021) reported that reproductive health knowledge in IDP camps in Abuja is shaped by NGOs, religious organisations, and peer interactions rather than formal government programmes. This supports the current observation that the woman leader's actions represent a mix of indigenous knowledge and learned practices from health campaigns or informal training.

Interviews with women revealed the incidence of stillbirth. The response from an interview that: *There was a time we had a stillbirth. The woman takes drugs – cocaine* provides insight into a critical issue affecting maternal care in IDP camps in Abuja.

The data shows the intersection of substance abuse and poor maternal health outcomes. The reported incidence of stillbirths linked with cocaine use reflects deep vulnerabilities among displaced women, including inadequate healthcare services, lack of psychosocial support, and poor awareness of maternal health risks. Comparative studies across similar contexts reveal consistent patterns. For example, a study by Sinha *et al.* (2020) on Syrian refugee women in Lebanon found that substance use, including alcohol and illicit drugs, was correlated with increased rates of miscarriage and stillbirth, driven largely by the absence of mental health services and antenatal care.

Substance use during pregnancy, particularly with illicit drugs such as cocaine, is a known risk factor for poor pregnancy outcomes. Cocaine acts as a powerful vasoconstrictor, reducing blood flow to the placenta and fetus, including miscarriage, preterm birth, low birth weight, and stillbirth (Terplan *et al.*, 2018; Gouin *et al.*, 2011). The fact that displaced women in these camps are engaging in drug use suggests a lack of comprehensive SRH services, which would ordinarily include antenatal care, substance use counselling, mental health support, and harm reduction strategies. In IDP settings, where access to quality antenatal care is limited, these risks are exacerbated.

Furthermore, the data reflects an unmet need for targeted interventions addressing the underlying factors that drive substance abuse among IDP women such as trauma, stress, lack of livelihood, gender-based violence, and limited access to mental health care. The absence of structured healthcare services within the camps exacerbates these risks, leaving women without preventive care, monitoring during pregnancy, or access to skilled birth attendants. These findings suggest significant gaps in public health interventions and underscore the role of stress, trauma, and coping mechanisms.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study underscore the intersection of displacement, poverty, and systemic healthcare neglect in IDP settings in Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The study observed a mixed but concerning landscape regarding SRHR awareness among IDF. While a majority has at least heard of SRHR, a significant portion lacks full knowledge of their specific rights or where to seek redress for violations. The findings paint a stark and troubling picture of the SRH challenges and abuses faced by IDFs in Abuja camps. Also, the study observes a critical public health crisis within the IDP camps in Abuja, marked by a severe lack of healthcare infrastructure, essential medical supplies, and trained healthcare personnel.

Qualitative data provides deeply personal insights into the normalisation of intimate partner violence, opportunistic attacks by male youths, and severe cases of sexual abuse and rape, often with devastating psychological and familial consequences. These narratives reveal a camp environment marked by lawlessness, weak governance, and insufficient protection for vulnerable populations. Consequently, there is urgent need for more targeted, accessible, and consistent educational interventions to bridge the knowledge gap and empower IDP women to protect and assert their sexual and reproductive health rights.

It is imperative to design and implement comprehensive, community-based SRHR education programmes tailored for IDFs. These should prioritise consistent outreach and engagement, ensuring that information is clear, culturally sensitive, and accessible to women of all literacy levels. Healthcare providers and community workers should receive regular training on SRHR and effective communication strategies to better inform and support IDFs. This will ensure that healthcare facilities become reliable sources of SRHR knowledge and support. It is crucial to develop clear, accessible, and confidential mechanisms for reporting SRHR violations. This could include setting up dedicated help desks in health centres, mobile reporting platforms, or hotlines, accompanied by awareness campaigns to inform women on how and where to report abuses.

Focused interventions are needed to reach the 15% of women who are entirely unaware of SRHR and the 7.5% who have had no prior exposure to SRHR education. Outreach strategies could include door-to-door visits, small group discussions, and collaboration with local leaders and women's groups;

Encourage and support peer-education models where women who are more knowledgeable about SRHR can share information with their peers, fostering a community-wide increase in awareness and understanding; Implement continuous monitoring and evaluation of SRHR education initiatives to identify gaps, measure progress, and refine strategies to ensure effective learning outcomes for IDP women; Finally, it is important to develop partnerships between government agencies, NGOs, healthcare institutions, and community organisations to coordinate and amplify SRHR education and advocacy efforts for displaced women.

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