DIASPORIC MIGRATION AMONGST NIGERIAN YOUTHS: AUTOPIAN ESCAPE

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Abstract

The term 'Japa' is a slang amongst Nigerian youths for diasporic sojourns, in search of greener pastures. Some decades ago, these youths were practically 'enticed' to take up 'western offers', in the face of an economically buoyant nation. Today, Nigerians contend with an impoverished, unstable economy and its associated problems of unemployment, hunger, occupational insecurities, political thuggery, insurgencies and others. This saddening situation has birthed the utopian idea of seeking refuge, outside the country. Diasporic migrations in contemporary times, have portrayed the 'west' as the safe haven for fulfilled dreams, juxtaposing it with the denigrated image of the African continent and its vicissitudes of shattered dreams, frustrations and socio- economic uncertainties. This study debunks the idea of the West as the promised land, with easy life without hardwork; as most Nigerians migrate from the African space, giving up on their native soil that could have been revamped with a committed and collective efforts. This trend leaves a more impoverished society because the best brains end up in strange and developed societies. The study adopts a qualitative methodology, using relevant texts and journals,in examining the causes of youth migration in Nigeria, its effects and the frustration that comes with an overrated expectation of the western society. The result points to the mirage of the 'japa' syndrome amongst Nigerian youths, as they end up chasing 'shadows' in foreign lands.

Key words: Migration, Diaspora, Utopia, Youth and Youth Crisis

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last three decades,the deteriorating economic situation in Nigeria and the geometrically widened gap between the rich and the poor , with harsh implications on inequality, have given rise to diasporic migrations,an utopian idea borne out of frustrations and the harsh socio-economic realities in the country, amongst the citizens.Migration is viewed as the window through which one can improve one's income, educational opportunities and the prospects of future generation. This utopic mindset has given rise to the movement of Nigerians, especially the youths; across international borders for better opportunities and stand of living.

The diasporic migration of Nigerian youth can be attributed to a mix of economic, social, and political factors. Nigeria, despite being an oil- producing country with rich earnings, has a significant portion of the population living in poverty. Many young Nigerians struggle to find employment opportunities to support themselves and their families. This lack of economic opportunity has driven many young Nigerians to seek better job opportunities abroad. Moreso, many young people in Nigeria feel that their voices are not being heard and that they lack political representation. This situation has led to hopelessness, disillusionment among Nigerian youths with a feeling of worthlessness in them in their country., Now, many young Nigerians have family members and friends who live abroad. This creates a sense of cultural familiarity and makes it easier for young Nigerians to move to a foreign country.

1.2 EXPLICATION OF TERMS

Migrationhas been defined as the movement of a person or people from one country, locality, place of residence ...to settle in another (goggle search 14th June ,2023).It involves the crossing of predefined geographical boundaries by one or more persons for specific goals.Migration has been part of the existence of man from origin and can be described as movement of people from one place to another with intentions of settling permanently or

temporarily; in a new location. The phenomenon of migration dates back to the mercantile era (1500 to 1800) when European merchant capitalists migrated and travelled to Africa to acquire protectorates where they inhabited enormous pieces of land for more than 300 years.

Diaspora-The Cambridge dictionary defines Diaspora as 'a group of people who spread from their original country to other countries,or the act of spreading this way'.

Diasporic migration in this study, therefore, refers to the movement of a group of people from one original country such as Nigeria to other countries.

Youth- According to wikieducator.org, the term youth can be defined as a young person who is transiting from childhood to adulthood.It refers to the period between adolescence and the maturity of an individual.

Utopia refers to 'an imagined place or state of things in which everything is perfect'(goggle.com)

1.3Aim of Study

This paper aims at exploring the causes, positive and negative effectsof diasporic migration amongst Nigerian youths and its impacts especially in Nigeria. It will also consider the linguistic implications of migration and make necessary recommendations

1.4 Significance of Study

i. The study will serve as a reference point for prospective migrants to be able to appreciate the problems and challenges of diasporic migration.

ii.   It will give hope to Nigerian citizens, especially the youths that there are no greener side anywhere and encourage them to work hard to succeed in their home country.

iii.   Stakeholders in government will take a leaf from this study to create progressive policies that will favour the progress of youths in Nigeria.

iv.   It will also give hope to utopic sojourners who are chasing shadows abroad to come home and take their future into their own hands in a land that is theirs because home is the best.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The causes and consequences of external migration have been investigated by various scholars. For instance, De Haas (2010) through a review of existing literature, examined the effect of international migration on the social and economic development of regions. Evidence from these empirical studies indicates that "education, living conditions and income have improved significantly as a result of migration and remittances."(Cadwell,1969)

Similarly, Ratha, Mohapatra, and Scheja (2011) embarked on a literature survey of the impact of migration on economic and social development on countries. The review showed that international migration had critical developmentaleffects on economies. Also, it showed thatmigration and the resultant remittances result in increased incomes, reduction of poverty, improved health, and better educational outcomes and boost economic development in migrated countries.

In another related research, Adepoju (2011) considered the relationship between international migration and development in Sub-Saharan Africa. The study revealed that "poverty,

unstable polity and fast growth of the population are the driving forces of migration". (Harzig et al,2009).

Ajaero and Onokala (2013) in related literature examined the relationship between rural-urban migration and the rural communities of South-Eastern Nigeria. The results revealed that rural-urban migration adds meaningfully to the development of the rural communities in South-Eastern Nigeria through remittances and the participation of these rural-urban migrants in the development projects in the community.

Similarly, Kirwin and Anderson (2018) investigated the factors of migration amongst West Africans, specifically Nigerians. It was discovered that Nigerians form twenty-five per cent of all migrants from Africa travelling through the Central Mediterranean route. Respondents were drawn from six West African countries of Burkina Faso, Cote d' Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. Economic factors were identified as the rationale for migration. However, "family and patriotism were observed as reasons for respondents to desire to remain in their own countries."(Golden & Reinert,2006).Using the data from a household survey on migration and remittance conducted by World Bank, Bedasso, Weldesenbet, and Obikili (2018) in another similar study investigated the effect of family migration on the attainment of education. The results showed that members belonging to the household of migrants have a higher likelihood of finishing secondary education and going to some post-secondary schools. Members of migrant households have a higher likelihood of emigration and the attainment of education could be realized through the migration of members of the migrants' families.

Anjofui (2018) examined the push and pull factors of international migration in South Africa, focusing on the Cameroonian and Congolese migrants in Cape Town. The Cameroonian and Congolese migrants in Cape Town were selected through the snowball sampling technique.

Employing a descriptive research design through semi-structured interviews, the results revealed that the main drivers of migration are economic factors. This is followed by the influences of migrant networks and political factors respectively. Furthermore, the results showed that the migration expectations of most of the migrants were not met owing to the limited opportunities presented to them through policies of migration. Also, unfriendly migration policies in most countries have negatively rendered Nigerian youths hopeless unproductive and hopeless For example, ,most foreign countries like the United States of America and the UK do not allow immigrants to work without work permits. Even when these youths do not meet their goals in foreign country.Majority of them lack the courage to return to their home country because of lack of material things to show off and because of the fear of starting life afresh.

Many researches on migration have been conducted in various disciplines such as Economics, Law, History, Sociology &Anthropology, Political Science. A significant number of these studies have dwelt on the economic, political and socio-cultural factors of human traffickingwhich is a form of migration but not much studies have concentrated on Nigerian youths who are the hope of the nation.This is the gap that this work tries to fill.

Research Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative research using data from relevant textbooks, journals and newspapers with contributions from informal collaborations such as personal experiences of fellow academics and students. The area of the study covers the country, Nigeria, with special consideration of the youths in the country.

4.0 CAUSES OF MIGRATION

There are various causes of diasporic migration amongst Nigerian youths which can be attributed to some of these factors:

4.1 Poor Economy as Cause of Youth Migration to other Countries

One of the grave causes is the poor economy of the nation. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and culturally diverse federation of 36 autonomous states. The nation is greatly blessed with different natural and mineral resources accumulations such as oil,gold, zinc and other valuable deposits in different parts of the federation. The daily output of these natural deposits are enough to make Nigeria as great as any of the developed foreign countries of the world, but her economyis in a state of comatose due to hostilities to prospective investors, insecurity, corruption and others . These negative factors have paralyzed the growth of Nigeria's national income and opportunities and have adversely affected   national development . Also,there is a high ratio of unemployment amongst the youths due to the misappropriation of national funds with negative implications on job creation and profitable investments. This situation leaves the youths with a feeling of hopelessness and frustration and drivesthem to foreign land in search of prosperity.

4.2 Threat to Life

Provision of shelter is key a sustainable society. Shelter entails not only the provision of affordable homes for citizens but also shelter from harmful persons and practices in the society. All sortsof kidnappings, human traffickers, yahoo boys and ritualists abound. Crimes are on the increase with incidences of kidnapping, human trafficking, ritual killings, terrorism and the likes.In every part of the country, there are serious incidents of youth abductions and terrorism which are life threatening. On 25[th]July 2020, some people were killed by bandits in

certain areas of the country and these killings do not encourage citizens to remain in their country for fear of the unknown(www.vanguard.com)

4.3 Eurocentric Effect

Eurocentrism has also played a significant role in youth migration. It is the ideological belief that Europeans or Western cultures are inherently superior to other cultures, especially those of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This phenomenon has long been reflected in various forms of discrimination and oppression, including the legacy of colonialism and the global division of labour.

One of the most significant impacts of Eurocentrism on the Nigerian youths is the way it shapes the global job market. Eurocentric businesses and organizations prioritize credentials and educational backgrounds that reflect Western standards, often overlooking the qualifications and experiences of people from other parts of the world, including Nigeria. This situation provides limited job opportunities for Nigerian youths within their own country, forcing them to explore other options including migration.

Moreover, Eurocentrism influences the way Nigerian youths view their own culture and identity. The dominant Eurocentric worldview often portrays African cultures as backward or primitive, while Western cultures are viewed as advanced and superior. This has created a sense of self-doubt and internalized racism amongst Nigerian youth, making them more likely to seek acceptance in Western societies. Eurocentrism has alsoperpetuated the idea that the West is the only place where one can achieve success. This compels Nigerian youths to perceive migration as the only pathway to upward mobility. The Western world is often glorified in popular media and portrayed as the land of opportunity. This idea is particularly

compelling for Nigerian youths, who are seeking a way to escape poverty and lack of opportunities in their own country.

4.4 Poor Public Healthcare System

The poor system of public health in Nigeria contributes significantly to thediasporic migration of Nigerian youths.The public healthcare system in Nigeria is inadequate, and many health facilities lack equipment, drugs, and qualified medical personnels. This makes it challenging to access basic health care services, leading many Nigerian youth to seek better healthcare abroad.

The bad conditions of the healthcare system in Nigeria have forced our medical graduates to seek a favourable working conditions outside the country. In Nigeria today ,many major hospitals lack adequate equipment for better healthcare services. Hospital workers are poorly paid and are not paid their salaries in due time. Moreover thehealthcare system lacks the conducive work environment formedical practitioners to update themselves,as evidently as seen during the COVID pandemic period. These unattendant issues   have great influence in the decisions of the Nigerian youth to move abroad.

4.5 The Lack of Proper Investment in Public Educational Institutions

The poor quality of education in public educational institutions in Nigeria has made it difficult for Nigerian youth to compete in the global job market. Many Nigerian students leave the country because they believe that they will receive better education and more job opportunities abroad. The lack of investment in public educational institutions has led to limited opportunities for skill acquisition among Nigerian youths. Students are not equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to compete in the job market.This limits their chance

of employment within the country. This situation also makes it more appealing for young Nigerians to go abroad to develop these abilities.

Additionally, inadequate funding and support for Nigerian public educational institutions has made these schools, less attractive to Nigerian students. Contrastively, foreign educational institutions give educational opportunities to Nigerian students by providing them with scholarships and other incentives to study abroad. This often leads to these students remaining abroad after graduation.

As Nigerian youths migrate abroad in search of better educational opportunities, Their desertion contributes to brain drain in Nigeria. The absence of skilled professionals in the country makes it even more difficult to address the existing educational problems and to provide more opportunities for Nigerian youths.

5.0 THE EFFECTS OF MIGRATION ON THE COUNTRY

Migration has very negative effects both on the individuals and on national. People move from one place to another for various reasons (war, persecution, scarce opportunities, unemployment, etc.) Migration of people can have effectson both the place they left behind and their new place of residence. These effects can be positive or negative, though the negatives override the positives.

Amongst the positive effects, cultural diversity and inclusiveness can be considered as one of them.Migration can increase the cultural diversity of a host country, asthe introduction of a new culture can bring a whole new market of products and services that were hitherto, not available in the host country. Migration in this sense can have very positive effects on the

host nation as well as the migrants who will get assimilated into the culture of their host country through marriage, long association with citizens of the host country.

Another positive effect of migration is the strengthening of diplomatic ties amongst nations. The existence of migrants enables their home country to enter into diplomatic relations with the host country in the interests of the citizens of the two countries ,thereby creating better understanding amongst nations

Nevertheless, migrations have more negative effects especially for the home country,such as Nigeria. Some of these negative effects are articulated as follows:

5.1 Clash of values and discrimination:

There are usually incidences of cultural clashes as a result of differences in cultural values which may create spaces for discrimination. Migrants may have a different ethnicity, religious practice, or cultural characteristics from their host nation; or there may be language barriers which can sometimes cause migrants to be discriminated against in every aspect of their everyday lives, either directly or indirectly.

5.2 Weakening of Family Structure

"Migration can also create strains in family relationships, including creating dependencies within couples. This is especially the case where residence is contingent on sustaining a relationship, which may make partners (typically women) unwilling to leave exploitation or abusive relationship"(ILO,1996-2023). Unlike the Western culture, Africans believe in a traditional and value-based life which is reflected through the institution of families. The family is an important factor that gives rise to migration. Families exist in two forms-nuclear and extended families. Most migrants can be seen from extended family because of a number of problems inherent in a large family. African families usually function through a patriarchal

setup where there is a male head who takes the ultimate family decisions under which the remaining family members function.Decisions are usually taken by the head, without taking into consideration other member's opinions. This creates a rift between the families itself and might led to unhappiness amongst younger members, compelling them to leaving the family to settle independently. This weakens the family ties.

5.3 Loss of Young Workers

Young workers make up more than 10 percent of the overall 232 million international migrants; and being the most mobile social group, young people constitute the bulk of annual migration movements. While international migration represents an opportunity for youth to provide a better life for themselves and their families, pursue educational aspirations, improve their professional skills and prospects, or satisfy a desire for personal development through the adventures and challenges that come with living abroad, the migration of young people takes place in the context of high youth unemployment and the lack of decent work creation at home.

"The unemployment rate among youths in almost all countries is at least twice that of the general unemployment rate. Unfortunately, many young people get trapped in exploitative and abusive jobs, including forced labour, and too often, they- like other migrants- become scapegoats for the shortcomings of economic and social systems"(Adepoju,2007).

When young workers migrate as a result of poor economy of their countries of origin, this creates a lacuna and lack of adequate labour force in their home country.

5.4 Exploitation of Migrants

Hundreds of thousands of migrants are employed throughout the garment and textile supply chains around the world. They are subjected to many of the same abuses that local workers

encounter. However, these abuses are compounded by the specific contexts in which migrants work.

Many migrants are desperate for better wages since they can barely make ends meet, as many of them have financial debts to pay to family members, recruitment agencies, labour brokers, or traffickers who facilitate the sojourn to a foreign land. Many cannot work legally due to strict asylum or immigration policies in the host countries while legal workers often risk losing their legal status ,upon dismissal. Migrant workers live in constant fear of arrest or deportation; many don't even dare leave the factories or their dormitories. Despite the repressive conditions, many migrant workers do manage to take action. Burmese refugees working in garment factories on the Thai border have been involved in filing legal cases and regularly go on strike against their employers. In Mauritius, migrants from China, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have engaged in numerous industrial actions for better pay and working conditions. They are compelled to take such actions owing to exploitation without equivalent wages to their rendered services.

5.5 Communication issues due to language barriers

Barriers to effective communication are obstacles or problems that breakdown the communication process because they prevent the flow of information between a sender and a receiver. There are numerous barriers to communication, and these may occur at any stage in the communication process. These barriers can be classified into: mechanical, physical, psychological, social, noise, religious, cultural, and language barriers.

Language is the most powerful tool of communication. Its function includes the communication of ideas, thoughts, opinion and emotional expression, social interaction, using the power of sound, recorded facts and the expression of identity. However, at the same time,

language could pose a common barrier to effective communication. Language or semantic barriers arise when many words have more than one meaning, and a sender and a receiver try to communicate in a language, which is mutually unintelligible. There may be obstacles in the communication system which may prevent the intended message from reaching the receiver. Language barriers are significant because they are often impediments to building relationships with others. They can cause misunderstandings that lead to conflict, frustration, offense, violence, hurt feelings and unpleasant situations.

In summary, language barriers have to a larger extent affected the lives of migrants in the country of destination. This has gone a long way to making their settling-down unduly long or even impossible.It has also landed many of the migrants to scammers because of their anxiety to travel abroad with inadequate knowledge of the host language.

5.6 Gender imbalance

Around the world, more people are on the move than ever before. Many of them are seeking new opportunities and a better life for themselves and their families. Others are forced to move, due to disaster or conflict in their home countries. Gender influences reasons for migration and these include: who migrates and to where, how people migrate and the networks they use, opportunities and resources available at destinations, and relations with the country of origin. Risks, vulnerabilities and needs are also significantly shaped by one's gender, and often vary drastically for different groups. The roles, expectations, relationships and power dynamics associated with being a man, woman, boy or girl, significantly affect all aspects of the migration process, and can also be affected in new ways by migration. It is therefore crucial to understand how gender interacts with migration and to respond accordingly. It is recognised that a person's sex and gender identity shape every stage of the migration experience.

On the other angle, where particular sex migrate to other country for better life and to support their various families, there will definitely be gender imbalance. For instance, when large number of male leave a particular locality to another place, the number of males in their place of origin will reduce and vice versa and so will lead to gender imbalance and associated problems. And the same applies if female migration is the case.

6.0 Discussion of Findings

. The result of the study revealed that the principal causes of international migration in Nigeria were job scarcity, unemployment, wealth prospects, safety and security, better conditions of service, low salaries and higher standards of living. These significant causes of international migration in Nigeria were mostly economic factors. However, safety and security were the only socio-political factor that was among leading causes of diasporic migration in Nigeria. Furthermore, the findings showed that the positive and negative effects of diasporic migration in Nigeria were mainly economic,social and politicalissues and that diasporic migration is a cankerworm that must be decisively eradicated for our nation Nigeria to thrive.

6.1 Linguistic implications

Migration, among the most important socio-cultural phenomena of contemporary global societies is complex, dynamic and multifaceted. At the heart of migration is language, the indispensable agent of migration. Migration linguistics is the interdisciplinary and multidimensional study of various aspects of language within the dynamic process of human mobility. It is a systematic study of migration which focuses on how language affects and is also affected by the whole migration process. Linguistic considerations on migration bother on the fact that:i. language is an essential element in the migration process, (ii) an

individual's acquisition, learning and use of language significantly changes as a result of migration. iii) Migrants must be understood in the languages they can use, they should be taught the destination language and should be provided with basic and essential services understandable to them.

Migration leaves a huge impact on language as immigrants usually have to learn the vocabulary of a new language from the scratch. They also teach the owners of the land the words, phrases and sentences from their own mother tongue. Some countries even suffer extensive mutations of their language by the arrival of immigrants from different countries. This implies that countries that harbour many other countries are always faced with multilingual problems.

7. Conclusion

This study examined the leading causes and consequences of international migration amongst Nigerian youths. It presented an overall picture of the push and pulls factors responsible for international migration in Nigeria with its linguistic implications. The strategies of the government for stemming international migration should address pull factors of unemployment, safety and security and low salaries and pull factors such as job opportunities, wealth prospects, better conditions of service and higher standards of living since they are the root causes of international migration

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations of this research:

i. Review and improvement of national policiesthat bother on youths' progression to make the system more attractive for youths to remain in their country;

ii. Better conditions of service for professionals and civil servants;

iii. Revitalisation of the Nigerian educational system and putting proactive measures to forestall industrial strikes and other retrogressive activities in the system;

iv. Creation of more employment opportunities for the youths and attractive retirement plans;

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