AN ASSESSMENT OF THE HISTORY, TRENDS AND DRIVERS OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

International migration of Nigerians got its history in the colonial years up to the contemporary Nigerians societies and has remain an important topic of discussion. This study examines the history of international migration of Nigerians, its major causes, forms and its consequences on Nigeria development as a nation, also British colonial policies, method of recruitments and also how artificial boundary has shaped migration flow was discussed. This paper also pointed that migration of Nigerians during colonial era was because of trade mostly influenced by colonial masters, labour demand at west indies and administrative demonstration of imperialists and also in post-colonial migration was influenced by Nigerian economic decline, unemployment, political instability, scholarship abroad and searching of green pasture. This study also further discussed thatpresent-day migration have contributed to a significant challenges such as brain-drain human trafficking and also lose of skilful manpower while also taken the capital to have been useful for Nigerian development abroad. This study employ the uses of historical research method using both primary and secondary source of data.The paper concludes that although migration has historically served as a survival and advancement strategy for Nigerians, persistent governance challenges, economic hardship, and insecurity continue to stimulate outward migration. Addressing these structural factors is essential for harnessing the developmental benefits of migration while minimizing its adverse consequences on national growth and human capital development.

Introduction

International migration significantly impacts the economies of countries worldwide. Cross-border migration is a major driver of globalization in contemporary times. Over the years, the trends of this movement have been altering the size, composition, and effectiveness of labor markets, cultures, political conditions, and populations in numerous countries around the globe.

This thesis explores the implications of migration on development, starting with its

economic effects and then addressing social impacts. While factors like violent conflict, political persecution, and trafficking significantly drive international mobility, over ninety percent of international migrants do so for economic motives. Generally, migration tends to yield positive economic outcomes for the households of migrants, both in their countries of origin and their host nations. The remittances that migrants send back home represent the most evident and least contentious connection between migration and development.[cxl]

In a traditional perspective, individuals tend to migrate when they experience a lack of opportunities at home that pushes them away, combined with the allure of better economic prospects elsewhere that pulls them in. Consequently, the belief that migration can connect migrants more intimately with accessible economic opportunities in other locations serves as a significant motivator for their movement. It can be argued that migration is inherently a component of a family's strategy to increase income, secure new funds for investment, and safeguard against potential risks. Therefore, it is not surprising that each year, numerous African workers possessing valuable skills leave their home countries in search of improved economic opportunities, both within Africa and beyond.[cxli]

Regarding the level of emigration from Nigeria and its underlying causes, it has been noted that Nigeria's post-colonial era has been characterized by lost opportunities, stunted growth, and unmet aspirations. Governance failures have resulted in inadequate socio-economic outcomes, leading to hardship, unfulfilled promises, insurgencies, conflicts, and political unrest. The participation of international development organizations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in managing the nation's economic affairs has further complicated the development issues. These circumstances have prompted a significant exodus of skilled professionals, such as doctors, nurses, engineers, and scholars, to developed nations in Europe and North America, as well as increasingly to emerging markets in Asia and Latin America.[cxlii]

However, Africa has been losing its skilled professionals, According to International Organization for Migration (IOM) statistics, since 1990, an estimated 20,000 (twenty thousand) professionalsincluding engineers, medical doctors, and university professorshave left the continent every year. According to the World Bank, Nigeria leads Africa in this category, and the country's contribution to the total is evident from the remittances. [cxliii]

Now, whether the focus is on international migrant remittances or brain drain, brain gain or brain circulation, the ultimate factor is how do these boosts or detract from economic growth

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[cxl] Mohapatra S, Ratha D. and Elina S. *Impacts of Migration on Economic and Social Development: A Review of Evidence and Emerging Issues,* World Bank 2010 Pp. 1-2

[cxli] Udenta, Jude Okezie Emmanuel and Nwosuji, Emeka Patrick. "Migration and National Development: A Comparative Analysis of the Attitude of the First-Generation South-East Nigeria Migrants and the New Generation*"Kuwait Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Migration Review Vol. 4, No. 8; April* 2015 Pp.99

[cxlii] Udenta, Jude Okezie Emmanuel and Nwosuji, Emeka Patrick. 2015. Pp. 99-100

[cxliii] Udenta, Jude Okezie Emmanuel and Nwosuji, Emeka Patrick. 2015. p.100

and development in the short, medium and long-run? How has migration aided organic solidarity in society (social development) and how has it aided political system capacity in terms of processing and effective delivery as regards the demands upon the political system, all these are areas of concern in the study. The study also looks at related emerging migrations issues such as environment and climate change, fertility and demographic patterns and national security.

Research Problem

Previous research[cxliv] has demonstrated that international migration and socio-economic development are related, and that for a country to grow. Incorporating the migratory aspect and related processes into development policies and discussions is essential for maximizing the developmental benefits of migration. Better data gathering on migration and remittances, particularly from the diaspora, acts as a crucial revenue source, playing a significant role in economic forecasts for microeconomic stability and alleviating household poverty. Sadly, Nigeria, the Africa's largest population, has been overlooked in migration and development literature despite playing a significant role in African migrations. There aren't many empirical studies on migration in Nigeria that go beyond the problems of trafficking. It is not surprising that the government of the day has deemed it necessary to establish a Commission in charge of diaspora to critically evaluate and attend to diaspora matters.

Again, population growth, high unemployment and underemployment rates, uneven income distribution, and high pressures on the land and urban environments, all of which may encourage people to look for work overseas because they have few options back home. This is another significant cause of emigration, particularly among highly skilled individuals. The deficiency of good political leadership in Africa stands to be the biggest challenge. Lack of trust by the people in their leaders to ensure good living standards, provision of good and qualitative education, infrastructure, and social security have made many individuals both old and young to begin to migrate. Nepotism also stands as a barrier to economic development, where one is not employed for their skills but for family relations with the individual. Therefore, all these problems account for the growing numbers of Nigerians who travel out of the country daily in the pursuit of better standard of living.

Considering this, the study aims to explore the socio-economic effects of international migration on Nigeria's development. Particularly since it impacts the younger generation, which includes professionals and skilled workers who travel frequently. Once more, this study will examine issues of brain gain, brain drain, and even brain circulation in detail to identify the benefits and drawbacks for the nation's socioeconomic development.Moreover, lack of adequate human capital resources, especially of skilled personnel and professionals, will ultimately result to poor service delivery, low productivity and even system collapse.

Conceptual Clarifications

International Migration: this is the movement of individual or group of people across the national border mainly for reasons of employment, trade, residence etc.

[cxliv] Hein de Haas, "International Migration and National Development: Viewpoints and Policy Initiatives in Countries of Origin, the Case of Nigeria", *A Report Prepared for Radbound University, Nijmegen and Directorate*. 2006.

Brain Drain: this could mean the emigration of highly educated and skilled group of people from their country to another country in order to search of green pasture

Diaspora: These are Nigerians living outside the country

Research Objectives

The study seeks to:

i. Examine the historical evolution of international migration of Nigerians since colonial times to date

ii. Analyse the major factors for international migration among Nigerian citizens

iii. Evaluate the consequences of migration and human trafficking on Nigeria's image

Theoretical Framework

It has been difficult to find generally accepted philosophical explanations for why people move away from their usual place of residence. As a result, a few migration scholars like Lee 1966; Massey et al 1998; Zelinsky 1971 have lamented the lack of a thorough theory of migration over the past few decades, and there have been several calls for or attempts to create one.

Lee's theory has the merit of being one of the first trying to identify in a modern and scientific way the drivers of such a complex phenomenon after Ravenstein first addressed them in Scotland in 1885. The factors acting together and determining the final decision of an individual to migrate may be subdivided into macro-elements (largely independent from the individual), meso-elements (more closely related to the individual but not completely under the individual control) and micro-element (personal characteristics and attitudes).[cxlv]

At the macro level, neo-classical economic theory accounts for migration by examining geographical disparities in labor supply and demand. The resulting wage differentials drive workers to relocate from regions with low wages and a surplus of labor to those with high wages and a shortage of labor. Migration leads to a decrease in labor scarcity at the destination and an increase in scarcity at the origin. Macro theories focus on the structural and objective conditions that serve as 'push' and 'pull' factors influencing migration. For economic migration, push factors generally comprise unfavorable economic conditions such as joblessness, low wages, or income per capita compared to the destination country. Pull factors involve migration policies and employment situation in the receiving countries. Involuntary displacement can be understood through elements such as state oppression or apprehension of widespread violence or civil conflict.[cxlvi]

[cxlv] Francesco Castelli, "Drivers of Migration: Why do people move" *International Society of Travel Medicine, journal of Travel Medicine*, 2018, Pp.2-3

[cxlvi] Douglas S. Massey, Joaquin Arango, et al "Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal*"Population and Development Review,* Vol.19, No.3, Pp.431-466, population council, 1993. Accessed via http://www.jstor.org/stable/2938462 on 16th August 2023

Historical Overview of International Migration from and to Nigeria since the Colonial Period

In 2019, Nigeria population was estimated to be around 200,963,603 people, making it Africa's most populous country.[cxlvii] It is projected to grow from more than 200 million people in 2019 to surpass the United States and become the third largest country in the world after China and India before 2050.[cxlviii]The country is composed of more than 250 ethnic groups; the most populous and politically influential are: Hausa and the Fulani (North) 29%, Yoruba (Southwest) 21%, Igbo (Ibo) (Southeast) 18%, Ijaw 10% and Kanuri 4%. Nigeria is a federal republic, with 36 States enjoying considerable political and juridical autonomy and Lagos being the country's economic capital.[cxlix]

Nigeria became a British Protectorate in 1900, with the establishment of the Northern and Southern Nigeria Protectorates. The Northern and Southern Protectorates were formally united in 1914 to form the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria and gained independence in 1960. The post-independence period was shaped by several military dictatorships (1966 until 1999) except for a short period of civilian administration between 1979 and 1983. Besides, those military coups, the country has been experiencing a series of minor and major violent inter-ethnic conflicts, the bloodiest of which was the Nigeria civil war (1967-1970) between Nigeria and the Biafra. Democracy was not formally restored until 1999 when President OlusegunObasanjo was elected.[cl]

International Migration in the Colonial Era and Shortly after Independence

The establishment of British rule in Nigeria led to demarcation of boundaries, ushered in a relatively stable government, created modern means of transportation, and a monetized economy, among others. The British colonial policy Snow-balled into the independence era in Nigeria; hence, waves of migration that propelled the export oriented political-economic policy of the colonial administration. This was sustained and persisted during the period shortly after the country gained its independence. The political economy of the country was such that it provided a framework for large-scale migration, deriving from the need for large Labour force for mines, plantation, and public administration. Labour was recruited through persuasion and coercion.[cli]

[cxlvii] United Nations Population Division: World Population Prospects: 2019 Revision. https//data world bank. org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?location=NG, 2019, p. 12.

[cxlviii] The World Population Prospect: The 2017 Revision, published by *UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs "Sustainable Development Goals"*, 2017, p. 12. Retrieved at https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/events/pfd/other/21/21june_Final%20PRESS%20RELEASE_WPP17.pdf

[cxlix] IOM, "Enabling a Better Understanding of Migration Flows and (its root-causes) from Nigeria towards Europe" *IOM,* 2017 P.10.

[cl] IOM "Enabling a Better Understanding of Migration Flows and (its root-causes) from Nigeria towards Europe", 2017 P.10.

[cli] Afolayan, A.A., Ikwuyatum, G.O. and Abejide, O. "Dynamics of international migration in Nigeria. African Perspectives on Human Mobility Programme, *MacArthur Foundation*, 2008, P. 9

During colonial rule, Nigeria also experienced international flows. Geographer AdejumokeAfolayam and Colleagues have found evidence of immigration and emigration as far back as 1903. An estimated 10,000 to 30,000 Tuaregs from Niger moved into Kano city and its environs between 1914 and 1922.[clii] Kano region offered better grazing facilities, wells for pastoralists and their flocks, Veterinary services, and lower taxes. For similar reasons, another 250,000 people moved into the northwestern region of Nigeria between 1931 and 1952 from French West Africa, which extended from Lake Chad to Dakar Senegal, and from the Sahara to the Gulf of Guinea.[cliii] The flow dates to the beginning of the 20th Century. It was perhaps so because the British Colonial administration was considered less oppressive than the French.

According to Afolayan, between 1900 and January 1902 approximately, 6,500 labourers left Lagos to work on the Sekondi-Tarkwa rail line and in the Gold mines of the Gold Coast, where wages were higher than in Lagos.[cliv] In Dahomey, many of Nigerian emigrants took to trading after the completion of the railway, while many of them left for Ivory Coast after the world war1. Many of the emigrants from Nigeria were attracted by evidence of success displayed by returnees; by the believe that wealth was easier to acquire while away from home and overtime, wives or new brides joined their husbands.[clv]During the colonial period, thousands of Nigerians from Hausaland and Borno in northern part of Nigeria migrated to Sudan for trade. Sociocultural ties, especially ethno-religious affinity, explain the Nigeria-Sudan connection, which remains strong today. About 257,000 people left Nigeria's northwestern region according to Nigeria's 1952-1953 census.[clvi] Their destinations included the Gold Coast, Dahomey, and Togo, out of which 28,000 people were mostly from northern Sokoto. Substantial emigrant Streams were particularly reported for the Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria to Cote d' Ivoire, Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), Dahomey, Mali, Togo, Niger and Ghana.

1.3 International Migration in the Post – Independence Era

Emigration from Nigeria to other regions of the world was on a small scale until after independence in 1960. Most of the movements were towards Britain, with an inconsequential amount heading towards the United States of America. From the 1950_S through the 1970_S, the emerging elites moved mainly to the United Kingdom due to the legacy of colonial ties, for educational pursuit and in a few cases for administrative matters. The expectation was that Nigerian students would return with valuable

[clii] Blessing U.Mberu, Roland Pongou, "Nigeria: Multiple forms of Mobility in Africa's Demographic giant"
Accessed online via
http://www.migrationpolicy.org, 2010, p. 11

[cliii] Blessing U. Mberu, Roland Pongou, "Nigeria: Multiple forms of Mobility in Africa's Demographic giant", accessed online on 20/11/2023 via https://www.migrationpolicy.org, 2010., p. 15.

[cliv] AdejumokeA Afolayan, Godwin O Ikwuyalum, Dynamic of International Migration in Nigeria (A review of Literature) *University of Ibadan* 2008, P. 11

[clv] Adejumoke A Afolayan, Godwin O Ikwuyalum, "Dynamic of international migration in Nigeria P.11

[clvi] Blessing U Mberu, Roland Pongou, "Nigeria: Multiple forms of mobility in Africa's Demographic giant" accessed online via https://www.migrationpolicy.org, 2010.

skills needed for national building. Indeed, most Nigerians educated abroad in the 1960_s and 1970_s readily came home after completing their education to assumed plum jobs in the civil service or the burgeoning oil and private sectors of the economy.[clvii] This situation did not last long because the leaders were unable to effectively manage the political structures they inherited from the colonial masters. This led to crises in the polity and the subsequent movement of Nigerians in large number towards Europe and the North America. This pattern of movement has significant implication for brain drain in Nigeria.[clviii]

The continuous deterioration of economic, political, and social conditions, including lack of job satisfaction and the existence of a system in which efficient inputs are not recognized or rewarded in Nigeria aggravated the situation resulting in an unprecedented scale of emigrant. After independence in 1960, this largely highly skilled migration to the United Kingdom continued, although an increasing proportion of Nigerians also migrated to the United States for study, business, and work. As political tensions engulfed Nigeria and as its economy stagnated in the late 1970_s and 1980_s, the stream of emigrants increased. Unlike previous emigrants, these Nigerians tended to stay abroad for longer periods after graduating, and some never returned.[clix] Consequently, a well-developed culture of professional migration emerged. By 1978, an estimated 30,000 Nigerians graduates from UK higher institutions were living outside Africa, with 2000 of them living in the United States. In 1984 the Nigerian population living in the United States had increased to 10,000 according to Afolayan and colleagues; many were highly skilled.[clx]

In addition to the poor economy, Nigerian-based professionals left because of the austerity measures of the Structural Adjustment Programme, which the government agreed to as a condition of a loan from the International Monetary Fund in the mid-1980_s. Because the programme included devaluing the national currency, wages for professionals became lower and working conditions worsened.[clxi] As desperation in the country continued, many less-educated youth became significant part of the emigration stream. By the early 2000_s, an increasing number of Nigerians had migrated to countries such as Spain, Italy, Ireland, Germany, France, the Netherland, and Belgium as well as the Gulf states. More recent migrants to Continental European Countries are reported to be less skilled on average, and more often work in the formal and particularly in Southern Europe, informal services, trade, and agricultural sectors.[clxii]

[clvii] Blessing U Mberu, Roland Pongou, "Nigeria: Multiple forms of mobility in Africa's Demographic giant, 2010,

p. 9

[clviii] Kennedy Eborka, "Migration and Urbanization in Nigeria from Pre-Colonial to Post-Colonial Eras: A Sociological Overview," in*Migration and Urbanization in Contemporary Nigeria: Policy Issues and Challenges, ed. University of Lagos Press and Bookshop Ltd*., 2021, P.16

[clix] Blessing U Mberu, Roland Pongou, "Nigeria: Multiple forms of mobility in Africa's Demographic giant, 2010, p. 11

[clx] Blessing U Mberu, Roland Pongou p. 15

[clxi] Blessing U Mberu, Roland Pongou p. 11

[clxii] Blessing U Mberu, Roland Pongou p. 11

Moreover, the cause of human mobility had not always been economic, civil war and ethnic conflicts had spurred the dislocation of minorities from their destination back to their home region. The Biafra war of 1967-1970 recorded the largest dislocation and dislodging of many ethnic groups from the Northern part to the Southeastern and southwestern parts of the country. And for some of the people dislodged during and after the Biafra war, the option was the flight out of the country due to economic hardship, to the Republic of Benin and to the outlying Island of Sao Tome and Principe.[clxiii]

Furthermore, the immigration of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) citizens into Nigeria took another dimension after the protocol on Free Movement of Goods, Capital and People was ratified in 1980. This almost coincided with the period of economic buoyancy in Nigeria, such that ECOWAS citizens immigrated into Nigeria. Nigeria's oil boom in the 1970s and early 1980s created numerous job opportunities, attracting migrants from neighboring West African Countries like Ghana, Togo, Benin, Niger and Chad. Nigeria experienced a significant influx of immigrants, particularly from other West Africa countries, due to the country's economic boom fueled by oil revenues. Initially, the influx of migrants was largely welcomed as they filled labour shortages and contributed to the Nigerian economy. Educational institutions also saw an influx of teachers and lecturers from Ghana and India.[clxiv] However, this period of open immigration was relativelyshort lived. By early 1980s the situation began to deteriorate, leading to job scarcity and increased pressures on the labour market. By 1982, there were estimated to be 2 to 2.5 million non-nationals in Nigeria, roughly 2.5 percent of total population. In 1983, survey of migrants in Nigeria found that only 23.3 percent of them were legal. Consequently, in January/February 1983 and April/June 1985 many ECOWAS citizens, some 1.5 million that had exceeded the 90 days of grace without the residence permit were expelled from the country.[clxv]

In addition, by the late 1980s, some other changes in the economic and political polices of the country resulted in changes in the pattern of migration in Nigeria. One is the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in June 1986. SAP dictated a shift from the official policy of full employment to substantially reduced government spending on critical services, such as health, education, and housing. This created a greater tendency for people to emigrate. Evidence includes the relatively large number of women traders that shuttle between Lagos and Abidjan in Cote d' lvoire and few other coastal West Africa countries.[clxvi]

All these changes in the migration phenomena in Nigeria are perhaps captured in the available data provided by the Nigeria census in the last 40 years or more. The 1963 and 1991 census, the 1991 Post Census Enumeration Survey (PES) and Nigeria Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) Migration Survey (1998) reveal some of the

[clxiii] Adejumoke A Afolayan, Godwin O. Ikwuyatum, et al., 2008 "Dynamics of international migration in Nigeria (a review of Literature)" *university of Ibadan*. P.13

[clxiv] Sharon Stanton Russell "Demographic Change in Sub-Saharan Africa" *National Academic Press Washington DC*. 1993 p.301

[clxv] Sharon Stanton Russell "Demographic Change in Sub-Saharan Africa P.302

[clxvi] Adejumoke A Afolayan, Godwin O. Ikwuyatum, "Dynamics of international migration in Nigeria (a review of Literature)" *University of Ibadan*. 2008, P13

dynamics of the volumes and direction of voluntary immigration into Nigeria. The 1963 census data indicate a total of 101,461 foreigners, (65,467 males and 35, 994 females). This included Africans and non-Africans living in Nigeria. The population of foreigners accounted for about 0.18 percent of the country's the total population of 55.7 million. In 1991 census, the figure had increased to 447,135 immigrants (264, 339 males and 210,796 females), constituting 0.54 percent of the total population of 88.99 million.[clxvii]

More recent data on immigration and emigration are estimates derived by varied international agencies and research units. For example, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2021, Nigerian population living in other countries across the globe was about 17 million. The top ten countries that Nigeria emigrant move to bethe United States, followed by Great Britain, Italy, United Arab Emirates, Brazil, Germany, Canada, Spain, South Africa and France.[clxviii]

For the immigration stock in 2005 a total number of 971,450 persons were estimated, that is, about 0.7 percent of the total population of Nigeria[clxix] Unlike the situation for emigration the top source countries were mostly from the neighboring West Africa States, of Benin, Ghana, Mali, Togo, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Liberia, Mauritania, and Egypt. Also, immigrants exceeded the number of emigrants by 134,618. Although all these statistics are quite revealing of the dynamics of international migration in Nigeria, there is still the indication of very low level of knowledge on the precise situation of things.[clxx]

Data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) shows that 1,361,580 individuals left the country in 2014. In 2015, 2,640,508 also left. In 2016, the figure of emigrants dropped to 1,181,211 but rose marginally to 1,344,318 in 2017 and increased to 2,322,585 in 2018. While the number of departures recorded for the country between 2014 and 2018 may not be permanent, the figure is higher than the numbers between 2005 and 2010, which remained between 900,000 and 1,000,000 migrants.[clxxi] It is important to state that the rise in the figures of emigrant in 2015 may not be unconnected with the political situation of the country being that it was an election year couple with the general insecurity situation and tension often witnessed during electioneering period in the country. This must have impacted the number of Nigerians that leave the country. In addition, the deteriorating economic conditions experienced with the coming of the opposition party to power in 2015 further pushed Nigerians to emigrate as experienced in 2018 and even beyond. According to Zachary Medugu:

He migrated to the United Kingdom primarily for study reason. Other reasons include promising opportunities in terms of job,

[clxvii] Adejumoke A Afolayan, Godwin O. Ikwuyatum p.16

[clxviii] Solomon Ekanem "10 Foreign Countries with the largest Nigerian Population" *Business Insider Africa*, accessed via https://africa.businessinsider.com on 16 August 2025

[clxix] UNDP, Development Prospect Group, 2006.

[clxx] Adejumoke A Afolayan, Godwin O. Ikwuyatum, et al., 2008 "Dynamics of international migration in Nigeria (a review of Literature)" *university of Ibadan*. P13

[clxxi] Daily trust Sunday magazine Vol. 14, No. 56, April 12, 2020, p.14

lifestyle, pollution free environment, safety and more. My quest for knowledge, the labour market and the economy are factors that attracted me to the United Kingdom.

He noted that there is a significance difference between Nigeria and the host country in population: population growth of the two countries is completely different. Nigeria has a higher population than the United Kingdom. Nigeria's population is almost three times double that of the United Kingdom. In terms of the economy, United Kingdom has a larger, more developed economy with a higher GDP per capital, a diverse service sector and advanced infrastructure. While Nigeria has a smaller economy heavily dependent on oil, imports and facing significant development challenges like poverty, infrastructure deficits and exchange rate issues. Culturally, there is a major difference between Nigeria's collectivism versus British individualism. There is more public display of emotions and community in Nigeria, strict hierarchy and respect for elders in comparism to a more egalitarian approach in the United Kingdom. There are also a different sense of time and punctuality and a greater degree of community involvement in child rearing in Nigeria compare to sole parental responsibility in the United Kingdom. These differences can lead to culture shock for individuals moving between these two countries.[clxxii]

According to Musa Waziri, a medical practitioner who migrated from Yobe State Teaching Hospital, Damaturu:

Doctors and other professionals migrated from Nigeria due to inadequate pay, poor working conditions, insufficient infrastructure and equipment, jobs security and a desire for better living conditions for their families. He noted that factors like systematic corruption, political instability and lack of leadership also contribute to lack of confidence in the government and a push to seek opportunities in countries that offer better compensation and opportunities for career growth[clxxiii].

Also, ChineduAkabike pointed that Growing insecurity, encompassing not just terrorism but also daily risks and threats to safety is a significant motivator for professionals to leave the country. Professionals often leave for better living conditions, access to quality education for their children, and a generally improved quality of life abroad. Unreliable power supply, poor internet access and deteriorating road conditions create a challenging daily environment that influences professionals' decision to leave[clxxiv].

Furthermore, as for GwomDakwak, he pointed that professionals in Nigeria are often frustrated by low wages, delayed salary payment, and lack of benefits making it difficult to sustain their families. Many professionals, especially recent graduates struggle to find stable and fulfilling employment within Nigeria's healthcare and other sectors. Opportunities for career development, specialization and further training are scares in Nigeria compared to other countries. The lack of essential equipment, technology, and effective management of drugs and vaccines in medical facilities makes it hard for professionals to provide adequate care. Rampant corruption diverts funds intended for healthcare ad infrastructure undermining system efficiency

[clxxii] Interview granted by Zachary Medugu of 55 Mervyn Road Bilston, WV14 8DB, Wolverhampton West Midlands, United Kingdom. 13/09/2025

[clxxiii] Interview with Dr. Musa Wazirion 08/10/2022.

[clxxiv] Interview with ChineduAkabike in Abuja, on 16/07/2025.

and public trust. Inefficient governance and a lack of meaningful reform efforts lead to disillusionment and a loss of faith in the system, unfavorable and poorly implemented policies related to health funding and professional welfare contribute to professional dissatisfaction[clxxv].

Data analysis of Nigerians leaving for greener pastures showed that people leaving the country are not restricted to skilled individuals. Even the unskilled are leaving the country in droves from both regular and irregular means. For instance, the National Agency for the Prohibitions of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) reported that about 2,894 persons were rescued from irregular migration between 2014 and 2018. Of this figure, 330 cases were reported in 2014; 285 in 2015; 320 in 2016; 1,104 in 2017; and 855 in 2018. These were persons who were involved in sexual exploitation outside Nigeria, external prostitution, forced labor outside Nigeria, armed conflict, illegal immigration, and smuggling.[clxxvi] The increase in the number of irregular migrants especially in 2017 is largely due to the country's economic and political instability, as well as increase in poverty and unemployment. In 2019, Nigeria closed its land borders to neighboring countries within and outside the ECOWAS region, citing security and economic reasons. This closure of borders as containment measures has dramatically impacted the social, economic and political situation in the country, leading to a decrease in the regular mobility path, and a potential unequal recovery from the economic downturn, which increased the demand for smuggling services in the medium and to long term and lead to an increase in irregular labour migration. In 2021, NAPTIP received a total of 1,112 cases of trafficking, Foreign Travel, which Promotes Prostitution recorded the highest number with a total of (223) cases representing 20.1% of the total cases reported. Following is Procurement of Persons for Sexual Exploitation with a total number of (164), which is 14.7% of the cases reported. Buying or Selling of Human Beings for any purpose followed with a total number of (130) representing 11.7% of the total number of cases reported. The next is Child Abuse which has a total number of (124) representing 11.2% while Employment of Child as domestic worker and inflicting grievous harm has a total number of (93) (8.4%), followed by Abduction from Guardianship and Forced Labour within and outside Nigeria which has a total number of (62) 5.6% and (61) 5.5% respectively.[clxxvii]

Nigerian women, girls and boys are trafficked in large numbers to North Africa, Saudi Arabia, and Europe mainly Italy, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Norway and in small numbers to the United States and Asia for sexual exploitation and domestic servitude. Women, girls and boys are trafficked are trafficked from neighboring countries like Chad, Niger Republic, Benin Republic, Togo and Ghana to Nigeria for begging, prostitution, domestic servitude, armed conflict and labour exploitation. It is estimated that about 750,000 to one million persons are trafficked annually in Nigeria and that over 75% of those trafficked are trafficked across the states, 23% are trafficked within states while 2% are trafficked outside the country. Edo state is one of the 36 states in the Federal Republic of Nigeria with its apital in Benin City. It is in the

[clxxv] Interview with Dr. GwomDakwak, on 19/04/2025.

[clxxvi] Daily trust Sunday magazine Vol. 14, No. 56, April 12, 2020, p.14.

[clxxvii] NAPTIP, Data Analysis, 2021 accessed via https://naptip.gov.ng on 16th August 2025

Western part of the country with a population of about four million people spread across over 18 Local Government Areas. Despite the huge population, the state is poorly industrialized, and job opportunities are very limited. About 50% of the population are civil service workers and others are self-employed, petty traders and subsistent farmers. This has created a large pool of unemployed youths that can be easily drawn into crime. Young females particularly those with poor family background are easy to entice into the trans-national sex trade for prostitution in European countries. According to the research produced within the framework of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNICRI/ UNODC) pilot project, many trafficked persons for sexual exploitation are young women and minors from Edo State of Nigeria. NAPTIP further confirmed Edo State as the most endemic state in external trafficking for sexual exploitation. This is because of the First Conviction Secured by NAPTIP in 2004 (AGF VS. SARAH OKOYA who was from Edo State. NAPTIP also reports that 98% of victims rescued from external trafficking for sexual exploitation are from Edo state, and about 47% of convicted traffickers are of Edo state origin.[clxxviii]

It is believed that the involvement of Nigerians in trafficking in persons has severe and wide range of implication on Nigeria's image and victims as well. For instance, is the inclusion of Nigeria in the Notorious Watch List. Trafficking in persons, drug trafficking and illegal migration, cybercrime, suicide attack, corruption and poverty places Nigeria and her citizens on notorious watch list regionally and globally. The case of Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab a suspected member of the Boko Haram, following the failed suicide attack on American airline on December 25h, 2009 has caused the U.S to enlist Nigeria in her terrorist watch list. Moreso, on January 27th, 2020, Nigeria was included in the list of 13 countries banned by Donald Trump. Nigerians were not allowed to migrate to U.S permanently but only on temporary visas, such as tourists, students and foreign workers. In this regard, no matter your social, economic or political status, Nigerians travelling abroad are subjected to some harrowing experiences at international airports. There is also the economic crisis. Trafficking in persons portrays Nigeria's image as a country in throes of economic crisis due to the large number of persons travelling abroad, both legal and illegal means for greener pastures or better life. For example, from March 2002 to April 2004, the Saudi Arabia authorities deported 9,952 women and 1,231 underage unaccompanied children. Investigation revealed that most of the women deported from Saudi Arabia were from Kano, Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, Niger, Katsina, Jigawa, Gombe, and Taraba States. The death crisis arising from the risky and illegal nature of the business of trafficking in persons portrays the country in bad light. A great number of these unfortunate Nigerians die in transit. The increasing cases of Nigerians who die in transit and in prison because of trafficking in persons, drug trafficking, cybercrimes etc. have reduced the country status as the giant of Africa, hence losing her respect among the international community. The loss of manpower and brain drain is another image crises for Nigeria. Most victims of human trafficking fall within the working force. As a result, the country of origin of the trafficked suffers a huge loss of manpower. The number of Africans travelling abroad, particularly Nigerians for medical

[clxxviii] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Accessed via https://www.unodc.org on 18 August 2025

services erroneously portrays Nigeria's image as a country in severe health crisis due to the large number of patients involved. Furthermore, most victims of trafficking are exposed to all sorts of illness and diseases because of sexual exploitation. Trafficking in persons has contributed to the increase of people living with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. Finally, leadership failure and developmental crisis affects the image of Nigeria in the international system. Leadership failure is one of the contributing factors of trafficking in persons, drug trafficking, cybercrimes, kidnapping etc and creates wrong impression of the image of the country. The lack of leadership has been the bane of successive regimes over the past five decades, which contributes to the problem of development in Nigeria. Giving credence to this observation are the various United Nations conferences and development reports which have consistently emphasized the importance of honest and dedicated leadership that will rise above selfish and primordial desire to address the monumental development challenges facing the country.[clxxix]

According to the Nigeria Immigration Services (NIS) about 4,364.668 Nigerians were issued with new passport between 2014 and 2018. But besides being a national identification and travel data, this indicates travel source states or regular departure point of most Nigerians.[clxxx]A breakdown of passports issued between 2014 and 2018 showed that the Southwest has the highest number, at 650,958 new passports issued. Lagos has the highest number (1.264.528), followed by Oyo (233,004), Ogun (166,920), Osun (109,016), Ondo (91,161) and Ekiti (50,857). The South-South came second with Edo topping at 172,435 new passports. About 158,304 received their passports from Delta, while 157,177 received in Rivers, followed by AkwaIbom (41,042), Bayelsa (38,100) and Cross River (26,506). The North- West came third with 484,766. Kano received 169,941 within the period while Kaduna got 110,856; Katsina, 68,132; Jigawa, 40,793. Sokoto, 36,932; Kebbi, 29,732 and Zamfara, 28,377. In the south-east, Enugu and Imo received the fourth highest number of new passports issued at 440,228. While Imo had 126,049, Enugu was second with 99,416. Others are Anambra (97,579), Abia (95,236) and Ebonyi (22,008). In the North-Central, 320,024 new passports were issued. Out of this number, Plateau had 109,016 while Niger had 77,354. Others are Kwara (71,565), Kogi (28,766) Benue (17,890) and Nasarawa (15,433). Also 511,059 new passports were issued in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). In the same period, the North-East had 137,332 new passports. Borno recorded the highest number with 29,977, followed by Gombe (26,965). Others are Adamawa (26,157), Bauchi (25,026) and Taraba (15,852).[clxxxi] The exact number of visas issued from 2014 to 2018 is not readily available, however, some data from the National Bureau of Statistics indicate that 120,679 visas were issued at Foreign Mission in 2018. The various types of visas include tourism, business and work permits.

[clxxix] Shedrack C. Igboke& Frank-Collins N. Okafor "Trafficking in Persons and Nigeria's External Image Crisis (1990-2020)*"NnamdiAzikiwe journal of political sciences Vol.*8 (4) ISSN:2992-5924, 2023 accessed via www.najops.org.ng on 18 August 2025

[clxxx] Daily trust Sunday magazine Vol. 14, No. 56, April 12, 2020, p.14

[clxxxi] Daily trust Sunday magazine Vol. 14

1.4 Major Destinations for Nigerians

Reports shows that countries such as United State of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Cameroun, Italy, Cote d Ivoure, Benin Republic, Australia, United Arab Emirate (UAE) and Canada are top destination for skilled Nigerians, while some European and Asian countries like Spain, Italy, Greece Bangladesh, Philippines are top destinations for Nigerian without much Skills. The Canadian government estimates that Nigeria ranks third in the countries that have received the highest number of Canadian Express Entry in 2018 under the Information Technology Agreement (ITA) scheme, which is usually offered to software engineers and developers, behind China and India in second and first respectively. While 6,025 Nigerians received the offer, 6,248 Chinese and 41,675 India received it the same year, respectively. Canada welcomed 341,000 immigrants in 2019 under its skilled labor programme; about 10,000 of them are Nigerians. It is a steady increase as only 2,000 Nigerians were received in 2015; 4,000 in 2016; 6,000 in 2017; 8,000 in 2018 and 10,000 in 2019.[clxxxii]

1.5 Conclusion

This study has explained that international migration remained a serious issue of discussion right from colonial period to date. It also pointed that the early migration was influenced by colonial economic structure, trade network while the contemporary migration is influence by economic hardship and unemployment and also to improve educational and professional privilege. However, from the 1980s up till 2021 the deteriorating socio-economic and political condition, including lack of employment opportunities, lack of job satisfaction, corruption, insecurity, lack of basic infrastructure, problem of religion and ethnic sentiments, favoritism, lack of meritocracy in the system, issues of transparency among others have continued to erode the desire by Nigerians who migrated to return home. It is important to emphasize that Nigerians who migrated abroad during this period have begun to shun homecoming and instead started to regularize their stay. This phenomenon has resulted in what is now known as the brain drain syndrome as professionals and highly skilled Nigerians who were supposed to remain and contribute to the socioeconomic development of Nigeria are migrating to other part of the world.

[clxxxii] Daily trust Sunday magazine Vol. 14, No. 56, April 12, 2020, p.14