

Factors that encourage increase in international migration among younger persons in Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Youth migration has great consequences on the economies, populations, and social structures of both the country of origin and the family. The following objectives were stated to guide the study; identification of the factors that propel youth international migration in Nigeria; the perceived dangers of youth international migration on the home country and the youth already migrated abroad. An in-depth interview guide was used in conjunction with the Interpretive Phenomenology Analysis research design (IPA) to collect data from participants for the qualitative analysis. 15 youths from Enugu State, Nigeria, participated in the. The results of this qualitative study were analyzed thematically. Findings identify variables, such as poor governance, insecurity, poverty, and unemployment, among others, as factors that promote youth international migration. The study also showed that young people are aware of the risks associated with international migration; the majority of them were still willing to take the chance of doing so. It is recommended that the government of Nigeria and relevant stakeholders should develop and implement measures to address poverty, poor governance, insecurity, and unemployment, as well as to educate the youth, in order to discourage migration.

Keywords: migration, youth, international migration, push and pull factors

INTRODUCTION

The movement of individuals across national boundaries, known as international migration, is estimated by the International Labour Organisation [ILO] (2023) to involve 200 million individuals living outside their birth nations globally. This phenomenon is marked by extreme demographic changes, widening regional economic inequalities, security challenges, and globalization, although it has deep historical roots. Despite its historical precedents, such as the mercantile period from 1500 to 1800, world immigration flows were dominated by Europe and stemmed from processes of colonization and economic growth under mercantile capitalism. Over the course of three hundred years, Europeans inhabited large parts of the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Oceania (Adam, 2004). The political landscape surrounding migration is relatively new and needs critical examination due to its instability (Manning and Trimmer, 2020). Nigerians are among the most migratory

populations in Africa (Potts, 2018) and face significant issues like insecurity, kidnapping, poverty, violence, and conflicts between herdsman and farmers, which impact international migration (Ukamaka et al., 2017). Migration can result in "brain gain" through knowledge transfers and increased educational investments in source countries. According to the International Organization for Migration [IOM] (2024), there have been some tremendous benefits of international migration, such as economic boosts, contribution through remittances and demographic rejuvenation. Nearly two-thirds of foreign migrants, particularly young people, are laborers in regions like the Gulf Cooperation Council (Shah, 2013). The IOM reports an estimated 272 million migrants globally, with Oceania and the United Arab Emirates having the highest shares of international migrants.

Nigeria's youth population is rapidly expanding, yet many remain jobless despite high educational and professional abilities (Shah, 2017; IOM, 2024). According to the United Nations (2022), young migrants (ages 15-24) made up 12% of the global migrant population in 2022. This demographic represented 10.2% of international migrants in developed nations, 14.9% in developing countries, and 20.9% in least-developed countries. Young women constituted 48.9% of migrants in wealthy countries and 43% in underdeveloped countries. The ILO (2023) estimates that 28.2 million international migrants are aged 15-24. While the proportion of young migrants is higher in developing countries, the number of young female migrants is larger in affluent nations. Young people can significantly contribute to the economic and social development of both their home and host countries when they migrate under conditions of freedom, dignity, equity, and security (ILO, 2023).

The disparity in income, employment, and social well-being between different areas is a primary cause of migration (Castle, 2000). Differences in fertility, mortality, age-structure, and labor force growth also play important roles. Migration is often a strategy to maximize income, but factors such as secure employment opportunities and long-term risk management are also crucial. Migration decisions often represent family strategies aimed at maximizing income and survival chances (Hugo, 2021). Iwuh (2020) classifies the factors driving international youth migration into economic, educational, political, and family reunion categories. Economic migration is driven by greater job opportunities, educational migration by the desire for better education, political migration by war and civil unrest, and family reunion by the desire to join family members abroad. The quest for peace is another factor, as defined by the absence of war and the presence of peaceful interactions (Ibeanu, 2020).

Young migrants make up more than 10% of the 232 million total international migrants, being the most mobile social group and accounting for the majority of annual migration movements (Manning and Trimmer, 2020). Youth

international migration occurs amidst high youth unemployment and a lack of decent job creation at home, despite offering opportunities for personal and professional growth abroad. However, many young migrants face harsh and exploitative conditions, including forced labor (ILO, 2023). The ILO collaborates with various stakeholders to promote better employment and labor migration policies for young migrants. Migration impacts the economies, populations, and social structures of both origin and destination countries (Divisha, 2017; Reips & Buffardi, 2012).

Push factors such as unemployment, poverty, and conflict drive migration from Nigeria, while pull factors like better job opportunities and political stability attract migrants (Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016). Significant life transitions, such as completing education or seeking employment, also influence youth migration decisions (ILO, 2023). With 71 million young people unemployed globally, youth migration is still mostly driven by the need for work. Along with being displaced by war or climate change, many people migrate to avoid poverty, violence, and conflict (Hall, 2021). Youth thus make up a significant portion of those migrating for humanitarian reasons, including unaccompanied children, refugees, and asylum seekers.

Nigeria's youth population is rapidly expanding, yet many remain jobless despite high educational and professional abilities (OECD, 2022). The rise in irregular emigration significantly affects Nigeria's development. The majority of irregular emigration involves youth aged 18-35, the most productive age group (Nganwuchu & Afunugo, 2023). Human capital theory posits that individuals can increase their productive capacity through better education and skills training (Becker, 1962). This theory explains why more young people migrate compared to older generations, seeking better job opportunities and higher wages (Kan, 1999; Khwaja, 2002). The focus on job opportunities and wages continues in recent research (Blackburn, 2010; Boheim & Taylor, 2007; Korpi et al., 2011).

Increased attention to migration dates back to human capital theory, which highlighted the importance of migrants in generating societal wealth and the variations in migratory motivation among different age groups (Becker, 1962). Individuals who have not yet invested in themselves are more likely to migrate, explaining why more young people migrate compared to older generations. This phenomenon can be observed in Nigeria, where youth migration is driven by unemployment, wage increases, bad governance, and insecurity (Sedark et al., 2021). The recent trend of "Japa syndrome" reflects youth migration driven by the desire to improve their financial situation. It is on this premise that the study tends to be guided by the following research questions: 1) What factors propel youth international migration in Nigeria? 2) What are the perceived

dangers encountered by youth international migrants? 3) What are the consequences of international youth migration on the migrated youth?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed an Interpretive Phenomenology Analysis (IPA) research design, using an in-depth interview schedule. Phenomenological research is a qualitative method that explores everyday human experiences without preconceived assumptions, aiming to understand how people perceive their experiences. Researchers interpret participants' feelings, perceptions, and beliefs to clarify the essence of the phenomenon under investigation.

Area of the study

The study was conducted in Nsukka Local Government Area (LGA), Enugu State, southeast Nigeria. Nsukka LGA comprises several autonomous communities in both rural and urban settings, including Edem, Umuabor, Opi, Opi-Agu, Okpalibo, Okutu, Okpuje, Obukpa, Ibagwani, Obimo, Lejja, Ibagwaagu, Eha alumona, Alor Unor, Ede Oballa, and Obimo. Nsukka LGA was chosen because it has many youths who have migrated abroad, leaving relatives behind.

Population and sampling

The study targeted male and female relatives of international migrants. A snowball sampling technique was used to select 16 participants, one participant from each village in Nsukka LGA, thereby ensuring equal representation. In-depth interviews were conducted with the participants, who were chosen based on their relation to the migrants. The researchers designed an instrument with open-ended questions, allowing participants to freely discuss their experiences. Participants were well-informed about the research aims and willingly participated.

Methods of data collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 16 consenting participants (11 males and 5 females) to ensure gender balance in the results. The interviews were conducted in English between July and August 2023, lasting approximately 30 minutes each. The questions aimed to identify factors propelling youth international migration, perceived dangers, and consequences of migration. Interviews were recorded, and the data were later transcribed. Identification codes linked field notes with verbal and nonverbal cues to relevant participants. Observations of non-verbal cues were recorded alongside the audio interviews.

Method of data analysis

Researchers read the translated notes and transcribed interviews while continuously playing the audio recordings to analyze the data. The transcribed data were open-coded immediately after translation to prevent memory loss. These codes were grouped into thematic categories. Thematic analysis, a technique for identifying important themes, was employed (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Braun & Clark, 2014). Participant identifiers, gender, and designation were used to code the data. Using an interpretative phenomenological approach, the data analysis characterized participants' lived experiences. According to Bennett and Roth (2015), reading the transcribed documents forms the beginning of data analysis, helping to identify themes and relationships. A thorough inspection of the data provided a fuller understanding of participants' minds and experiences, essential for a better picture of each case. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented narratively. Quotes from participants were used to present results, with pseudonyms ensuring anonymity.

FINDINGS

Table 1 presents a summary of the participant's demographic characteristics. The table shows the age range of the participants between 18-38 years old. It also showed that there were nine male and six female participants. Twelve of the participants were single, while three participants were married. Ten of the participants earn below ₦100,000, while five of the participants earn above ₦100,000. Ten of the participants reside in urban areas while five of them reside in rural areas. Seven of the participants had WAEC, Four had HND, and one had NCE, while three had a B.Sc. On the occupation of the participants, six of them were students, five of them were employed gainfully and four of them were unemployed.

Table 1: A summary of the participant's demographic characteristics

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Marital status	Level of Education	Income status	Location/rural/urban	Occupation before migration
Chima	22	Male	Single	WAEC	Below ₦100,000	Urban	Student
Mike	33	Male	Married	WAEC	Below ₦100,000	Urban	Student
Okey	25	Male	Single	WAEC	Below ₦100,000	Urban	Student
Obinna	38	Male	Married	HND	Above ₦100,000	Urban	Self-employed
Kamsi	35	Male	Single	HND	Above ₦100,000	Urban	Self-employed
Kosi	30	Male	Single	NCE	Below ₦100,000	Rural	Unemployed
Martins	34	Male	Single	WAEC	Below ₦100,000	Rural	Unemployed
Ken	38	Male	Married	B,Sc	Below ₦100,000	Rural	Self-employed
Okwy	30	Female	Single	B,Sc	Above ₦100,000	Urban	Self-employed
Wisdom	33	Male	Single	B,Sc	Below ₦100,000	Urban	Unemployed
Uche	28	Male	Single	WAEC	Below ₦100,000	Urban	Student
Ngozi	33	Female	Single	HND	Below ₦100,000	Rural	Unemployed
Chioma	24	Female	Single	HND	Below ₦100,000	Urban	Self-employed
Adanna	25	Female	Single	WAEC	Below ₦100,000	Urban	Student
Rubby	28	Male	Single	WAEC	Below ₦100,000	Urban	Student

Factors propelling youth international migration in Nigeria

The participants posit different factors that propel youth international migration in Nigeria. They include bad governance, insecurity, and lack of job opportunities.

Bad Governance

Participants identified bad governance as a major reason for youth migration. A 33-year-old male participant, who had attempted to migrate twice, shared:

“A lot of factors can lead to youth migration but first of all, Nigeria is not really a favourable place for people of young minds. The educational sector is neglected by the government, causing pain to young people. They feel the only way to retaliate is by leaving the country, taking their brains, intellect, and skills with them, which has a negative impact.”

A 38-year-old male participant added:

“Looking at the future of Nigeria, you cannot really foresee a good life or sufficient opportunities for good education and employment. Even if a new system tries to change things, they may not succeed due to opposition. If given the opportunity, I would leave the country without any doubt.”

A 25-year-old married participant emphasized:

“In other countries, you are valued, but here, you are treated as a slave. I want to travel out for my children's sake, to give them a better life and future. In Nigeria, you get nothing, struggle for everything, and still see no results. If I see an opportunity to travel, I will take it and never come back.”

Insecurity

Findings also revealed that insecurity is another factor that propels the youth towards international migration in Nigeria. Insecurity also drives youth migration. A 37-year-old male participant explained:

“For me, even though I am currently well-paid and a bit comfortable, I want to travel out because other countries are safer. In Nigeria, especially with the presence of 'Fulani herdsmen' or 'Boko Haram,' there is no guarantee of safety. Our leaders do not care about the citizens' welfare.”

A 22-year-old female participant shared:

“You are not at peace in your own house; you sleep with one eye open because of the evil people around. Even if I can manage the situation, what about my children? I can't stand anything bad happening to them.”

Unemployment

It was equally revealed that the inability to secure lives and properties makes one to leave his country, youths are not safe in their country, any attempt to challenge or correct higher authority their life will go for it, this also propel young international migration in Nigeria. Unemployment was another key factor. A 35-year-old participant disclosed:

“We have a very low employment rate. Graduates are on the streets with no jobs, and the government calls us 'lazy.' Even where there are jobs, they are taken by older people who manipulate their age to fit the positions, leaving qualified youths jobless.”

A 28-year-old participant echoed this sentiment:

“After finishing school, you find it difficult to get a job. The jobs are there, but they go to those with connections, not necessarily those qualified. Those in positions can't do the job well, while those who know what they are doing suffer after their years in school.”

Poverty

Findings also revealed that young international migration also serves economic purposes for families. Young people who migrate internationally can broaden a family's access to income in other countries as an insurance mechanism against instability in their home country. They may also have to move at a young age to access economic opportunities to support their family if their parents are not able to provide for them. Poverty also drives youth migration as a means to support their families. A 37-year-old participant recounted:

“I've suffered in life. Growing up, my family lived in penury. My siblings died because we couldn't afford hospital bills. I decided to lift my family out of poverty, so if I see an opportunity to migrate, I will take it.”

A 27-year-old participant added:

“I will never let my children experience what my parents did. We lived in abject poverty, and I vowed to give my children a better life. I will do whatever it takes.”

Perceived dangers of youth migration

Perceptions of opportunities and dangers of migrating abroad and in Nigeria; the youths’ knowledge of the risks they might encounter on the journey through preparations and decision-making process and also lived experiences of irregular migrants living abroad without documentation; access to networks; and the influence family members have on the decision to migrate are the main focus of these sections. The decision between being an ‘illegal’ and ‘irregular’ migrant is a matter of concern to youth migrations and the dangers involved. Due to the negative connotation of the term ‘illegal’, the term ‘irregular’ will be used when referring to a person, while ‘illegal’ will be used when referring to a status or process some youth perceived potentials dangers living abroad, The term “illegal” is considered problematic by many intending youth for international migration because the adjective has a negative connotation and suggests an involvement in a crime, and thereby perceived it to be a great danger.

Youth also perceive various dangers related to migration. A deported international migrant shared:

“My brother warned me about the dangers of being defrauded by middlemen. After selling our father’s land and family contributions, I prepared for the journey. Unfortunately, the travel arrangement was flawed, and I was deported from the UK within a month. My fears became reality,”

Another participant discussed their brother’s fears:

“My brother was scared of being tagged an illegal immigrant and of job availability. Luckily, his fears were unfounded, and he made it safely.”

A participant voiced concerns about remittances and racism:

“My brother feared being unable to send money back home and facing racism and discrimination abroad. He also worried about being deported for violating foreign laws.”

Consequences of youth migration

International migration 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. Many young people are excited at the prospect of

leaving home to settle in another place. However, the period leading up to their departure may present a variety of challenges. one of the challenges cited most often by participants through phone calls was the difficulty youth faced in obtaining accurate information about their intended destination.

Discrimination

Discrimination was a significant consequence of migration. A participant shared a concern about his brother:

“I faced severe discrimination in Germany. I couldn’t get a decent job because I couldn’t speak the language.”

Another participant narrated an experience that happened to his brother at a church:

“I went to a nearby church, and despite available seats, people avoided sitting next to me. I felt so embarrassed that I left the church immediately.”

One of the major problems encountered by migrating youths is discrimination exhibited by their “hosts.” In fact, most international migrants are confronted with one type of discrimination or the other. The picture is made clearer through a (28 year old participant):

“When my brother arrived in London, he thanked God because it was a dream comes true for the family. His host was a classmate in primary school who came to the airport to receive him. After spending one week in his house, he suggested that it was time he looked for a job. The search began. One day, he went to a grocery store to know if he could be their sales person. He was surprised when the manager looked at him scornfully and replied that black people do not work in his store. He dismissed him with a wave of hand. A week later, he saw an advert in front of an eatery seeking to employ a clerical officer. He went in with his documents. The receptionist was surprised to see a black boy applying for clerical job. She informed him that they only employ blacks as waiters or in the kitchen to tidy up things. His ego became deflated immediately. Finally, he got a job as an attendant in a store. The job did not last beyond two months. He was sacked because he had an argument with a white girl who was ordering him around at the store. In fact, once you are black, you are less than human he concluded”

Forced Labor

Another major consequence of international migration is forced labor. Most of the time, the young migrants are meant to do certain jobs against their will. There are times when they are forced to peddle drugs. A 35-year-old participant recounted:

“When he got to South Africa, he was stranded. As he was searching around if he could find a Nigerian who he could confide in, he met one black man. He seemed to know that he had a problem and asked if he could be of help. Because he is black, he trusted him and told him his problem. He promised to provide him with shelter. He followed him to his house. He gave him a room and provided him with a lot of comfort. He felt he has arrived. After four days, he invited him to his sitting room and told me that he has a job for him. He was excited. He promised to pay him well. Then, he told him that his job would be to supply heroine to his customers. He told him that he does not need such a job and that the man replied that he was just informing him and not seeking for his consent. He threatened to hand my brother over to the police and that he must refund all the expenses he had made on him. That’s how he became a drug peddler. One day, he was caught and jailed before he was finally deported”.

Lack of access to further education

Access to education is also challenging. A participant shared: “My cousin found it difficult to further his education abroad due to a lack of funds”. Another participant added: “My relative hoped to further her education abroad but couldn’t due to incomplete documents and lack of funds. She felt cheated but remained hopeful.”

Difficulty with remittances

Remitting money back home is often difficult. A 38-year-old participant noted: “My brother had trouble accessing funds to send money back home. He faced difficulties opening a bank account and was often duped while trying to remit money.”

Another participant added:

“My relative struggled to find a job and eventually faced high charges while sending money back home through unreliable means.”

On the remittance of money back home, a male participant gave an account of his relative experience:

“Before he could get a job, it was a tug of war, and when he finally got one and was receiving money based on the amount of hours he put into the job, he decided to send some money back home. It was very difficult, at a point he was using western union money transfer then someone then introduced him to a more faster one that he could help him send money home from his account while he give him the dollar equivalent, at the beginning it was working well until he found out that it was a rip off because the guy was collecting additional charges saying it was bank charges”.

A 33years old male participants stated that:

“Some of the youth that have migrated left with the skills they posses that the other youth at home could have benefited from thereby leaving the home country with youth who has inadequate skill sets he stated Further that the gap that the youth that has migrated left behind could not be filled up easily as the access to some facilities was difficult that were initially occupied by those youth who has migrated.”

Suggestions on how to improve the situation

Participants suggested organizing seminars to educate youths about the dangers of illegal migration. A participant shared:

“My brother didn’t know about the hardships abroad. He thought it was all about making money and returning home wealthy. He faced many challenges and was eventually deported. Educating youths about these issues is vital.”

Providing employment could reduce youth migration. A 36-year-old participant shared:

“After years of job searching, I traveled abroad and was arrested for forged documents. Now, I have a job in a bank and will never work outside Nigeria again. I learned my lesson the hard way.”

Similarly, majority of the participants believed that apart from elimination of poverty, it is necessary to organize seminars and workshops for youths in order to explain to them the dangers involved in illegal international migration. Most youths know only about the gains of traveling abroad, they may not be aware of the pains involved. One of the participants gave a narrative of the experience that happened to his brother that was deported:

“Before he traveled to Europe, he never knew about the kind of hardship that our people face over there. He thought that once you get abroad, you get a job and start making real money. The following year, one returns back to Nigeria to show off his wealth. When he got to Europe, he spent up to six months before getting the first job. At every moment he was hiding from the watchful eyes of security agents. Before he left Nigeria, he had calculated the money he was likely to earn in dollars in a year. When he converted it to Naira, it was so much money. As he got to Europe, he realized that he had to pay house rent, light bills, water rates, and transport fares in dollars and feeding. What was left was nothing to write home about. He spent eight years without returning to Nigeria. Finally, he had an issue and was deported. If he had been educated about the problems he faced there, maybe he would not have traveled. There should be regular seminars for youths on this issue. Invite people with such experience to educate them. This is very vital.”

Participants were also of the opinion that provision of employment could prevent youth migration abroad. The participants agreed that if youths have gainful employment, they may not wish to travel and suffer abroad. Buttressing this point, a 36 year old participant a narrative about his relative who was deported before settling down:

“I never believed that I will travel out of Nigeria to work. I worked hard while at school and I graduated with Second Class Upper Division in Economics. After my youth service, I searched for a job for almost three years to no avail. And there was also serious pressure from family members. It was then I began thinking of traveling out of the country. At last, I traveled and was arrested for forged documents. I was detained for eight months before being deported. Today, I have a job in the bank. I think I will not like to work anywhere outside Nigeria again. I have learnt my lesson the hard way”

In summary, the study highlights bad governance, insecurity, unemployment, and poverty as major factors propelling youth migration from Nigeria. Perceived dangers include fraud, racism, discrimination, and remittance difficulties. Consequences of migration include discrimination, forced labor, challenges in further education, and difficulties in remittances. Participants suggest that employment opportunities and education about migration risks could mitigate youth migration.

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

The study investigated the factors that propel youth's international migration in spite of the fact that they are aware of various challenges they are likely to encounter. Data revealed that the major factor that pushes youths to travel out of the country is poverty. This finding is in tandem with the view of Ebimngbo, et al. (2022), Nanzip (2020) and Mberu and Pongou (2010) when they noted that the major push factor for youth migration in Nigeria is poverty. Again, the findings provide support for the relative deprivation theory, which states that the incentives to migrate are a lot higher in areas that have high levels of economic inequality. It is also seen that the findings of the study are very much in line with the thinking of the functionalists who believe that youth migration is fulfilling certain functions for the individual and his/her family, especially in eliminating poverty (Djelti, 2017). Data also revealed that sometimes, poverty, apart from causing youths to migrate abroad, also forced them to commit crimes to raise money to travel abroad. Some of them dupe people; some steal while others misappropriate funds kept in their custody. All these are in the desperate move to travel out of the country to seek greener pastures.

Another major force that propels youths, especially educated ones, to migrate to foreign countries is unemployment. A lot of young people, after graduating

from colleges and universities, roam about for years without getting decent jobs. This problem, coupled with the initial poverty in their families force them to migrate abroad for better opportunities without minding the consequences. This finding is in support of the view of Agwu, et al., (2020) and Nanzip (2020) when he pointed out that one of the push factors for youth migration is unemployment. He believes that youths move away from their countries of origin with the hope of getting better employment overseas. In many cases, youths have been asked to go back to “land” when faced with unemployment. That is, they are encouraged to take up farming as a profession. Unfortunately, the study revealed that in the study area just like the entire Nsukka urban area, there is scarcity of land. And the requirements for acquiring plots of land are very difficult for the average youth. Similarly, the few parcels of available land are not equitably distributed. Some people have more parcels of land than they need, while others have little or no land. Therefore, even when the youth wants to take up farming as an occupation, he may not get the land. The land is also not available for him to sell and raise the capital to set up a business venture. So, the presence of poverty, unemployment, and being idle, may propel young people to migrate abroad, most times illegally at the slightest opportunity. The finding is in line with the position of Nanzip (2020) Bauder (2006) and Nwosu et al (2022) when they noted that one of the push factors of youth migration is lack of land or lack of fertile land.

Another factor that causes youth international migration is bad governance as revealed in the findings from this study. This finding is in tandem with Muktar et al (2017) who noted that bad governance is the failure to govern competently, effectively and proficiently. Any leadership that is devoid of transparency, accountability, credibility, justice, selflessness, and fair play demonstrates bad leadership. In the developmental aspect, also, governing without transformative capacity is bad governance. In view of Muktar et al (2017), the basic argument about the role of governance in development holds that weak governance originates due to a sequential failure of the state to: a) project a developmental vision; b) demonstrate a commitment to realize this vision, through putting in place policies and programs, as well as calibrating its allocative priorities to realize this vision; c) develop a capacity to fulfill its commitments. This includes administrative and technical capacity as well as political capacity to mobilize necessary support both within civil society as well as in the political arena to translate the vision into reality. While visionary leaders are very rare in Nigeria, other bad leadership practices are also reasons behind insecurity in the country. Among other factors, corruption, and injustice are also prevalent in the country and are some of the major reasons why youth migrate to foreign countries.

The findings from the study also reveal insecurity as a major factor that is responsible for international youth migration. According to Okoye and Aniche

(2021) and Nwoke (2019), in contemporary Nigerian society, the security system is highly porous. There are tolls of dehumanization in the country, insurgency, unbridled violence and the lack of safety in general. Young girls in Nigeria have been targets of terrorism. There are so many hidden criminal activities going on secretly in Nigeria. Due to lack of security in Nigeria, some Nigerians in the diaspora have declined to come back to Nigeria for fear of their lives. For lack of security, some foreign investors have diverted their business attention to other countries. Young people have migrated to other countries to preserve their lives. Nigerian youth in recent times have witnessed religious upheavals and ethnic clashes across the country. Many Nigerian young people were directly involved, and young Nigerians were lost to the clashes or became internally displaced or driven into refugee camps. Some youths sustained wounds or injuries that have kept them psychologically traumatized (Nwoke, 2011). All these scenarios have contributed to insecurity in Nigeria and subsequently have contributed to international youth migration in Nigeria.

A consequence of youth migration found in the study is discrimination by their “hosts” in destination countries. Most times, young migrants are discriminated against either because of their colour or because of their sex or religion. These findings support the view of Olajide (2018) and Nwosu et al (2022) as they pointed out that discrimination is a major problem confronting young migrants. According to them, such discrimination comes in the form of racial discrimination, religious/gender/language biases and/or merely because they are outsiders. On the other hand, the study revealed that brain drain is not a consequence of youth migration. Rather, what was discovered was the phenomenon of brain waste. This is because most graduate youth migrants, on getting to their destination, are meant to perform unskilled jobs such as cleaning gutters, cutting grasses, gatemen, mortuary attendants and so on. This, according to Pires (2015) and Olajide (2018), results in deskilling. Such migrants are never allowed to use their training to achieve their desires.

The findings of this study have implications for social work practice and training in Nigeria. There is a need for social workers in different organizations in Nigeria that come in contact with young people to add counselling of young people as part of the services they render. This way, social workers will have access to many young people who are potential migrants. Through this interaction, social workers can give them accurate information on some of the problems associated with migration and guide them through the process as noted by Okoye and Aniche (2021). It is pertinent for young people to understand that migration is a planned process to be taken seriously. Also, it may be necessary for social work educators, together with their students organize massive awareness and sensitization programmes in various university

campuses on the problems associated with migration. This may go a long way in preparing potential migrants to know what to expect and be prepared.

From the findings, it is therefore recommended that the Nigerian governments and their agencies should manage the economy properly and put up policies that can help to eliminate poverty, which has been identified as the major force that pushes youths into migration and enslavement. In other words, the formulation of National Migration Policy in 2015 is not enough. There is a need to develop an accompanying policy on poverty reduction to propel the migration policy to success.

In the same vein, community-based and sensitization programmes should be mounted to educate and create awareness among the youths on the dangers and consequences of illegal international migration. This can be done in collaboration with social work associations. In other words, there should be regular seminars and workshops to bring to the knowledge of the youths and parents the possible dangers they may face in the process of international migration. Youth migrants who have returned may be invited to share their bitter experiences. This may discourage the youths from embarking on such suicide missions. On the other hand, the government and wealthy individuals should build factories and industries to reduce the level of youth unemployment.

Similarly, Nigerian government should intensify efforts at ensuring an effective and systematic pattern for international labor movements which sufficiently respond to the supply-demand dynamics of the labour markets across continents. This can be achieved through bilateral, and multilateral, or regional agreements. This is directed at answering the call of some scholars in international migration when they requested that Nigeria should enter into partnership with Western nations in order to derive maximum benefits from migration. This form of collaboration ensures a win-win situation for the country of destination and the home country of the migrants.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concluded that great numbers of youths are willing to migrate abroad legally or even illegally though many of them are not aware of the various challenges they might encounter overseas. The study made an attempt to identify the factors that propel and encourage the youth towards international migration in Nigeria with special emphasis on the happenings regarding youth migration in Enugu state. The study noted that many of the young people in Enugu state may appear to be aware of the consequences relating to international migration, yet they are still willing to take the risk as a result of their perceived idea that anywhere is better than Nigeria as a result of unemployment, high cost of living, and insecurity. Some of these international

youth migrants are not aware of the situations in their destination countries before making the decision to migrate. Some of the situations as reported are similar to the modern-day slave trade as evident in Libya. We can, therefore, conclude that the greatest problem confronting young migrants today is the issue of being sold into slavery, being forced into unpaid labor/prostitution and being forced to donate their vital organs. The study has also highlighted the factors that encourage international youth migration and noted that young people need to be sensitized.

Social workers have a tremendous role to play in ameliorating the ills in international youth migration. They can serve as frontline workers in assessing and providing interventions on migration to the society. They should be committed to the promotion of the well-being of migrants irrespective of ethnic groups, socioeconomic backgrounds, religion, and political groups. Social workers also need to create avenues for sensitization and advocacy programmes to forestall the migration of the youth. Social workers should partner with the government in the areas of developing stable and achievable policies toward discouraging international youth migration by providing and creating an enabling environment for the youth to thrive in their daily endeavors, thereby discovering their God-given potential. The study also rests on the human capital theory, which states that the incentives to migrate are a lot higher in areas that have a high level of economic inequality and which has to do with wages. It is also seen that the findings of the study are very much in line with the thinking of the functionalists, who believe that youth migration is fulfilling certain functions for the individual and his/her family, especially in eliminating poverty. The study also concludes that there is a significant correlation between poverty and youth migration.

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