

## INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN AFRICA: A STUDY OF NIGERIA, 2010-2022

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### Abstract

*This study interrogates the nexus between International Migration and Poverty Reduction in Africa with a focus in Nigeria. The theoretical framework that anchored the study is the Pull and Push Migration theory propounded by Ravenstein in the year 1885. The study employed longitudinal survey research design and time series analysis to carry out its investigation. In the course of the discourse, the findings show that: one of the Impacts of International Migration is that, there will be enough workers who will work for low wages, there will be an increase of cultural diversity, and the skills gap will be filled, that is to say that, the immigrant must have arrived with various kinds of skill which will help to develop the destination country. Arising from the above findings the researcher made the following recommendations: Provision of job opportunities to the Nigeria youths to curb youth incessant international migration; and provision of standard hospitals by the Nigerian Government; therefore making our young medical personnel to find the country worth staying in.*

**Keywords:** International Migration, Poverty Reduction, Job Opportunities, Cultural Diversity

### Introduction

Essentially, the creation of humans have always showcased themselves in movement activities. This has been a major feature in the history of Africa and the entire globe generally (Akanji, 2012). Migration cannot be inevitable from the history of the story of man, families, villages and nation- state. Therefore, migration can be traced as far back as the existence of man, especially, when man desired to go in search of food during various famine seasons, the desire of separating from the crowd as well as the seeking for independence. As earlier revealed, virtually all individuals and nation states have one or two traces of migration history (Internal and international) mostly influenced by two factors these are the “Pull” and “Push” factors.

Migration can be internal or international. Internal migration explains the movement of individuals within same geographical territory, which in this case, can be from rural to urban or from Lagos to Abuja. While, International Migration has to do with the crossing of borders or international boundaries such as Cameroon to Nigeria described as South-South Migration, Nigeria to United States of America described also as South-North Migration (Ravenstein, 2014).

For International Migration (Emigration and Immigration) to take place, the sending state, the receiving state and the migrant is involved in the migration process. International Migration is a global culture in which a reasonable amount of individuals (nationals) practice. International Migration (Emigration and Immigration) can be of great benefits to a nation state through agreements and partnerships with others (states) in the international system. As observed from literatures, developing countries engage more in

International Migration than the developed countries (Ojiako, 2014). About 1 billion migrants are around the world presently not residing in their nation state of origin (Nwagwugwu and Oluranti, 2015) as these migrants around the globe can make up a 6th nation state after the order of China, India, United States of America (USA), Indonesia and Brazil (Adeola and Oluyemi, 2013). As people tend to move from a particular place to another for various reasons best known to them also being an essential part of man's nature (Fayomi, 2013).

International Migration is said to be at its increase due to the wide spread taught benefits and awareness of opportunities in various countries through various platforms such as the television, internet, etc. International Migration (particularly immigration) is a sensitive issue in discussions and debates in the international system. However, this foundation and trend as well as various rising phases of globalization have contributed in influencing the tradition and culture of International Migration in our immediate world. This globalization, which has unfolded itself in different phases, has raised alarm of great benefits and opportunities around the globe. This benefit ranges from job opportunities, international education certifications, interconnectedness, international relations between countries creating avenue for interdependence especially in the aspect of manpower (Martin and Midgley, 2013). Due to this perceived opportunities International Migration became a popular culture and trend in our present world (Wickramasinghe and Wimalarantana, 2016).

The rate and speed at which International Migration is increasing is alarming as it cannot be completely stopped but can be managed properly to the nation state's advantage bringing poverty reduction and socio-economic development (Babalola, 2015). International Migration (emigration and immigration) as a major and popular economic factor can revive a nation state such as Nigeria by bringing poverty reduction, it also has the capacity to develop a nation state, through other means such as filling the nation state's labour force with quality skills and expertise for maximum productivity as earned results which invariably will help to reduce a nation's poverty rate. However, International Migration is needed and highly embraced since the combination of individual experts from various cultures and nationality can not only assist in a nation's poverty reduction rate but can as well make a nation state flourish (Braun, 2014). The present 21st century's experience on International Migration (emigration and immigration) matters is revealed to be the tip of the ice berg as International Migration will keep unfolding and remain on its increase due to the exposure and experiences of migrants with the help of different unfolding phases of globalization (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011). The high increase in demand for labour makes International Migration inevitable, so are the "pull" and the "push" factors of international migration. These factors make individuals (nationals) to desperately desire migrating out of their nation state of origin. This describes International Migration as an activity and also a reaction that makes the migrant unstoppable.

However, due to the high increase and desires of migrants to be part of a nation state at all cost or become a resident in their favourite destinations the international system is consciously concerned about this high rate of movements of migrants across borders. This is the reasons nation states guide their boundaries and entrance gate jealously because without proper control and conduct of these migrants, as regards International Migration activities, there will be more unskilled workers and unwanted persons in the nation-state which in turn can cause nuisance resulting to unwanted outcomes. Skilled migrants are always assets to the receiving nation state (Adetunji, 2014).

The 1970s and 1980s fortunes derived from Nigeria's oil sector increased the number of immigrants from the West African neighbouring countries into the Nigerian State. The Nigerian state shares borders with Cameroon located at the Eastern part of Nigeria, Chad to the Northern part of Nigeria while the South-West Nigeria region is bordered by Benin Republic. The porous borders which are mostly economical to

her fellow West African neighbours keep Nigeria at disadvantage, as they are majorly unprotected thereby threatening the poverty reduction, socio-economic development and security of the nation state; though the movement is perceived to bring peace and unity to West Africans as well as to promote trade which would lead to economic growth of the West African states ECOWAS (Akinyemi, 2013).

### **Conceptual Delineation**

**International Migration:** For this study, International Migration is the movement of nationals from other West African states to Nigeria (South-South) and also the movement of Nigerians to the developed countries (South-North). International migration is the movement of people across international borders for the purpose of settlement. Migration is the movement of people between regions or countries. It is the process of changing one's place of residence and permanently living in a region or country. When people leaving their place of residence go to live permanently in another area then this is called migration.

**Poverty Reduction:** Means all formal activities geared towards lowering the rate and prevalence of poverty in the country. Poverty is the complete lack of the means necessary to meet basic personal needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Reduction is the action or fact of making something smaller or less in amount, degree, or size.

**Job Opportunities:** A chance for an economic role for which a person is paid. An advancement of a task, or series of tasks carried out for a financial or non-financial benefits. It can also signify a progress of a public transaction done for private profit; something performed ostensibly in a favorable circumstance or occasion as a part of official duty. It means a work done for private gain. It is an occasioned to work done for hire. To seek private gain under public service. A job can be seen in actions done, hire or let in periods of service.

**Cultural Diversity:** This is the norms, values, background, lifestyles, and habits of different humans in their different societies. The coming together of different attitude, race and belief and human behavioral actions that belongs in different environment or jurisdiction. It is the different conventional conducts and ideologies of a community. Cultural diversity is the coming together of persons in a system comprising the different norms of people living in a society.

### **Theoretical Underpinning**

This paper is anchored on the theory of “Pull” and “Push” Migration Theory propounded by Ravenstein in the year 1885. Ravenstein (1885) was the individual who revealed the “Pull” and “Push” Migration theory from one of his popularly known writings revealed as “law of migration” (Xiangjing, 2009: 14) which was derived from a study focusing on Britain in the 19th century, with the use of some information such as birth place of the migrants relating to his study. This theory explains the “how” and “why” of migration within a territory or across borders and also the “importance of international migrations” to nation states (Haas, 2018). According to his writing it is impossible to separate development from migration. The seven (7) laws he listed in the study (laws of migration) are: (1) Migration depends on distance (2) Migration takes place in stages (3) Every successful migration process is endowed with a migrating pattern flow (4) Most times the natives in their territory have less degree (educational qualifications) than the fellow counterparts (migrants) (5) Gender of the migrants (6) There is a relationship between the level of technology, number of migrants and distance travelled (7) Migration has always been influenced by economic motives.”

According to Haas (2018) other scholars who also made several attempt in applying this theory apart from Ravenstein are; Lee, Donald among others (Haas, 2018: 35, 36). According to Donald the forceful desire for opportunities and improvement of one's life most times influences and motivates international migration. Generally, when the “Pull” factors at the destination nation-state outweighs the “Push” factors at the individual's nation state of origin, International Migration often takes place. These “push” and “pull” factors according to Donald is referred to as Negative (Push factors) and Positive (Pull factors). These “Push” and “Pull” factors (determinants of migration) by most scholars are demographic, economic, environmental, and social in nature. Myrdal and Prothero opines that only “Push” factors are responsible for international migration while others (Sovani, Base, Trewartha) oppose the statement revealing that the combination of “Push” and “Pull” factors are responsible for the migrants decision in leaving his/her territory (Haas, 2018: 40).

According to Lee, “pull” and “push” migration theory are representatives of either a positive migration or negative migration, since migration is provoked by two (2) factors which happen to be “pull” and “push.” Lee also identified some barriers that can hinder International Migration between the two (2) different countries. The barriers he revealed were cultural differences, distance, differences in language communication and most importantly physical border presence. (Haas, 2008: 40). Lee's contribution reveals why International Migration takes place and secondly why majority of individuals find it difficult to migrate as explained with the barriers that hinders migration. Lee also revealed some hypothesis that explains the “pull” and “push” migration theory. These hypotheses are: (1) The volume of migrants varies in a territory in diverse areas (2) The volume of migration also varies with different migrants (3) Also areas where there is similar characteristics as in the migrants origin (such as; race, ethnicity, traditions, education, income among others) mostly experience less immigration (4) The fluctuation in the displayed pull factors such as; the boom and increase in the economy and the decrease in the economy can also truncate the high increase of immigration bringing it lower than unexpected. (5) Unless the migration (immigration) process are checked and properly managed the migration activity will increase in no time (6) migration population vary in states for example developed countries have more migrants than in less developed states (Haas, 2008: 41).

Lee cited in Haas (2018) also reveals that: (1) Migration is selective. This selection can be positive or negative. It is positive for the wealthy migrant and negative for the opposite individual. (2) Majority migrants who respond to the “pull” factors, they are selective about their destinations since they are not under any pressure to move, they only want to move because of their desire and perceived opportunities out there. (3) Migrants who respond to push factors are negatively seeking to migrate out to another destination. Some of these people influenced by “push” factors are obviously more of the illegal and irregular migrants. There are two (2) types of migrants, the one influenced by the pull factors (influenced by positivity) in the destination nation state and the other influence by the “push” factors (influenced by negativity) at the state of origin (4) How high the degree of “pull” factors (positive views) at the destination nation state determines the increase in difficulty and obstacles faced in getting into the nation-state due to the high immigration policy in those destinations (states) for development, health and security reasons for the state. (5) the most preferred age bracket 6 wanted and mostly welcomed by immigration policies in receiving countries are the young and age working set of individuals, to make up the population of the labour force than aged individuals. (6) The migrants are mostly at the middle of the “pull” factors of the destination nation state and the “push” factors of their nation-state of origin. In all these they are more of complementing the population of the destination states.”

Summarizing Lee's model and opinion on this theory (“pull” and “push” migration theory), International Migration is influenced by the “Pull” and “Push” factors.

## **The Discourses**

### **Socio-Economic Impact of International Migration in Nigeria**

Migration is a decision that impacts the welfare of the household, the home community and in the end the whole economy in various ways. The welfare implications of migration on the origin country are most often, though not always, sizeable and positive. The main channels through which migration alleviates poverty are increased incomes from remittances, ability to smooth consumption, access to finance for starting a new business, as well as tapping on to the knowledge and resources provided by the international community of the migrant diaspora. Besides pure monetary gains, migration and remittances allow for higher investment in health care and education.

Foreign aids and diaspora remittances are key relief to poor Africans. While foreign aides have stagnated in recent years, remittances become the financial lifeline which unlike the former, places money directly in the hands of those in need. In 2012, Africans received \$32 billion from their sons and daughters abroad. The 17 million officially documented Nigerians in the diaspora funneled a whopping sum of \$21 billion to the country (the fifth world's largest beneficiary of such funds following India, China, Philippines and Mexico) as against the \$23 billion they sent in 2011. With growing diaspora communities in Europe, America and Asia, the figure is growing tremendously. Concerned by the continuous drop in revenue generation for the country due to shortfall in crude oil production, the coordinating Minister for the Economy and Minister of Finance, Dr. Ngozi Okonju-Iweala has renewed initiatives to attract non-oil revenue from remittances from diaspora Nigerians and non-oil tax payers in the country.

The Minister has commenced a sensitization tour of major cities in the world with high concentration of Nigerians to convince them on increased remittances. The Federal Government has concluded plans to float a diaspora bond for Nigerians living abroad through which medium the Minister believes that Nigerians over there can meaningfully contribute to the economic development of the country by investing in critical infrastructure development with high yielding returns potentials. The appetite to pursue diaspora investment has been buoyed following the realization of a huge inflow of income from remittances. According to the Finance Minister, a whopping \$20.7 billion was harvested in 2013 while in the first half of the year, 2014, more than \$10.40 billion has equally been recorded.

This account was contained in the statement by the Minister's Special Adviser on communication; Paul Nwabiukwu on the Minister's trip traversing the world in hot chase for remittance, the statement explained that the mission was in response to the long standing desire of the Nigerian diaspora to support economic development in the country (Nigeria). A high level executive legislative team is currently holding a series of interactive sessions with Nigerians in Europe and the United States. The sessions are organized by the Debt Management Officer, led by the Director General, Dr. Abraham Nwankwo. It will be recalled that Nigerians in the Diaspora have been seeking ways and means to contribute more to the country's development. This interest is backed by substantial capacity. The value of remittances from Nigerians abroad in 2013 was \$20.77 billions and for the first half of 2014 it is \$10.40 billion. This includes contributions through remittances to their families, friends, and communities, medical missions and provisions of scholarships. Indeed, the experience of countries such as Israel and India shows that the diaspora are a force to be reckoned with the growth and development of the country through the funding of critical development projects among other means. This current effort is directed at providing the Nigerian Diaspora similar opportunities.

Remittances have been found to have an income stabilizing effect at both the macroeconomic level and at the household level. Historically, remittances have attended to rise in times of economic downturns,

financial crises, and natural disasters because migrants living abroad send more money to help their families back home. Also, migrant remittances increase domestic savings as well as improve financial intermediation, which can improve growth prospects. Evidence from Philippines, Mexico, Nigeria and other countries suggest that remittances promote self-employment and also increase small business investment in migrant-sending country. The diaspora equally serves as a link between the sending and receiving communities, expanding the opportunities to access international financing, and facilitates networking. The diaspora also contributes through philanthropic remittances and the development project such as schools, health facilities and community infrastructure. Access to information through the diaspora and skills learned by returning migrants can improve technology, management and institutions in the sending country. Emigrants may also be an important supply of foreign investment as their knowledge of their country institutions (and perhaps a greater ability to maneuver within the home country regulatory framework) may mean that they incur lower investment cost and/or higher returns, compared to other international investors.

### **Impacts of Migration on the Destination Location**

#### **Positive Impacts**

Following the research embarked on, the following are the positive impacts of international migration on the Destination Location: First, they will be enough workers who will work for low wages and are prepared to do jobs that local people in such destination country will not do; they will be increase in cultural diversity of that country; skills gaps are filled, that is to say that, the immigrant must have arrived with various kinds of skill which will help to develop the destination country; boost to the local economy; there will be increase in government tax revenues, public services can benefit from an influx of qualified staff e.g. doctors and nurses and there will be increase in birth rate among the immigrant.

#### **Negative Impacts**

The negative impacts of international migration on the destination location include: There will be pressure on public services such as schools, housing and healthcare; overcrowding in the destination country which might bring about increase in crime, language and cultural barriers can exist; there will be increased in levels of pollution; increased pressure on natural resources, there will be racial tensions and discrimination; local people can miss out on jobs due to increased competition from migrants; Migrant groups may not assimilate into local communities and there will be gender imbalance because majority of immigrants are usually men compared to female; there will be cheap and flexible labour; there will be increase and high rate of unemployment among immigrants and also there will be slums in big cities, the reason being that no incentives to improve working conditions.<sup>24</sup>

### **Impacts of Migration on the Origin Location**

#### **Positive Impacts**

The positive impact of international migration on the origin country includes: There will be reduction in unemployment in the origin country, the reason being that there will be less competition for jobs; less pressure on natural resources including food and water; when migrants return, they bring new skills and knowledge and this skills help to development the origin country; there is less pressure on services such as

education and healthcare and money is often sent back to family and friends (known as remittances), boosting the local economy of the origin country.

### **Negative Impacts**

On the aspect of the negative impacts of international migration on the origin location, there include: There are fewer people to pay tax, so it could increase; fewer skilled migrants, as those with skills and education, tend to be the people who migrate. This is also known as brain-drain, and when there are brain drain in the origin country, there will be serious effect or rather it will affect the said country negatively in terms of economic development, also brain drain could have a negative impact on economic development; families separated by borders and there are often gender imbalances, as it is often males who move.

### **Impacts of Migration on Migrants**

#### **Positive Impacts**

The positive impacts of international migration on the Migrants include that: There are much opportunities for the Migrants to get a better job, compared to the country that they came from; there will be improvement in the quality of life they will be living, the reason being that, the more job opportunity they have, the more money involved and the better way of living; Safety from conflict, that is to say that, majority of the Migrants are better safe compared to their Origin Country, the reason being that, some of the reasons Migrants live their home country in search of other country could be as a result of insecurity in their origin country, therefore, when once they have been accepted in the country they have migrated to, they fill highly safe; another important point is that, there are opportunity for a better education.

#### **Negative Impacts**

The negative impacts of international migration on the Migrants are that; Migrants may run out of money, and since the country is not their origin country, people to assist or people to run to might be very difficult; Issues communicating due to language barriers; Issues securing accommodation or housing on arrival; Illness due to not being able to access healthcare; Migrants can be exploited and also Migrants may experience racism.

### **Consequences of International Migration (Emigration and Immigration) in Nigeria**

These consequences are discussed as follows;

Emigration as a consequence is associated with brain drain as a challenge which leads to lack of skilled personnel, lack of man power and expertise due to the high rate of individuals leaving the nation state for their various destinations. When these smart and sophisticated individuals leave the nation state due to these two (2) factors known as “push” and “pull” the sending state suffers as it lacks various improvements and developments such as in industries and other sensitive fields in the nation-state. All these skills are then benefited and transferred to the destination countries. Nigeria as a state of origin suffers high rate emigration of highly skilled and intellectual individuals such as doctors, engineers,

lecturers to mention a few. Majority of these highly skilled Nigerian emigrants see it as unnecessary to associate back with their home nation state through investments and most importantly feel reluctant and discourage in bringing their skills to develop the nation-state reducing the low level of industrialization in Nigeria.

Immigration consequences are seen in protocol relating to free movement of persons.

Haas (2018) affirms that, the economic boom of the Nigerian state due to the discoveries and presence of oil in the 1970s and also the ECOWAS protocol brought about the influx of undocumented migrants from West African neighboring countries in and out of the nation state. The West African States entered into an ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African State) treaty with a view of promoting cooperation and development amongst member states. This was achieved by dissolving the obstacles and barriers restricting the free movement of persons and residence of labour force within the community, this protocol was formed for this purpose. It means that the entry conditions for community citizens are comparatively easy and simple in comparison to aliens coming from the non ECOWAS countries.

Thus, a community citizen may enter any member state of the community for 90days without visa, provided he possesses a travel document and international health certificate. But this protocol has given way for illegal/undocumented movements across borders. Making the Nigerian borders a free easy passage without identities or documents. This can endanger the socio economic development and political stability of a nation state. This ECOWAS Protocol is misunderstood and misinterpreted by and to the public (West Africans). For this reason, Nigeria has found herself in an embarrassing situation from the borders, most especially the northern borders where there are high rates of illegal/undocumented immigrants from Niger and Chad, as a result of the economic hardship in their respective countries.

Olajide (2015) also acknowledged that, one of the factors responsible for International Migration in West Africa is the strong force of necessary agriculture needs for various individuals such as farmers, nomads known as the cattle rearers as they search for water as well as grazing lands for their cattles and cultivation of crops. Due to the poor conditions of their (neighbouring West Africans) various environments they migrate to their nearest alternative which is Nigeria. But the disadvantage is that these West Africans cross the international borders with little or no regard for the Nigerian regulations. Though borders must remain open but openness without adequate control allows possibility of threats such as transnational crimes and even terrorism to be successful.

Adetunji (2014) validated the statement that, the objective of the ECOWAS protocol was to facilitate freedom of movement, residence and employment. However this protocol or policy is now at the detriment of Nigeria's socio-economic development and security as the Nigerian federal government and migration agency (Nigerian immigration service) finds it difficult to guide and control criminal activities in this various borders.

### **Remedies to the Short Coming of International Immigration towards Nigeria's Poverty Reduction**

1. **Employment Opportunity and Hospitals:** Since majority of those living Nigeria to other countries are as a result of unemployment and good health care, the solution to the problem stated remains that, the Nigeria government ought to consider those reasons that are pushing the skilled Nigerian's out of the country, by making them available in our country as this will help to curtail the incessant

engagement of skilled Nigerian youth on international migration. For instance when good hospitals and job opportunities are made available in Nigeria such that, graduates are not allowed to walk aimlessly in the street, nothing will make them to think of living the country.

2. **Provision of Factories in Nigeria:** The research made so far, revealed that, some Nigeria youth are living the country for other countries just because, factories that are supposed to be established by our government to help reduce the rate of unemployment among the youth are slept under the carpet. Thereby leaving the graduate to be rooming along the street selling pure water, hand bags and shoes etc.
3. **Reduction of Tax Rate:** Good number of graduates and non-graduates, who decides to startup small scale business in Nigeria, sometimes regret having embarked on such plan, the reason being that, business men and women most a times are mandated to pay tax beyond how they can gain in a particular year. For instance in Ebonyi State, majority of graduates who had shops at Abakpa Main Market lost their capital when Governor Umahi, moved Abakpa main market to the current Margret Umahi, International Market.
4. There is a need for an *evidence-based narrative* on migration to promote reliability, coherence and consistency.
5. Migrant and refugee health must become a *shared priority* mirrored in the commitment of member states to ensure access to healthcare for all.
6. The need to raise awareness of migrant group barriers to accessing care, and *training health care professionals* to overcome language barriers.
7. Support *social integration* through education, housing and employment.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

While it is correct to say that international migration has both positive and negative impacts on the world, and Nigeria inclusive, its negative impacts are very weighty. There is need to urgently and effectively address these challenges arising from international migration. Therefore the study discovered that since the creation, humans have always involved themselves in movement activities. This has been a major feature in the history of Africa and the entire globe generally.

The paper also concludes that, the positive impacts of international migration on the destination location include: there will be enough workers who will work for low wages and are prepared to do jobs that local people in such destination country will not do; there will be increase in cultural diversity of that country, that is to say that, the immigrant must have arrived with various kinds of skill which will help to develop the destination country. On the other hand, the negative impacts of international migration on the destination location include: there will be pressure on public services such as schools, housing and healthcare; overcrowding in the destination country might bring about increase in crime, language and there will be increase in levels of environmental pollution.

Lastly, the work concludes that, the consequences of international migration includes a loss of public resources invested in their education sector, it can reduce the migrants productive capacity, it can worsen

the business environment, especially in small economies, and also emigration as a consequence is associated with brain drain as a challenge which leads to lack of skilled personnel, lack of man power and expertise due to the high rate of individuals leaving the nation state for their various destination.

The study recommends thus:

1. Provision of job opportunities to the Nigeria youths is one of the measures to curb youth incessant international migration.
2. Provision of standard hospitals by the Nigerian Government; therefor making our educated youth, nurses and doctors to find the country worth staying, having spent much in the educational sector.
3. Provision of factories in Nigeria by the Nigerian government, therefor making our capable youth not to have reasons to migrate to other countries, with so doing achieving poverty reduction in the country, will be possible.
4. Reduction of tax rate by Nigerian government. The claim by the resident Nigerian business men and women on high rate of tax is one of the features of international migration. Therefore there is a need for reduction of the tax rate to give enabling environment to Nigerian business residents, with so doing achieving poverty reduction in Nigeria will be possible.
5. Government should intensify efforts to create more vocational skills acquisition centers across the country to enable our young men and women to acquire skills for them to be self-employed. Skills acquisition is a strong instrument for empowerment of youth in areas like tailoring, carpentry, automobile mechanic, ICT, metal work, to mention but a few. With so doing, the poverty reduction in Nigeria can be made minimal.

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