

Drivers and Trends of Irregular Migration: The Push and Pull Factors Responsible for the Japa Syndrome in Nigeria

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Abstract

Migration has changed over time in reaction to happenings and events around the world. The present surge in irregular migration was spurred by the absence of equitable social, political, and economic possibilities in many nations across the world. People are encouraged to go for better possibilities in other regions due to the unequal chances. This study therefore addressed the causes and trends of irregular migration in Nigeria with an emphasis on the push and pull variables that contribute to Nigerians' Japa syndrome. The collected data was analysed using the trend analysis approach, and the study employed a historical research design. This study concluded that migration is a means of pursuing greater possibilities abroad due to a chronic lack of work opportunities, income prospects, profitable employment, safety, and security, among other things. Fundamentally, economic opportunism that is, the enhancement of one's standard of living, the welfare of one's family, and other aspects that may guarantee the significance and relevance of the individual and their household contextualizes irregular migration in Nigeria. Since 2019, there has been a noticeable increase in the rate of migration abroad. Many young, bright, active, and industrious youths have been pushed to leave the country by these conditions, and this has resulted in the "Japa Syndrome or Japa Wave" in Nigeria.

Keywords: Irregular migration, drivers and trends, push and pull factors, opportunities, japa syndrome

INTRODUCTION

Since the Palaeolithic age, when hunting and gathering food was the primary means of subsistence, every human community has had the urge to migrate or relocate. For thousands of years, people have travelled from place to place in order to hunt, gather food, and look for suitable housing. It was, in essence, a search for a means of subsistence to enhance their quality of life. But during the Age of Discovery, also known as the Age of Exploration, which spanned the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, migration changed from being a means of subsistence to an adventure. The trend and nature of human mobility change as society evolves. With the introduction of devices like cars, ships, aircraft, and trains, human mobility has become more varied and has a greater range of destinations. The development of mobile phones, the internet, social media, and television led to a faster and more dynamic means of information gathering and sharing (Akanle, Fayemi, Adejare & Orobone, 2019; Idemudia & Boehnke, 2020).

Human mobility, or the act of moving from one location to another for a variety of reasons, is a necessary component of life, regardless of the time or distance involved (Akanle et al., 2019). It is carried out in light of an evaluation of the anticipated results of such movements, which are sparked by the migrants' perceptions of a lack of opportunities in their native country, the growth in socioeconomic gaps between nations, the ongoing influence of cross-cultural interactions, and the fully realised context of globalisation (Isbell & Ojewale, 2018). Global political and socioeconomic crises, ranging from economic depression and natural disasters to civil wars and political conflicts, have increased since the 19th century (Malka, 2018; Isbell & Ojewale, 2018). The results of these crises have made migration an essential component of human existence, which is fuelled by the need to protect and improve

migrants' general well-being and means of subsistence as well as by the human desire for a higher standard of living and, of course, to survive the harsh realities in their places of origin. Naturally, the result has been an increase in migrants' lengthy, difficult travels. Since all countries are now the origin and destination of international migrants, particularly those in the Western Hemisphere (Western Europe and America) and the Middle East, international migration has emerged as a crucial theme in international relations by the 20th century (Malka, 2018).

However, because both the countries of origin and the countries to which they migrate are becoming extremely multicultural, more countries are being affected by migratory flows at once. In developing nations, this condition affects the family, the society, and even the country (McAuliffe & Khadria, 2020). The rise in foreign migration has intensified disruptions to norms in the countries of origin. Cultural, social, and economic spheres are disrupted in a number of ways, including the generation and sustenance of food, water, shelter, clothing, medicine, security, and social standards and principles (migrants return with ideas and practices that question traditional beliefs like adopting attitudes towards sexual orientation or religion). Akanle et al. (2019) state that the following are all impacted: the creation of skilled labour and brain drain, the growth and prosperity of communities, the generation of revenue, the rise of a remittance benefits, and the labour supply.

Migration abroad has caused many families to be split up (e.g., spouses parting ways in search of better opportunities elsewhere, or parents abandoning their kids with other family members). In order to lessen the effects of separation, families are utilising information technology more and more, including phones, email, and social networking sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, Snapchat, and others. Real-time communication between families is made possible by these technologies. In order to mitigate any potential negative consequences of migration on kinfolk, they also stay in touch through remittances transferred across time and distance (Akanle et al., 2019). Given the worldwide nature of global migration, it becomes sense that Nigeria has developed as a destination and origin amphitheatre, particularly in light of the nation's size and standing (Sasu, 2022). Therefore, forced migration may be a lifeline and means of survival for the national governments of the migrants' home countries as well as for themselves and their dependents (Ikuteyijo, 2020).

The term "Japa wave," which has uncertain Yoruba origins, refers to fleeing or making an escape. It suggests that Nigerians, regardless of age or gender, are willing to do whatever it takes to cross the border and seek better opportunities elsewhere, even if doing so puts them in danger. As a result, seven out of ten Nigerians are open to moving abroad, and many of them are successful today. In particular, the industrialisation of Europe and the United States of America, as well as the poor state of Nigeria's human and material resources combined with the country's pervasive life insecurity, have pushed its citizens to migrate (Duru, 2021; Oludotun, 2023). Accurate information regarding the total number of migrants out of Nigeria has become increasingly challenging due to the spike in the number of migrants leaving the country and the irregular migration trends of certain migrants (travelling without a visa or using fraudulent documents). It is predicted that a sizable portion of migrants leave their countries of origin and final destination without formal paperwork and continue to be undocumented (Duru, 2021).

The Nigerian Immigration Service, which issued 1.9 million new travel passports in 2022 an 80% increase over 2021 shows an ongoing surge in the number of people leaving the country. This indicates that there is a constantly intent for relocation and actual migration out of Nigeria. Additionally, 33.3%, or 392,000, of these migrants are from Nigeria, and many of them travel to EU nations in search of protection or refugee status (Obi, 2019; Oyebamiji & Adekoye, 2019). The Nigerian Statistics Bureau (NBS, 2020) reports that Edo State serves as the epicentre for Nigeria's highest rates of irregular migration; the International Organisation for Migration, a global agency for global migration, asserted that Benin City, Edo State, accounted for 37% of all returned migrants under the joint EU-IOM initiatives, and that there is widespread conjecture that these two states are the origins of individuals leaving Nigeria, particularly young people (IOM, 2021). Furthermore, according to UNHCR's High Commissioner in Nigeria, Amah Assiama-Hillgartner, the majority of Nigerian irregular migrants roughly 70% of them cite Edo and Delta States as their origins (Emenyonu, 2019). According to Vermeulen's (2019) research, over 50% of Nigerian migrants residing in the European Union indicated Benin City as their homeland. The IOM, other international organisations, and the concentration of migrant programs and resource centres in Benin City have all endorsed this position (Houttuin & Haaij, 2018; IOM, 2018; Beber, 2020; Shaidrova, 2023).

In accordance to a SEEFAR (2021) study, 62% of Nigerians surveyed on their journey to Europe were from Edo and Delta States, where migration has been an ongoing issue for decades. According to estimates by Beber and Scacco (2020), one family member of at least one in every four Nigerian families departed the country in an effort to travel to Europe. Out of the 4,316 Nigerians that the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) repatriated from Libya in 2017, 4,000 of the migrants were from Nigeria (Owegie, 2017; Ochoga, 2018). The state of irregular migration affects the Nigeria economy in a number of ways, including the level of surviving, building of infrastructure, social facilities, remittances, and skills transfer. Thus, this study evaluated the pulling and pushing variables that contribute to Nigerians' japa syndrome.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Irregular migration is defined by international agencies such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) as migration that occurs outside of the legal requirements of the sending, transit, and receiving nations. When a person or group of persons cross an international border without an authorised passport or travelling paperwork, or when they fail to meet the necessary formalities to exit a country, it is considered irregular from the perspective of the sending country (Karatranos, 2021). Therefore, from the standpoint of the nations of destination, it is the act of entering, remaining, or working in a nation without the proper documentation or authorised authority as required by immigration laws. A multitude of factors, including increasing mobility brought by globalisation, improvements in communications and transportation, and the overall development of migration, have contributed to the continual increase in the number of irregular migrants (Dennison, 2022). Another is the growing restriction of normal migration opportunities as a result of government responses. A significant discrepancy between the labour demand and availability is the third. Fourth, as demonstrated by the situations in Libya, Syria, Iraq, and

the Middle East, mass migration frequently results from widespread violations of basic human rights and warfare (Abebe, 2019).

Individuals who relocate are categorised based on their objectives and motives. They fall into three main categories: asylum seekers, migrants, and refugees or internally displaced people. Every kind is determined by the various factors that drove them to relocate (IOM, 2019). People who are forced to from their homes because of hostilities, wars, or acts of terrorism in an effort to find safety and security elsewhere are known as refugees. Therefore, migrants relocate for a variety of broad aims and motives. These goals could involve looking for better employment possibilities or meeting medical needs. They are known as internally displaced people and relocate within the same nation (UNHCR, 2022). Unwillingly, asylum applicants depart their nation but not because of hostilities or violence. Asylum seekers may be driven by high crime rates, unstable political or economic environments, or both. Therefore, the main reason asylum seekers move is to avoid having their quality of life worsened (UNHCR, 2022).

According to Vespe, Natale, and Pappalardo (2017), irregular migration refers to the migratory status of the individuals engaged at a given point in time rather than the migration itself, and this status may alter as they travel to and remain in their intended destination or transition country. It is challenging to obtain a complete picture of irregular migrants because of this specific aspect. Laws and policies at the national level have the power to change the nature of migration, either from irregular to regular or regular to irregular. Obani and Odalonu (2023) expressed similar views regarding irregular migration; their differences stemmed from the assertion that the term refers to both the variety of migrants whose status may be undocumented at any given time as well as the movement of people without proper documentation. According to Obani and Odalonu (2023), an irregular migrant can be classified as having entered the country via any of the following means: using forged papers at a crossing point, or possibly not even entering through an authorised crossing point; living there illegally by breaking the terms of a residency permit or entry visa; or working there illegally by taking a paid job when their intended status was only resident.

Consequences of Irregular Migration

The hazards irregular migrants encounter and the issues the country of origin or receiving nation faces can be used to categorise difficulties related to irregular migration. The economic, political, social and security issues facing the host nation can be broadly categorized:

Economic consequences:

1. Growing financial cost: Undocumented immigrants frequently require more services than the host community or country's government can provide, which raises the government's financial burden, especially in the crucial fields of health and education.
2. Native workers are displaced - Immigrants fill positions that would have been held by locals; in some locations and situations, there may be rivalry and conflict in the following ways:
3. Native Americans are being deprived, and there aren't enough job prospects (Obani & Odalonu, 2023).

Political consequences

1. Population growth: An excessive increase in the host nation's population could have a detrimental effect on its social and economic development. ii. Ethnic violence: In these circumstances, prolonged civil disobedience and the worst forms of ethnic violence are frequently observed.
2. Irregular Voters: Immigrants may have their names added to the voter list irregularly, giving them the appearance of law-abiding residents and supplying the political parties with a vote bank (Ezemenaka, 2019).

Social consequences:

1. Poor person identification - An abrupt increase in immigration frequently causes an identity crisis among native populations
2. There is a threat to cultural survival; one of the main obstacles is the dilution and disorderliness of culture. Unusual behaviour might undoubtedly arise and weaken the indigenous people's great cultural legacy.
3. Degradation of the environment - Land degradation and invasion are commonplace. Due to competition for space, immigrants and native people put unnecessary strain on social services.
4. Unfair conflict within the community is often caused by the large number of unidentified individuals living there (Obani & Odalonu, 2023).

Security challenge

1. Rise in vices - The undocumented immigrants may contribute to a rise in crime in the host country.
2. Terrorism - There are claims that some of the irregular migrants are militants who could enter the country and commit acts of terrorism. The act of terrorism has spread around the world, and it is believed that undocumented or irregular immigrants are at the forefront, both helping to carry out the act and engaging in terrorist operations (Jideofor et al 2023).

Drivers and Trends of Migration: The Push and Pull Factors Responsible for the Japa Syndrome of Nigerians

Migration cannot be explained or caused by a single factor. The volume, orientation, and trends associated with global migration are, however, more influenced by some factors than by others. These include war, civil war, and conflict; values and aspirations; economic globalisation; shifting demographics; evolving technologies and communication means; longer life expectancies; higher levels of education; urbanisation; and climate change (Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO, 2018).

War, Civil War and Conflict: Violent events like war, civil war, or other domestic conflicts cause abrupt and massive migration in the form of irregular migration as well as refugees and asylum seekers. There have been ongoing internal disputes despite a persistent decline in interstate armed conflicts since the late 1980s. Of the 49 armed conflicts worldwide in 2017, 48 were internal. The bloodiest internal conflicts and civil wars that year took place in Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and the Central African Republic. People eventually moved across borders in search of safety as a result of the biggest displacements caused by the clashes (PRIO, 2018). Approximately 57% of all refugees

worldwide come from South Sudan, Afghanistan, or Syria in 2018, significantly impacting the global migratory community. The Global Peace Index (GPI, 2019) states that, excluding refugees from the recent Russia-Ukraine war, "the state of peace" is either "low" or "very low" in approximately 42 countries. The index measures peacefulness in relation to continuing regional and global disputes, societal security and stability, and militarisation. Global migratory movements continue to be largely, if not primarily, driven by this absence of peace.

Urbanisation: Within a given nation, populations fluctuate in terms of size and location. An urban phenomena that connects cities across national borders is international migration. Customising an individual to a new urban centre in a different nation is made much easier by their experiences of internal migration from rural to urban centres and starting over, together with their applicable global abilities for living in a city setting (Hofmann et al., 2020). As a result, as urbanisation increases, so will the number of foreign migrants in the future. Put simply, future levels of international migration will be influenced by the proportion of the global population that lives in urban regions. To put it simply, living in an urban area increases the chance of migrating abroad (UNDESA, 2018).

Migrants' Decisions and Global Opportunity Frameworks: Migration is a human phenomena that is shaped by decision-making processes that are ingrained in social contexts and can be influenced by political intervention, either on an individual or collective level. Moving could be a multifaceted decision. A variety of global opportunity architectures, including those pertaining to economic, political, security, cultural, social, and network variables, or a mix of two or more, are the primary forces behind individual migration. These drivers are cumulative, complicated, interwoven, and ingrained in these structures. At times, the choices are made with a high degree of reason and the best evaluations of the costs, rewards, individual needs, stress, and urgency (Czaika et al., 2021). Tabor et al. (2015) state that factors such as emotional conviction, close relationships and extended family, prospects for improved future, language and cultural similarities, and a welcoming environment for migrants in the destination nation all affect migration decisions.

Revolutions in Communication Technology and Transport: The globe has experienced constant technological advancements and their societal ramifications during the last 20 years. Smartphones provide nearly limitless information access, enabling long-distance communication as well as the sharing and analysis of data by a large number of users simultaneously. In 2003, just approximately 10% of people worldwide were online; today, 57% of people do. Only 5% of people in Africa and 13% in North and Middle East had mobile phones in 2003, out of a global population of 22%. Currently, 67% of people worldwide have a mobile phone, and in many Middle Eastern, African, and European nations, that number is 100% (Datareportal, 2019). Migration has produced a global population that is able and eager to relocate and live wherever prospects are most promising, claims McAuliffe (2018). Migration has also been greatly influenced by the usage of applications for real-time information sharing, particularly in support of border crossings, and the synthesis of social media channels to link geographically remote communities with same interests. A new and unique group within mankind emerges for those who master the new technology and take use of the opportunities they present (McAuliffe, 2018). Digitalisation has far-reaching effects on migration. The spatial origins of learning, work, engagement, and communication are making them

increasingly complicated. Transport is now more flexible thanks to the current revolution (McAuliffe, 2021).

Socio-economic Development: More so than poverty, economic and social progress leads to international migration, which improves society fundamentally. The rate of child mortality was lowered by products like machines that took the place of manual labour. Population, education, and personal ambitions all rose as a result (Williams, 2018). Societies and economies have struggled throughout history to offer the growing number of young people positive opportunities. Many of these young individuals relocate abroad in order to start new lives; rather than being just motivated by economic indicators, people move because they believe there will be better economic prospects in the future. Africa's economy is expanding at the second-fastest rate in the world, and seven of the ten fastest-growing economies worldwide are in African states. Given that most migrations originate in Africa, a migration forecast inevitably anticipates a rise in migration from that continent. But there will also probably be a rise in emigration to other regions of the world (Hofmann et al., 2020). The notion that migration and development are intrinsically linked is called into question by recent research. It asserts that a country's emigration rate appears to decrease with economic growth, as opposed to growth occurring over a period of five to ten years (Bencek & Schneiderheinze, 2019).

Demography and Migration: The world's population has been steadily increasing; in 2015, it surpassed 7.4 billion people, and by 2050, it is expected to reach roughly 1.9 billion people (UNDESA, 2018). As a result, major changes in the demographic profiles of all countries will occur, with regional variations. The Global South is already experiencing 95% of the world's population growth, and this trend is expected to continue in the near future. In contrast, it is predicted that between 2009 and 2050, the populations of around 45 countries mostly in Europe will decline. In many Global North countries, this tendency has started to lead to population ageing and decline (Hofmann et al., 2020). UNDESA (2017) projects that by 2050, the proportion of the Global South's population that is 60 years of age or older will rise from 8% to 20%. These forecasts are significant for migration because they emphasise that one of the main reasons people migrate is to provide for their parents and other family members back home. The much larger incomes of high-income nations are sometimes the only means of guaranteeing the welfare of older family members. The demand for migration rises as a result of demographic ageing in both high- and low-income nations. Therefore, in both high- and low-income countries, the necessity for migration is made worse by population ageing. Migration demands are therefore increased by population ageing in both high- and low-income nations (Sudharsanan & Bloom, 2018).

Income Disparities: A handful of Asian and African countries have seen exceptional economic growth in recent decades, leading to a discernible increase in average per capita income. For instance, Asians' per capita income climbed by 108% and Africans' by 26% between 1990 and 2018; Despite this, according to the World Inequality Database (WID, 2019), Europe has an average GNP per capita that is about twice that of Asia, nearly five times that of Africa, and roughly twice that of the world average. The average GNP per person in Africa is still only 41% of the average worldwide and 83% of the average in Asia. Based on these trends, relocating to Europe from Asia and Africa is consistently a desirable choice in terms of relative job prospects. Labour migration is primarily the result of wage disparities. The

necessity to assist family members who are either self-sufficient or have retired from the workforce adds even more motivation to increase income. Thus, it makes moving to places with greater earning potential more likely (Arif, 2020).

Climate Change and Environmental Degradation: Natural catastrophes, climate change, and environmental degradation have all attracted attention as the main reasons of migrant flows in recent years. Over the past thirty years, environmental migration has grown in importance and urgency, and it will only get bigger. Climate change and environmental variables alone, however, hardly account for all migration. Their effects are compounded by additional factors such as poverty, marginalisation, population changes, land-use concerns, inequality, intergroup conflict, and tensions (Safra de Campos et al., 2020). Increased internal migration may also boost the possibility of cross-border mobility, even if natural disasters and environmental deterioration are the main causes of internal displacement and migration rather than external migration.

The Non-Financial and Other Effects of Irregular Migration

Understanding the amount of remittances sent home is essential to comprehending the non-financial effects of migration on the welfare of the sending country, with a focus on the non-monetary social implications of remittances. The impact of remittances on education, health, care plans and social systems, gender, and ethnic standing within migrant societies are some of these non-financial significances (Kushnirovich, 2021). Yeoh and colleagues (2020) contended that migration facilitates the transfer of investment capital and expedites the exposure or growth of communities to modern education, enlightened, rational, and democratic principles. Remittance inflows along with the skills, expertise, and information that migrants gained prior to leaving will greatly help their home nations. Some academics, on the other hand, disagreed with this position and said that migration would probably exacerbate the negative social effects of underdevelopment. They went on to say that, aside from brain drain, the loss of individuals regarded as community pillars causes relatively stable societies to collapse or even disintegrate. The result of this is a community of lazy residents who rely on remittances, a shrinking experienced workforce, and passivity on the part of the older people in the community (Warnecke-Berger, 2021).

In accordance with Warnecke-Berger (2021), a population grows dependent on imported goods as a result of consistency, the amount of parcels and remittances that migrants send home, and their preference for imported goods. Additionally, by reducing chances for socially responsible investment and advancement of humanity, employment motivation and community solidarity are diminished, diminishing the socio-cultural honour of the neighbourhoods that send migrants. Again, the migrant's household and extended circle of relatives always shows the effects of migration, both positive and negative, on society, even though these effects are difficult to pinpoint for the sending and origin countries. Skuflic and Vuckovic (2018) noted that although migrant families may experience difficulty as a result of migration, the effects may not be significant. Elveren (2018) contends that migration can affect a nation's capacity to accumulate human capital, children's health and education, and the social welfare of the family unit, especially the women in it. According to Aguila et al. (2012), social structures incentivise non-migrants to migrate and solidify the process by lowering the cost of migration for other parties involved.

In the words of Tsaurai (2018), there is an increased chance of family disturbance, social network chaos, dislocation, and psychological anguish when there is temporary circular movement. Migration can improve the household's well-being when done correctly. But there is a high cost associated with cross-border travel and being away from family, especially emotionally. Both migrants and those who stay behind experience the emotional toll of losing family members. This is particularly true for households with low incomes, where there are insufficient funds to sponsor the immigration of the entire family. They consequently split up, destroying family units and connections (Tsaurai, 2018). Adhikari (2019) asserts that children lose access to parental authority, the fundamental role of giving care and affection, and parental reference in managing their homes the longer they are separated from their migratory parents. Eventually, the children take on the duty of self-parenting, or other family members replace the migrant parents. For those left behind, this condition causes a sense of loss, rejection, and abandonment that gifts and remittances cannot make up for. Technology advancements in the form of cheap phone calls, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other social media, along with electronic mail, may make it possible for families that are separated by distance to establish and strengthen social bonds.

Continuous absences have a lasting effect on the lives of those left behind, particularly young people and children. The boys' poor upbringing has led them to engage in criminal activities and drug and alcohol misuse. Individuals that migrate do it deliberately and with planning (Sanubi, 2014). In the destination nation, individuals could experience the exact opposite of what is anticipated—being ensnared in human trafficking and subjected to sexual exploitation. Although their initial motivation for travelling was the prospect of lawful employment in the country of destination, they are forced into prostitution once they arrive. Children are not excluded however, as they might suffer from trafficking for the rest of their lives (Bastia & Piper, 2019). Reproductive in social demography is impacted by migration as well. Jiang, Taixiang, and Wang (2021) claim that migration has an impact on parents in a variety of ways that may cause them to have more or fewer children; the income of the household, the opportunity cost of time, and recent advancements in the usage of contraceptives all influence their decisions; diseases that result in social stigmatisation can also be acquired and passed down via family members, undermining the social influence of the family. Families in places where dowries are customarily paid could use the money from remittances to finance weddings. Young individuals can create self-sufficient homes more quickly than they otherwise might thanks to these remittances. Migration is positively impacted by this phenomenon since it fosters family renewal and social growth (Tipalayai, 2020).

Additionally, it helps the home household build economic capital by valuing land for agricultural output, invest in the development of talent, and generally strengthen the social power of the members of the family through remittances. Migration from abroad has a favourable effect on household social advancement by lowering the population of the impoverished. According to Uddin and Igbokwe (2020), this effect lowers household reliance ratios while raising the status and recognition of leaders in social settings and congregations.

Pre- and Post-Colonial Migration Trends

In the pre-colonial migration trend, migration developments were principally slave exchange, clashes between ethnic groupings and warfare. The biggest trade exchanges

occurred during the fifteenth century when 12 million individuals were traded as enslaved from the west, west-central, and eastern Africa to the European settlements in the Americas (IOM, 2019). Most changes during the colonial period (1891–1960) were labour migration to the United Kingdom (UK), where the British needed a large workforce for their mines, plantations, and public service organizations. Other than work migration to the UK, there were additional developments within Africa, particularly in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Ghana and Sudan. In the post-colonial era, migration from Nigeria moved towards Europe, mainly the UK. The United States began to expand, unlike the pre-independence intra-region migration (IOM, 2019).

During the 1950s, the Nigerian elites started migrating to the UK because of the heritage of colonial ties, fundamentally for education and administrative purposes. This migration pattern increased after Nigeria became a republic in 1966 and was limited to those who were "exceptionally talented" leaving for school, work, and business (IOM, 2019). In the 1970s, Nigeria witnessed many immigrants created by Nigeria's oil riches after 1973. Some West Africans sought work there (de Haas & Flahaux, 2016). Be that as it may, in the mid-1980s, oil costs were diminishing again, and the economy confronted a downturn along with political suppression and brutality. As an outcome, many worker migrants, around one million Ghanaians, were expelled from Nigeria (de Haas & Flahaux, 2016). This period was described as Nigeria's inverted migration, transitioning from net immigration to a net emigration nation (IOM, 2017). With the stagnating economy, numerous Nigerians emigrated particularly the educated and wealthier ones. IOM (2019) considers it the "way of life of expert migration," explicitly present in the mid-1980s, caused by the grim proportions of the Structural Adjustment Program. Accordingly, the devaluation of the national currency, compensation for experts diminished, and working conditions weakened. As conditions declined and frantiness developed, the low-talented youth began to leave Nigeria too. In the mid-2000s, an increasing number of Nigerians migrated to other nations, for example, the Gulf States, in Europe, countries like Spain, Italy, Ireland, Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Belgium, working in the rural areas and doing casual jobs (Agwu et al., 2022).

Alongside monetary reasons, Nigeria's migration history is linked to violent internal clashes. The mass killings of Igbo inhabitants by the Hausa-Fulani oligarchy in the Northern Nigeria as a consequence of an intense battle between the north and the south and the associated pogroms culminating in the Civil war to dispel the Biafran State prompted one of the significant removals of the Igbo individuals within and outside of Nigeria amid the 1970s (Weiler & Sanubi, 2019). Another ethnic crisis started between Hausa-Fulani herders and Mambila ranchers in the mid2000s provoking the Hausa-Fulani to escape in vast numbers. In Nigeria's southern region, agitating groups such as the Niger Delta Movement (MEND) and the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) demanded control of oil resources and self-determination, respectively (Agwu et al., 2022).

The different military fascisms fueled these internal crises, prompting the ethnic nationalities to re-appraise their commitment, all examining and activating their advantage. In the north, the Islamic groups, Izala and Boko Haram, intend to destroy Western ideologies and build up an Islamic religious government in Nigeria. The unending conflict in the northern part, agitation for a separate country in the South East and resource control struggles in the Niger Delta led to the loss of occupations and livelihood for thousands of people and

left many homeless, maimed, or murdered (Agwu et al., 2022). With the worsening of living standards in Nigeria due to economic and security issues, applications for asylum in other African countries, as well as in Europe and North Africa, have increased since the late 1990s. Nigerian out-migration is associated with criminal activities and exploitation due to numerous documentation of human trafficking, prostitution, money laundering, and forged travel documents for cross-border migrations (SIHMA, 2014).

Nigerian Government Policy Responses to Irregular Migration

As noted by Nwafor and Onalu (2023), migrants are frequently ignorant about the laws controlling their admission, employment, and residence, the skills needed, cultural considerations, and their rights and responsibilities in their new nations. A lot of women and children are also trafficked, seduced, and coerced into forced employment that is exploitative and involves commercial sex. Nevertheless, the fact that so many people especially women and children are weak and defenceless allows irregular migration and human trafficking to flourish. Counselling and pre-departure training can help migrant workers get ready for their destination's labour market entry and social integration. Since the majority of labour migrants from Nigeria travel under private arrangements, protection from fraud and phoney agencies must begin at home to prevent recruitment agencies from taking advantage of potential migrants' inexperience and fragility and demanding excessive fees (Sanubi, 2006). Remittances are currently the second-biggest source of foreign exchange earnings in Nigeria and have surpassed official development assistance on a global scale. Before 2003, the country's remittance inflow was less than US\$ 2 billion; five years later, it had risen to ten times that amount. However, there hasn't been much progress made in using this enormous remittance stream for development. Furthermore, there is no oversight of the Nigerian diaspora's return migration, meaning that the skills of those who have returned cannot be utilised for prosperity (Ezemenaka, 2019).

Given that the majority of migration occurs for work, a thorough national labour migration policy that is compliant with both national legal requirements and pertinent international agreements was obviously necessary. A policy like this would control and furnish information about citizens' movements into and out of the nation. Furthermore, considering the uprooting that such migration entails as well as the challenges of relocating abroad, it would provide for safety and well-being of citizens who chose to become migrant workers. Additionally, it would guarantee that newcomers to Nigeria are competent to fill open positions and receive equitable treatment, as well as that when its own competent residents depart, Nigeria won't be without the international expertise they bring with them (Ezemenaka, 2019). Early in 2006, the process of creating a national migration strategy was started, and at a national conference in April 2007, a draft National strategy on Migration was reviewed. The draft policy prioritised topics such as development and migration, migration and intersectoral concerns, irregular migration and national security, compelled relocation, migrant human rights, regulated labour migration, internal migration, and data utilisation. However, the failure of the relevant authorities to support the policy weakened the resulting document and the previous optimism for the draft policy (Dakuku, 2022).

Enforcing norms and regulations that all parties involved must adhere to is necessary to regulate migration and the employment difficulties that it raises. Nigeria has accepted the International Labour Organisation (ILO) 1949 Migration for Employment Convention (No.

97) in 1960 and the United Nations Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 1990 in January 2009. A solid national regular foundation for migration policy and practice can only be possible with further work to completely "domesticate" the regular standards found in these instruments, some of which have already been adopted into national legislation (Dakuku, 2022). No matter their status, migrant workers' human rights must be promoted and protected as one of the main tenets of an efficient and effective labour mobility strategy. This should be guaranteed by national laws and procedures, which should also outline precautions against illegal migration practices like migrant smuggling, human trafficking, and human exploitation. Migrant workers would be guided through all phases of migration, including the preparation and planning phase, transit and arrival, acceptance in the country of final destination, as well as opportunities for return and reintegration, by an equitable and well-organised labour migration process in both the origin and destination countries (Nwafor & Onalu, 2023).

Nigerians migrating irregularly to Europe is a long-standing, complicated problem with substantial social, political, and economic ramifications for both Nigeria and the participating European nations. The number of Nigerians making sporadic attempts to immigrate to Europe in quest of better prospects and improved living conditions has clearly increased over time. The Nigerian government must develop comprehensive policy solutions in response to this situation, which has alarmed policymakers, international organisations, and the general public (Jidefor et al., 2023). There are several factors contributing to the increase in unauthorised migration from Nigeria to Europe. A number of issues, including poverty, high unemployment rates, unstable economies, and limited access to fundamental social amenities, are pushing people especially young people to look for better opportunities outside. Many Nigerians wish to leave their country in search of a safer and healthier future due in part to political strife, insecurity, and a lack of suitable social infrastructure (IOM, 2019). One of the most populated countries in Africa, Nigeria, has seen a large exodus of its people in recent years. Nigeria's push factors are largely due to a faltering economy characterised by high jobless rates, poor infrastructure, and restricted access to necessities. The issue is further exacerbated by internal disputes within the nation, especially in the northeast and the Niger Delta. Due to these difficulties, irregular migration is encouraged, with many Nigerians opting to travel over hazardous borders in search of a better life in Europe (Yunusa, 2020).

Examining the data pertaining to irregular migration from Nigeria to Europe is essential to developing a better sense of the scope of this issue. According to reports, no fewer than 170 Nigerians were deported from Germany, Sweden, Lithuania, and other countries between May and September of 2023. Four siblings, ages eleven to seventeen, along with their moms were deported from Europe to Nigeria in May of 2023. Germany deported 80 Nigerian migrants between the end of May and July 4, some of them were children in critical condition in need of surgery. 50 more people were deported from Switzerland, Sweden, Luxembourg, Austria, Belgium, Spain, and Hungary in the months that followed. Of these, 48 were men and 2 were women (Angulu, 2023). Thousands of Nigerians are being stopped by European officials as they try to enter Europe without the required papers, according to the figures, which show a worrying trend. The number of Nigerians becoming victims of human trafficking networks has also increased, underscoring the vulnerability of migrants and the necessity of more

international collaboration to address this problem. The Nigerian government has responded to these obstacles by putting in place a number of laws and programs designed to address the underlying reasons of irregular migration and stop the flow of people.

Economic improvements as well as investments in job development are two important options. The government hopes to provide employment possibilities for the growing youth population by concentrating on industries like manufacturing, technology, and agriculture that have significant employment potential. Programs for education and skill development have also been implemented to improve the workforce's employability and allow them to make a significant contribution to the country's economy (Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2021). The Nigerian government has also stepped up initiatives to combat human trafficking and spread awareness of the risks associated with irregular migration. To capture human traffickers and destroy their networks, law enforcement organisations have been called into action. In order to inform vulnerable groups about the dangers of irregular migration and to highlight the value of formal paths and readily available support services, awareness programs have been launched concurrently. Furthermore, in order to make it easier for Nigerian migrants to return home and give them the assistance they need once they do, diplomatic ties have been reinforced with European destination nations. Additionally, structures for collaboration and bilateral agreements have been developed to guarantee the safe and compassionate return of migrants while simultaneously addressing the difficulties they have in their social and economic reintegration back home (Angulu, 2023).

Even while the Nigerian government is committed to tackling the problem of illegal migration, there are still a number of obstacles to overcome. Resource limitations and bureaucratic bottlenecks frequently occur during the implementation of policies. Moreover, thorough cooperation between governmental institutions, civil society groups, and foreign allies is essential to the success of awareness campaigns and law enforcement initiatives. To achieve sustainable results, these collaborations must be strengthened and coordination methods improved.. The necessity of regional cooperation and coordination among African countries is another important issue that needs to be addressed (Yunusa, 2020). It will need a team effort to address the underlying causes of irregular migration in order to advance economic growth, stability, and peace throughout the continent. African countries may create an environment that is favourable to opportunities and lessen the pressure on their residents to migrate as a last choice by promoting regional relationships and supporting efforts that aim to enhance intra-African trade as well as economic development (Jideofor et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

High unemployment rates and widespread discontent with the country's socioeconomic conditions have led to an increase in migration from Nigeria, particularly among young, educated people traditionally men but increasingly women as well who are looking for work opportunities both inside and outside of the continent. Some are travelling to the USA and the Middle East, while others are travelling through Europe and Asia. Nigeria has paid astronomical salaries to hire foreign specialists while also losing some of its brightest minds to labour migration. Lower-skilled migrants have also made their way to numerous African countries and other parts of the world. Nigerians who wish to leave the country in order to escape financial difficulties are left to make that decision on their own as there is currently

no official framework in place to assist them in doing so. Many migrate under hazardous and unsafe travel conditions, and upon arrival, they frequently find themselves limited to low-skilled, low-paying occupations.

In conclusion, migration is the first step towards pursuing better chances abroad due to ongoing shortages in a variety of areas, including safety, security, productive employment, wealth prospects, and job opportunities. Fundamentally, economic opportunism that is, the enhancement of one's standard of living, the welfare of one's family, and other aspects that may guarantee the significance and relevance of the individual and their household contextualizes irregular migration in Nigeria. Since 2019, there has been a noticeable increase in the amount of migration abroad. Many young, bright, active, and industrious youths have been effectively pushed to leave the country by the condition, and this has resulted in the "Japa Syndrome or Japa Wave".

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