



Understanding the social impact of youth migration in contemporary Nigerian society

Mary Basil Nwoke

Department of Psychology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

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ABSTRACT

Migration by youths is leaving one's geographical location to another one within the same country or leaving one's homestead and settling in another location within the same geographical location by young persons. In other words, migration can be internal or external. It is internal migration when the movement and settlement is still within the same country, while it is external or international migration when it involves leaving one's country to another country. It can be temporal; and this is where the migrant returns to his/her original place of habitation after achieving his/her economic goal. It may also be permanent when the migrant decides to remain in the migrated place or city or country after achieving the goal. Youth migration in contemporary Nigeria has many tentacles with pros and cons that propel it. Among the push and pull factors are the quest sustainable livelihood, lack of employment opportunities, insecurity, violent conflicts and climate change. It can be beneficial or detrimental to the sustainable development of Nigeria as a country. The position of the current paper is that, among other consequences, youth migration has introduced the phenomenon of brain-drain or brain-gain culture in Nigeria. It is suggested that before the youth take to migration, he/she should weigh the rigours involved and consider be properly prepared manage psychosocial outcomes of migration.

Introduction

Human migration is the movement from one geo-political region to another, or the movement of people from one country to another (Anyanwu & Erhijakpor, 2010). Youth migration could mean leaving one's geographical location to another one within the same country or leaving one's home stead and settles in another location within the same geophysical location or geo-political region (internal migration) or leaving one's country to another country (external or international migration). It can be temporal; and this is where the migrant returns to his/her original place of habitation after achieving his/her goal. It may also be permanent when the migrant decides to remain in the migrated place or city or country after achieving the goal. Migration can be beneficial to the individuals' families, communities and Nigeria as a country. Youth migration in the contemporary Nigeria has many tentacles and multiple factors that propel it. It is important to note that migration is one of the many drivers of social change. Migrants mobilise social and cultural value exchange between societies which affects societies as they struggle to maintain a cohesive society. Migration creates a social dynamic that affects both the migrants those left behind and those they are meeting (IOM, 2011). The goal of this paper is to examine the social import of youth migration in contemporary Nigerian society.

Youth and migration

Young people make up about a quarter of migrants worldwide. Those involved in migration are in the age bracket of 15-29 years with a mean age of 22 years. Nigeria witnessed

the initial exit of her strong and young minds to other places like big towns within the country and foreign lands for better living in the 1980s and 1990s, and this has remained constant. Migration has gross positive and negative effects on every facet of national growth and development - politics, economy, value system, social- communication, trade, agriculture, religion, science and technology among others. Today Nigerian youth migrants are counted in millions and billions (Ezema, 2017). The United Nations (2015, 2017) indicated that there were 244 million international migrants in 2015, with 20 million refugees in different countries. Deotti, Laura and Estruch (2016) observed that as many as 740 million people migrated to different countries, and among these young people are in the majority. Isiugo-Abanihe and IOM- Nigria (2014) observed that over one million Nigerians are living abroad.

Population explosion has been the core and bottom-line jet that propels young Africans to migrate with the sole aim of increasing their earning power and the number increases on daily bases. The socio-economic stand of many Nigerians coupled with the continued population increase as well as the inability of Nigerian government to provide basic infrastructure for job and wealth creation, continues to cause pressure for many young Nigerians. In the recent years, migratory pressure has increased, and it is expected to intensify further in the incoming decades, given the rising and widening gap in wages between the developed and developing countries and their differing demographic futures. This will in turn lead to an increase in the exposure of young people to exploitation, human trafficking, and crimes in their bid to migrate. Rye (2011) observed that

Corresponding author

Mary Basil Nwoke, Department of Psychology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka 410001, Enugu state, Nigeria
Email: marybasil.nwoke@unn.edu.ng; Phone: +2348038243959

many reasons for youth migration, and some of these factors will be discussed in below.

(1) Search for sustainable livelihood: In most developing countries, there is poor investment on roads, electricity, schools, hospitals, and other social amenities in rural areas which are essential for proper socioeconomic activities. It is because of these that youth with professional skills tend to migrate to urban areas or big cities or town within the country or outside the country to seek for job opportunities that are commensurate with their professional skill (Deotti, Laura, & Estruch, 2016). It is obvious that the level of rural poverty or socio-economic development can act as a push factor for migration. Simply put migration is a strategy utilized by young people from poor and less developed communities to upgrade themselves, their families and their rural dwellings. Food insecurity is one of the key factors that motivate migration. Food insecurity could be as a result of natural causes such as draught or man-made causes such as war and communal conflicts. In this regard, young people who can brave the challenge of distant journey tend to migrate in search of food. Hunger stimulates the individual to move and look for food in places where food is available.

(2) Lack of employment opportunities: Yaro (2007) observed that rural or country poverty causes poor quality of life and lack of employment opportunity. For this reason, individuals tend to migrate in search of good and better job opportunities. In most rural areas in developing countries like Nigeria, agricultural practices are mainly peasantry, with low productivity and lack of purchasing power and therefore less attractive to youth. There is evidence that employment opportunities are lacking in the contemporary Nigeria society for her young ones. Where there is job opportunity, it may not be decent, because of the environment or because of the personality and individual behavioural differences in the organization. Nwoke (2013) observed that in some places where decent jobs exist, interpersonal harmony and cordial relationship among workers may be lacking. There may be suspicion, interpersonal conflicts and bickering among the people working in the company. Such work environments could push the youth to leave the job. Because of the endemic corruption, some youth employed in the government owned parastatals are under paid or not placed according to their qualifications. This type of treatment compels the youth to search for greener pasture outside his/her country for better remuneration. Deotti, Laura and Estruch (2016) observed that with such huge and teeming millions of youth unemployed globally, the search for work continues to be strong motivator and driver of youth migration in both developed and developing countries.

(3) Insecurity: 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 Nigerian have been targets of terrorism, for example, the young schoolgirls of Chibok, the young schoolgirls of Dapchi, and others in the Northern part of Nigeria. The young girl Leah Sharibu, who refused to decline her Christian faith was kept under hostage and mercilessly tortured. There are so many hidden criminal activities going on secretly in Nigeria. Due to lack of security in Nigeria, some Nigerians in 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 migrate 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 youth sustained wounds or injuries that have kept them psychologically traumatized (Nwoke, 2011).

(4) Climate change push on youth migration: Climate change has given rise to several social and psychosocial issues. Researchers (PCC, 2001 in Nwadinigwe, 2018) have observed that issues like food insecurity caused by increasing rainfall, dryness/drought/ desertification, flood, environmental degradation, variable patterns, extreme weather events, earthquakes, mudslide, cyclones, volcanoes, tornados forest fires, etc., have led to loss of farm lands, and income, as well as crop diseases and pests, with the attendant negative impact on economic and social structures. When the situation becomes unbearable, the best option for the youth may be to relocate to better geographical locations within the country or to foreign lands.

Consequences of Youth Migration

Internal and international migration can open new avenues in the lives of young people. Young migrants are generally resourceful and active. Nwoke (2017) observed that young people possess unique reasoning ability and cognitive skills. Young people possess good sense of humour. They are resilient/ adaptable to new environment. They can learn fast and adapt to new environments. Young migrants can also gain quality education, and this serves as a catalyst that catalyses socio-economic development in the young migrant's live. As young migrants exchange vital ideas, friendly relationship between regions and countries of the world begin to widen. With time more interpersonal relationship begins to grow and this in turn strengthens cultural integration. Migration can widen the scope of international economic development among regions or countries and brings about the expansion of international market. Many young migrants have skills and qualifications and are familiar with new technologies. Young migrants contribute as productive members of their communities, as workers, or students and widen the avenues of international investment between country of destination and country of origin. Young male/female migrant gain more skills through education and work experience. They earn higher wages which help them to support their families at home and the communities where they live. Some young women migrants may gain decision-making power and experience greater personal autonomy

Youth migration and human capital development

Deotti, Laura and Estruch (2016) observed that youth migration out of the rural areas drastically influences the demography of the rural areas leaving mostly the old and very young human beings in the rural county. This, in turn, influences labour productivity. Youth migration from the rural to urban causes decline on the hands in the farm that produce food for communities and nations at large. This is the fate of most rural areas in Nigeria today, where the aged parents depend on their migrated children who must send money home for them to buy food, medicine and other things. Youth migration can lead to loss of skilled and highly trained personnel from one country to another. Youth migration from Nigeria to abroad reduce the country's productive capacity and this deprecates the business environment especially in small economies. Studies (Deotti et al., 2016, Ratha et al., 2011 in Ezema, 2017) have revealed that most developing countries lost their highly skilled professionals to most developed countries in search of greener pasture. Consequently, in recent times most developing countries have limited number of skilled health workers while most developed countries have more than enough skilled workers. In Nigeria most of the highly skilled medical worker make their ways to capital cities like Abuja, Lagos, Kano, and Enugu, where most infrastructure and social amenities are prominent, while the rural areas are left into the hands of less efficient class. In some universities in Nigeria, some young lecturers have left the Nigerian university classroom to developed countries in search of greener pasture, or to acquire better training and have

better opportunities for personal development. Ezema (2017) observed that brain-drain has been an issue of international discourse where highly skilled labourers leave their countries (mostly low-income countries) in search of good, lucrative and meaningful jobs which ensures and enhances better living.

Youth migration and technological transfer Nigeria

As youth are highly resilient and can easily learn and understand, they enhance technological transfers among regions and countries. Bhugra (2004) observed that when people from their original place to a new place they carry with them all they know and have with them. Migrant workers when they left the rural areas and enter the cities or move to abroad, they are likely to encounter some techniques and technologies which they were not used to or not exposed to in their rural areas or home countries. In such situations, they will get perfected in the ones they know before and can learn the ones they are not used to at their home cities or countries. These migrants acquire new skills or improve in the competency of their already acquired skills. Keen observation in the contemporary Nigeria shows that some people who left Nigeria as young migrants, who later returned to their home steads in Nigeria have established lucrative business ventures based on the skills they acquired abroad. Such individuals have enhanced the socio-economic development of their homes and communities. Some migrated and highly professional individuals have entered into partnership with some entrepreneurs from the regions or countries where they migrated to and have established buoyant businesses that have employed many skilled and unskilled job seekers. Ezema (2017) indicated that, one important technological transfer was in agriculture. Ezema uphold that history has it that many cash crops produced in Africa such as cocoa, coffee and rubber were originally brought by European settlers and who taught the indigenes on how to produce them for global market consumption. It may be obvious that there was at a time when these cash crops were the chief sources of national and international income for African and especially Nigeria.

In contemporary times, many Nigerian youth who migrated from rural areas to big cities have brought a lot of innovation and changes to their villages, clans and communities. Such individuals have uplifted the lives of their people and have modernised their homes. Such migrants have organized themselves and built access roads, boreholes, health centres, market and embarked on other areas of community development. Most of those who migrated abroad have frequently visited their country or have partially returned have made a lot of impact on their father land. They have established companies, setup modern infrastructure and lucrative business enterprises that have offered jobs to many job seekers in Nigeria. Many young migrants who acquired the best and high-quality education, have invested much in education, and built standard educational institutions. Some young Nigerian migrants are giving scholarship to many indigent young people in school. Some young people who are interested in learning trade are equally sponsored. Generally, social import of migration of all kinds has put Nigeria in the front wheel of modernity. In the banking system/ sector, there are new ways of money business transaction. In education sector there are innovative ways of teaching/learning. In the health sector, modern hospital equipment that facilitates medical attention to patients is available. In agricultural system, there are some innovations and mechanized systems of cultivating, planting, maintaining and harvesting of crops. In the telecommunication system, there is a great breakthrough of innovations and inventions.

The influence of youth migration in the country of origin Nigeria is that such becomes “brain drain and brain gain” culture. The country of origin is deprived of sustainable economy, manpower and skilled labour force needed for

continued national development and growth. For the quest for greener pasture, the workforce group abandon their country of origin and cultural value- system in the first place. On the other hand, youth migration has ushered in a lot of innovations, inventions, human and infrastructural development. Human Development Report (2009) observed that most migrants whether internal or international reap gains in form of higher incomes or wages, better access to quality education and health are improved prospects for their children.

Youth migration and socio- economic challenges

Many Nigerian young people migrate under the misguided belief that life is always better and ‘rosier’ abroad and money can be picked up on the streets of United States of America or Europe. This idea propels the young Nigerian to dispose of all his/her meagre belongings and even borrow money to travel outside the country. He/she may arrive at the destination and realize that he/she must work extra hard earn the desired income. Young migrants are pulled out by misguided belief (Mberu, 2005; Ezema, 2017). So, at times some young people who leave their homes in search for greener pasture may find their condition at their homestead better than what they encounter out there. At least at home they have a room and a bed to themselves. A great number of migrants identified as illegal do not reap any positive gains. Many of them are ill-treated, assaulted, imprisoned, dehumanised, abused and publicly harassed. In Nigeria, some young people who migrated to big cities like Lagos, Abuja, and Kano are found under the bridges, uncompleted buildings or market stalls at night because they have no shelter or place to lay their heads. They face socio-economic challenge because they could not secure the white and lucrative job they came to seek for in the town and they cannot afford transport fare to go back home. They are trapped and are ashamed. Some of them end up joining criminal gangs (Ezema,2017) This is true about many Nigerian youth who migrate to foreign countries. At times they do not reach the promised land they got drowned in the sea and their families will be hoping against hope as those whose sons or daughters are abroad.

Youth migration and personality development

Some psychologists (Bandura, 1986; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Erikson, 1968; Nwoke, 2015) observed that the environment plays a very significant role in personality development. As the young people migrate, they try to move along with their values and tenaciously guard them. But with time, due to acculturation stress and the processes of adaptation in the new environment, most of the cultural values, norms, religious customs and the cultural social support system are jettisoned. According to Triandis and Suh (2002), migration involves new ecology. Ecologies shape culture and its value system of the immigrants. However, how migration influences one’s personality is dependent on the circumstances surrounding one’s migration and the extent of variation in the cultural value between his/her initial place of habituation and the new place of residence. It must be understood that those who migrated in search for something good or for better are different from those who were forced to migrate such as internally displaced individuals or refugees driven out of their homes. When the youth who migrated in search of better opportunities get settled, his/her pattern of living, dressing, moving and attitudes changes. Migration can lead to increasing family breakdown, fragmentation of social network and psychosocial stress especially if the migrants are newly married and with small children. The unfortunate couples get their marriages dissolved as soon as they migrated out of their countries of origin to foreign lands.

Psycho-social problems of migrants

There are adjustment problems accruing from the new physical environments. The young migrant may be greeted in the foreign land with culture shock as it concerns patterns of behaviour and lifestyles. There may be discrimination in school and places of work based on social status and migration status. Certain health risks are elevated for youth migrants and further heightened by other risks associated with migration. Children born to the migrant parents are at particular risk of discrimination and social exclusion. This can create heightened psycho-emotional tension or psychic trauma among the migrants.

Conclusion

Youth migration in contemporary Nigeria society can be beneficial or detrimental to different individuals. Some youth meet with good luck, while some are greeted with misfortune. Those young people who met good fortune may come back home to alleviate social problems in their homes, families, communities, towns and country. Youth migration can be brain drain of manpower as the well qualified personnel move out in search of greener pasture, but if they come back to open new avenues, inventions and innovations, they contribute to the new frontiers of human and infrastructural development, and they become brain gains. This paper suggests that before the youth take to migration, he/she should weigh the rigours involved and consider be properly prepared manage psychosocial outcomes of migration.

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