

## **YOUTH MIGRATION AND THE EXIGENCIES OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY IN EDO STATE**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examined the youth migration and the exigencies of the local economy in Edo state. However, it is aimed at examining youth migration and migrant remittances and their attendant consequences. To further this study, the paper adopted a theoretical perspective using the secondary sources of data and adopted the structural functionalist theory as well as the Pull and Push migration theory. These theories were used in complementary ground as they each make up for the inadequacies of the other and also to direct and redirect the focus of the study within the ambit of the formulated objectives. It was found out among other things that youth migration and international remittances have significant impact on the local economy. It is therefore recommended that the government as well as the stakeholders should be concerned on how to boost their efforts to better their employability and their vocational skills as these will no doubt increase the youth's chances to secure good paying jobs both at home and abroad. These would create more jobs for the youths and increase their inflow of remittances to their home countries and finally, the government should focus on strengthening the legal pathways of migration to countries abroad as a solution to the use of illegal deadly routes in travelling abroad. The implication of this is that youths can travel legally abroad with its beneficial consequences of increasing migrants' remittances.*

**Keywords:** Migration, Youth, Remittance, Local and Economy

### **Introduction**

In the Nigerian history, different migration patterns could be distinguished. In the first place, was the Hausa transnational links following the trans-Saharan trade routes and later on the pilgrimage age routes to Mecca and the Medina. Secondly, the transatlantic slave trade, during which period millions of Nigerians became involuntary migrants to the Americas and the Caribbean. But, with the introduction of the colonial system most migrants were male rural dwellers moving to the cities to look for wage jobs. In the first decade of independence, migration became more regionally oriented with the movement of thousands of job seekers to other neighboring states. But, since the 1980s, migration abroad has been directed more towards the industrialized richer countries of Europe and the United States-an intercontinental migration flow (Balogun, 2016).

This trans-continental migration became much more evident when Nigerians started going to study abroad in the 1950s and 1960s. This was later followed by the political refugees (As a result of the Nigeria's Civil war in 1967-1970) which was then followed by economic migrants (because of the oil crisis and economic meltdown in the early eighties). It had nevertheless been observed that most of these migrants were further disillusioned because of stricter regulations which had created a situation of a clear shift from the legal migration to the irregular migration. There have also been cases where prospective migrants got involved in one desperate attempt or the other all in the bid to emigrate from their poorer countries to those of developed and developing world (Falola, 2008). As a corollary to the above, the incapacity of the labour market to create jobs as well as the current unemployment rate of one-third or more among secondary school leavers and university graduates started posing great challenges to migration (Adepoju 2018). At this stage, it is important to say that the various governments had been concerned with issues of unemployment through the formulation of different policies and programs for the youths in the acquisition of related skills as well as, making available job opportunities for the youths (Emeh 2012).

The main purpose of youths migrating abroad in recent times as it relates to the socio-economic development has been realized in the lives of international migrants as well as in the lives of the migrants' household members they had left behind. This is seen in the remittances sent and received by the house hold of these migrants (Thapa & Acharya, 2017). In Nigeria, as in every other developing countries, government as well as policy makers, have had difficulties in arriving at reasonable solutions that would successfully tackle youth unemployment which could be hinged upon the lack of the initiatives to include job creation in their developmental plans, policies and programmes (Okafor, 2011).

In spite of all efforts to combat unemployment, Nigeria with a 1% income rise and a high rate of unemployment remained a developing country with extreme poverty despite its recent growth in its Gross Domestic Product (Uche, 2014). The presence of this group (which is the unemployed youths) had led to a reasonable social policy concern in Nigeria of late. Unemployment and underemployment had remained, both social and economic challenges facing the nation, which have made many of the youths to consider international migration as alternative solution of improving their present state and that of their households (Bolarinwa, 2012).

These international remittances from migrants have come to occupy and play significant roles in the developmental growth of Nigeria as it is estimated that one tenth or more of the world population and household are beneficiaries of the billions of foreign exchange monies that are sent by money transfer to countries around the world (De parle, 2008), making migration a free flow choice instead of a desperate journey (Agbowu, 2000).

## **Statement of the Problem**

International migration and remittances in Nigeria have been on the increase in the past two decades and there are relevant literatures that have pointed to the high increase in the level of the poverty rate and its socio-economic concerns (Adeyode, 2013). International migration and its remittances have been on the surge in Edo state, the southern region of Nigeria. The history of the state is associated with the prevalence of migrant remittances which is determined by the relationship to migrants (Taylor, 2005). The international remittances of migrants are important sources of income to members of their household and their communities they left behind (Arif, 2009). The capital has a history of been one of the foremost destinations of Europeans during their exploration of the African continent many centuries ago. Although the state had been confronted with some challenges, among these observable challenges are the phenomena of youth unemployment and the alarming rate of migration of its teeming youths. Never the less, it is endowed with natural resources with rich cultural heritage (Michael, 2017).

The following objectives become imperative to this paper.

## **Objectives of the Study:**

- i. to determine the causes of migration among the Edo State youths
- ii. to assess the impact of youth migration on Edo locals.
- iii. to evaluate the impact of migrants on Edo local economy and to
- iv. ascertain the impact of remittances on the Edo local economy.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This paper employs the “Structural Functionalist Theory and the “Pull” and “Push” migration theory in explaining the nexus of relevance in the work. It is also met to provide the explanatory ambit needed to capture all the sides of the linkage between youth migration and the exigencies of the local economy. The two theories will be used in complementary grounds as they each make up for the inadequacies of the other. The structural functionalist theory does not cover the socio-demographic structure of international migrants and the social ties between these migrants, (the regular and irregular migrants). However, it provides the explanatory power that is concerned with the interpretation of the society or the political system having related and relevant parts as a unit of analysis to this study this is in relations to the functions performed by these related and relevant parts, norms, customs, traditions and institutions (Tinner, 1985). According to the theorist, this theory seeks to explain time period of the scientific advancement in the social science inquiries instead of seeing it as a particular school of thought (Talcott, 1975). Again, their relevance is premised upon the relations and the

inter connectivity between one organ of government and the other in their ability to actively engage the youths in gainful employment within time availability.

### **Theoretical Assumptiont**

The theoretical assumptions could be broken down into two main areas which are:

- i. that a political system or social system is a prior causal reality of the different parts and that these system parts are functionally interrelated; and that,
- ii. every social phenomenon has related functions which they perform on behalf of the larger social system. Such functions must be relevant for the continued survival of the entire system or part of it. Also, there might be functional alternative or multiple consequences from one particular phenomenon which could make it dysfunctional as a result of the tension and the changes in the entire system.

Thus, in the utilization of this theory in relevance to the explanation of the variables of this study, it is therefore assumed that all the various sectors or structures in every political system of the world are functionally interrelated, that is, all the sectors in the political system, such as the agricultural, educational and the power sector as well as, the defense, aviation, Labour and the others. These sectors perform functions which are needed for the survival of the entire system. However, the labour sector and the others in Nigeria are assumed to be dysfunctional creating an increase in the unemployment rate and underemployment level. The consequences of this state of disequilibrium, makes the unemployed youths and have no other choice than to migrate (Okah & Osadolor, 2018). Secondly, from the above assumptions, when a dysfunctional state exists, it could create tension as well as a significant change in the system. These observable changes and tension result in the migration of the viable youth population.

The application of the “Pull” and “Push” Migration Theory became expedient based upon its explanatory relevance needed for this study. This theory could be traced to the writings of Ravenstein (1885) it emphasizes the importance of the seven (7) Laws of Migration. One of the laws is that migration continually depends on distance; others are, that migration takes place in various stages, that every successful migration processes are endowed with a particular migration pattern flow. Others are that, the compelled quest for opportunity often times influences international migration. If the pull factor of the expected destination often outweighs the push factor of the individual's states of origin thus, international migration can be said to have taken place and could be referred to as Negative (push factor) and positive (pull factor). It is positive for the wealthy migrants and become negative for the opposite individuals. Migrants that had responded to the call of the pull factors are selective about their destinations because they are not under pressure to migrate and they only wanted to move base on their desire as well as the perceived opportunities out there. Those who responded to the push factors are influenced by their environmental conditions at home. Some of these persons that are

influenced by this push factors are obviously more of the illegal and irregular migrants as could be seen in most Literatures of Migration.

In summary, therefore, the most formidable conclusions that could be derived from the positive and negative model are that both factors could continually no doubt attract people to move out of their original places into other places (Ebri, 2017)

### **Causes of Migration among the Edo Youths**

Okah-Donli and Osadolor (2018) categorized the drivers of youth migration as a combination of both the centripetal and centrifugal forces otherwise known as the “Push”-“Pull” factors as the drivers for youth migration. The Push factors includes poverty, low income, insurgency and war, climate change, social marginalization, internal conflict, lack of opportunity in homes, political unrest, ignorance, agreed, peer pressures and dysfunctional homes are some of the factors that propel or push people out of their countries or communities.

Poverty is endemic in West Africa including Nigeria with one-half, of the population living on less than US1 dollar per person per day. This is according to the human development index (HDI), that measures progress attained in the social domain (health, education etc.) that was developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1980 as an instrument of the assessment for social development (UNDP, 2008).

On the other hand, the Pull factors included the perceived better opportunities elsewhere, cheap labour, positive economic situation, political and social stability, good social infrastructure etc. Several studies on unemployment in Nigeria have identified several other causes of youth unemployment being experienced in the country. Despite the fertile land, massive oil wealth and other natural resources to include the followings:

**Rural-Urban Migration:** In Nigeria, the youths migrate to the cities more than other migrants for the sake of greener pastures and a better and conducive life. However, in the cities, job opportunities are limited. This will further be understood in the light of the Push-Pull factors. The Push factors include the pressures resulting from man-land ratio in the rural areas and existence of serious underemployment arising from the seasonal cycle climate and the rate of urbanization of the youth has continued to create unemployment. (Okafor, 2011).

**Rapid Expansion of the Educational System:** The promulgation of Decree 9 of 1993 created rooms for the establishment of private institutions in the country. Following the deregulation of education in Nigeria, government has encouraged the opening of private schools and universities. However, the massive creation of more private and public-funded universities and other higher institutions of learning have inadvertently created an adverse disparity in job creation efforts. This is owing to the fact that Nigeria has not pursued a commensurate job absorption strategy for the many graduates from these educational institutions. Whereas universities have grown at multiple progressions or

geometrically, jobs and employers have grown at arithmetic progression (Ajufo, 2013). This gap created, has led to the supply of manpower which outstrips the corresponding demand for them, thus driving down wages and further increasing unemployment in the country.

**Corruption:** Corruption is an endemic problem in Nigeria which permeates not only the public sector but also the private sector. High level corruption in Nigeria has robbed the country of developing a vibrant economy in spite of her abundant natural resources. Funds meant for developmental projects which could have generated employments have been misappropriated, diverted or embezzled and sometimes through capital flights (transfer of money to international account) thus, impeding development and intensifying economic stagnation. Attempts had also been made to checkmate the growth and spread of this social enigma called 'corruption' in Nigeria.

One of such initial constitutional attempts was the established regulatory (oversight) responsibilities of the Legislative arm of government (the National and State Assemblies), which was evident in the establishment of anti-graft commissions of the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) (Otoghile & Ebomoyi 2016). Also, a combination of high fertility rate as well as the declining mortality rate accounts for the demographic trends in sub region of West Africa including Nigeria. The demographic pressure associated with population dynamics in the region has spiked social demands and above all the unemployment rate. The population of the young people aged between 15 and 34 years is estimated at slightly above 1/3 of the total population (34 percent) or 102 million inhabitants. The population of the young which is affected by unemployment is particularly high and acted as a driver of social tension (UNECA, 2010:49).

Also, the Circular, commercial and cross border migration from Nigeria into the West African Regions have been facilitated with the vulnerable borders in Nigeria making it to become a medium to a long term pattern of migration. Youth unemployment can also be seen as having a geographical dimension. This is because youth unemployment has remained unevenly distributed such that some areas have more unemployed youths than the others (Emeh, 2012).

### **The Impact of Youth Migration on Edo State Locals**

Youth migration contributes to the development of both the sending and the receiving countries of migrants. The significance as well as the contributions of migration to development can be seen at both family and at the community levels (Abdul & Mustiary, 2009). Migration has assumed a phenomenal level and dimension in Nigeria, Edo State in particular in the recent decade (Chukwuma, 2007). The youth migration has become an issue that is capable of having a profound effect on our endeavors and also to meet the challenges of developmental growth and globalization (Annan, 2006). Youth migration is often seen as essential endeavors to achieving greatness and realization of

hopes among the youths with their inborn impressions that those who do not migrate abroad see themselves as idle and frustrated youths. It is therefore widely believed that certain aspects of youth migration may have a positive effect for development, making migration a free flow choice instead of a desperate journey (Agbowu, 2000). It can also be seen as a way to further household social economic advancement, where remittances are used to enhance the long term economic status of families through the investment in capital assets that will generate further income as well as employment generation in the state. Remittances, therefore, can be seen as the financial inflow arising from the cross-border movement of nationals of a country and the transfer of money and goods sent by migrant workers to their country of origin (Thapa and Acharya, 2017).

Edo state relies on different kinds of activities in order to meet their economic needs and also the economic needs of others and migration is a key component of these economic activities (Sanchez-soto, 2009). The channel and ways of using migration as an economic strategy can differ from one household to the other according to the economic situation, resources, needs and aspirations (Itzigsohn, 1995; Massey et al, 1987). On the other hand, migrant Returnees most of who have been engaged in one form of enterprises and another some of them have been in the semi capital intensive businesses where labour are hired. These activities in no doubt had stricken the gap created by unemployment, while the others are engaged in services rendering enterprises.

### **The Impact of Remittances on the Local Economy**

Migrant remittances had given rise to the growth of the informal employment sector that had remained redundant in the years past which accounted for the largest employer of Labour in Edo state (Ebri, 2012). The Edo state economy and the individual household over the past years have witnessed an additional stream of income due to the inflow of migrants' remittances to the state. Remittances therefore refer to the money sent to migrants' home country and family members or other beneficiaries from migrants either through the formal or informal channels (World Bank, 2005). Apart from the above, remittances sent by individual migrants in monetary terms, goods are also transferred or transported to migrants' state of origin which had helped in the growth and development of migrants' home local economy Gold ring, ( 2003), as well as acting as benefits for the individual and the community most especially in the case of collective remittances which are often facilitated by specialized or organized group or associations and the government in order to make migrants' remittances less cumbersome (DFID, 2010). The economy of the state has continued to benefit tremendously in the form of monetary remittances, community donations and through the investment and reinvestment of capital sent to migrants' individual household families. This is in addition to the already existing income stream of family members of the migrants, making it easier and possible for households in meeting their livelihoods demands and their necessities.

Economic activities are enhanced and household livelihood improved as money is infused into the local economy during migrants return home. This become evident in the area of tourism, where the revenue bases of businesses in the local economy are increased and often times yielding better returns for their investments in the monies that were spent on such recreational centres and facilities. This activity might not benefit the household of the migrants per say, but more directly for the business owners' whose livelihoods are enhanced as well as improved. Telecommunication is not left out in the benefit accruable from migrants' remittances. This could be achieved through money spent on telephone calls which is dependent upon the status of the individual families and such money also forms part of remittances of migrants infused into the communication sector. Another area of improvement is trade. Trade boom can be achieved through migrants buying and spending on such nostalgic commodities and the local delicacies. In this way local demands are improved and migrants' household livelihoods and commercial trading are economically enhanced (UNCTAD 2011). Remittances also have positive impact in both the short and long run in the economic development of Edo State especially in the area of the building industries that has continued to be employers of Labour in the recent times. It has become an essential endeavors to achieving greatness and realization of hopes among the youths with their inborn impressions that those who do not migrate abroad see themselves as idle and frustrated youths. Also it has capability of having a profound effect on our endeavors and also to meet the challenges of developmental growth and globalization (Annan, 2006). And extant literatures have shown that the economy of the state has continued to benefit tremendously in the form of monetary remittances, community donations and through the investment and reinvestment of capital sent to migrants' individual household families.

## **Conclusion**

It can reasonably be concluded from this paper that youth migration predominates as well as mandates the socio-economic activities in the Benin metropolis and the roles of migrants' remittances are crucial in this regard. This is particularly so in the Edo state context as the long history of migration in the state has been associated with the prevalence of remittances. This is due to the inflow of remittances to the different households that have been seen to be major causative factor for youth migration in Edo state. Further to that is a combination of the centripetal and the centrifugal forces otherwise known as Push-Pull factors. Along with the pervasion of the institutional arrangements or formations that were put in place which is met to superintend over employment generation has rendered such institutions and the system structurally dysfunctional or seemingly structurally dysfunctional.

Also of significance to this paper is the impact of youth migration and its attitudinal influence on the Edo locals. The youth of Edo state see migration as capable of having a profound effect on their endeavors as well as a bid to meet the challenges of their developmental growth and their realization of hopes and aspirations. Youth

migration is seen as essential endeavors in achieving greatness and the youth who do not migrate abroad see themselves as been idle and frustrated. It is widely believed among the youths that migration is capable of having positive effect to their development and their emancipation from poverty. This further engendered in the youths of Edo state the spirit of determination as well as making migration a free flow choice instead of a desperate journey for them.

It is important to note that the earnings in hard currencies and the concomitant repatriation of same back into the country have made migrants becoming millionaires at home and acquiring properties. Migration has also played a role in the enhancement of their social mobility upward the ladder, which remained of value to migrant's household. Migrant remittances have no doubt given rise to the growth of the informal employment sector that had remained the largest employer of Labour. The economy also has continued to benefit and grow tremendously in the form of monetary remittances as well as community donations through the investment and reinvestment of capital sent to migrants' individual household families. This is in addition to the already existing income stream of family members of the migrants making it easier and possible for household in meeting their livelihoods demands and other necessities.

### **Recommendations**

- i. The government should create the enabling environment suitable for investment and development. In order to achieve this, the security architecture should be enhanced capable of providing crime free society where migrants can invest in the economy without fear or favour.
- ii. The government as well as the stakeholders should be concerned with how to boost their efforts to better their employability and on their vocational skills so that they can easily secure good paying jobs both at home and abroad. This would create more jobs for the youth and increase their inflow of remittances to their home country.
- iii. The government should focus on strengthening the legal pathways of migration to countries abroad as a solution to the use of illegal deadly routes abroad. The implication of this is that youths can travel legally abroad with its beneficial consequences of increasing migrants' remittances.
- iv. The government should encourage people to imbibe those investment skills especially to the members of migrants' household as to the effective utilization of such remittances to the proper disbursement of such will definitely have tremendous effect on the local economy by helping to diversify its economy from the mono-product economy (Oil) to other areas such as the building, industries, solid minerals, agricultural products, natural gas etc.

- v. Finally, the government should work extensively on its re-distributive policies by this, we mean, bridging the gap between the rich and the poor, with much emphasis and focus on the youths. Much of the taxation in the country should be made to address the issue of the re-distribution of wealth positively skewed towards the youths. This will no doubt rekindle the hopes and aspirations of the youths in the country and their concomitant love for their country.

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