
**SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES AS
DETERMINANTS OF MIGRATION
(JAPA) AMONG NIGERIA CITIZENS**

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Abstract

This study explores the influence of socio-economic factors on migration patterns among Nigerian people, specifically focusing on migration to Japan. The increasing number of Nigerian citizens, particularly young individuals, migrating to countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, the Netherlands, and Australia, is a cause for concern and raises anxiety. This phenomenon can be attributed to the migration of individuals from Japan to various countries, as well as other regions throughout the globe, in search of better economic opportunities due to high levels of unemployment. A significant number of individuals currently affected by the "Japa" phenomenon hold the belief that they have been disillusioned with Nigeria and firmly assert that the country offers them little to no prospects or positive outcomes for their future, primarily due to a dearth of employment opportunities. Professionals, including medical doctors, nurses, lawyers, teachers, university lecturers, artisans, and bankers, are also participating in the phenomenon of migration, commonly referred to as "Japa," to industrialised countries worldwide. The paper highlighted

that a significant number of individuals, particularly young citizens and recent graduates, have firmly resolved to relocate from Nigeria to other countries, driven by the belief that their future prospects and safety would be better ensured elsewhere. Based on the aforementioned analysis, the present study suggests, among various other considerations, that individuals aspiring to migrate or relocate to foreign nations with the aim of improving their quality of life, ensuring personal security, and securing their future prospects should seize such opportunities if they arise.

Keywords: Migration, Japa, Socio-economic, Nigeria, Citizens

Introduction

The statement that one's chosen occupation or profession serves as a remedy for poverty is a widely accepted notion in the context of socio-economic factors influencing migratory patterns among Nigerian nationals. This principle holds significant importance in the modern world and should not be underestimated. When an individual engages in productive employment or selects a career path that aligns with their educational background, they become significant contributors to both their immediate household and the broader society (Osokoya, 2000). The aforementioned assertion finds its basis in the chapter from the book of II Thessalonians 2, specifically in verse 10. This text posits that individuals who decline to engage in productive work need to be deprived of sustenance. According to Ecclesiastes 9:10, individuals are advised to pursue whatever activity they encounter with a high degree of effort and dedication. This phenomenon arises from the cessation of life and subsequent confinement within the burial chamber, which precludes any potential for exertion, ingenuity, erudition, or sagacity. The religious passages convey the notion that individuals who are indolent should not be provided with sustenance. When individuals strive, with the support of their parents and relatives, to successfully complete their university education and subsequently participate in the

National Youth Service Corps, their next objective is to seek employment opportunities. It is disheartening and concerning that many individuals face significant challenges and distress in their efforts to secure employment, only to find that job opportunities are scarce. This scarcity can be attributed to the practise of those in position.

According to Olorundare (2012), it is reiterated that an individual's career is defined by the collective sequence of employment positions they hold throughout their lifetime. According to Hornby (2016), the term "career" or "job" refers to a means of earning a livelihood. It is commonly expected that obtaining a good job is the desired outcome for any individual upon completing their education (Adeyinka, 2002). Adeyinka's statement asserts that it is advantageous for young individuals who have completed their education to secure meaningful employment that offers fair compensation, ensuring that their efforts are duly rewarded and sustained. The employment opportunities for young individuals are currently lacking or inaccessible. This may serve as a catalyst, motivating individuals to initiate the process of relocating to a different country in search of improved employment opportunities and benefits. The lack of clarity surrounding the socio-economic conditions and opportunities in Nigeria has led individuals to express a desire to move and seek better prospects in other countries worldwide. For example, the prevailing issue of insecurity in the nation, characterised by the emergence of various terrorist groups such as Niger Delta militants, Boko Haram, bandits, and conflicts with herdsmen, as well as challenges posed by IPOB, kidnapping, and other undesirable circumstances, has significantly impacted the desirability of residing within the country. This assertion is supported by Fadiye (2011), who posited that an inhospitable climate will inevitably lead to depopulation. Olorunnisola (2021) emphasises the significance of peace in determining an individual's willingness to reside in a particular location. The absence of peace acts as a compelling force that motivates people to leave such an environment, resulting in migration and

relocation. This study aims to explore this phenomenon in greater detail.

Background of and Issues involved in Immigration (Japa) Syndrome

Immigration, often known as international migration, encompasses the process of individuals permanently moving from their country of origin to a foreign nation. The Yoruba term “Japa,” which denotes the act of running or fleeing, has been assimilated into the common parlance of Nigerian youth (Olowofoyeku, 2022). This notion is supported by Igbalajobi (2022), who posited that the phrase “Japa,” derived from the Yoruba language, which means “to run” or “to flee,” has gained widespread recognition as a representation of the act of departing from Nigeria. Since its emergence in 2020, it has commonly been employed to depict the sense of urgency felt by young individuals from the middle-class segment of society to relocate from the country. In the context of Japa, the prioritisation of the act of fleeing takes precedence over the significance of the destination.

According to Hornby (2016), immigration is the process by which individuals establish permanent residence in a foreign country. According to Ogungbile (2023), the prevalence of the Japa phenomenon in Nigeria persists, exhibiting characteristics akin to a rapidly growing epidemic. The concept of “Japa,” a phrase rooted in the Yoruba culture of Nigeria that conveys the pursuit of improved prospects in alternative locations, is a prevalent topic of contemplation among disillusioned Nigerian youth. Unfortunately, a number of individuals chose to leave as a result of their unwillingness to endure the adverse circumstances arising from negligence and autocratic administration any further. Regrettably, the prevalence of the Nigerian “Japa” phenomenon continues to escalate on a daily basis. Based on the findings of the Nigerian Social Cohesion Survey (NSCS, 2020), a recent investigation revealed that a majority of 70% of Nigerian individuals exhibit a willingness to relocate to foreign countries for various motives, with a notable proportion of this cohort experiencing favourable consequences.

Recent research findings suggest that a significant driving force for the migration of individuals from Nigeria to Europe and America is the aspiration to evade the challenging economic conditions prevailing in their home country. The aforementioned problems encompass a declining security environment, escalating unemployment rates, a significant expense of living, and inadequate administration and leadership, among various other contributing elements. On May 29, 2023, Bola Ahmed Tinubu assumed office as the new Head of State. Subsequently, the subsidy on petrol products, specifically PMS, was eliminated, resulting in a retail price range of N500-N520 for fuel. Furthermore, on the 14th of July, there was a notable increase in the price of petrol, rising from N500 to a range between N600 and N650.

The tuition costs at Unity School experienced an increase from N45,000 to N100,000. Furthermore, it should be noted that the University of Lagos administration has recently implemented a significant rise in tuition fees for its students, raising the amount from N19,000 to N190,000. There were rumours circulating that other federal universities will also adopt a similar course of action. These factors contribute to the challenges faced by citizens, resulting in an increased burden and difficulties in daily living.

A considerable proportion of individuals now impacted by the “Japa” issue have conveyed a feeling of disenchantment towards Nigeria, perceiving a lack of realistic methods or commitments from the government to cater to their welfare. While several persons go for the normal route of pursuing education and professional opportunities in Japan, others undertake perilous endeavours, such as trekking the parched terrains of northern Africa or embarking on deadly cruises across the Mediterranean Sea.

The dominant perspective posits that individuals perceive moving to different geographical areas as a means to access improved educational opportunities, greater professional chances, higher remuneration, and, inherently, a more secure and stable future for their children. The aforementioned advantages

are currently regarded as elusive and inaccessible within the context of Nigeria. Not only are young individuals and recent graduates migrating or relocating to various regions of the world, but older individuals are also undertaking this adventure. According to Olorunosebi (2022), there has been a significant surge in the number of workers and employees across various sectors in Nigeria who have either migrated or are planning to migrate to other parts of the world in search of better opportunities. This phenomenon of seeking greener pastures has resulted in a mass resignation of individuals, including professionals such as bankers, teachers, lecturers, and medical practitioners, who have opted to leave Nigeria in pursuit of more favourable prospects elsewhere. Moreover, it is noteworthy to mention that over a certain period in the previous year, the Nigeria Association of Resident Doctors effectively disengaged from the country. The University College Hospital located in Ibadan, Oyo State has reported that a significant number of its clinical personnel, totaling over 500 individuals, have chosen to voluntarily end their employment. According to the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital, a significant number of nurses, specifically over 150, have voluntarily terminated their employment at the aforementioned tertiary healthcare facility.

Furthermore, a significant number of individuals affected by the “Japa” phenomenon have asserted that public colleges in the country have seen a total of nine prolonged strikes within the last 13 years. Undoubtedly, the exacerbation of the delays has intensified the feeling of urgency. According to both former and current students, Japa is considered the sole method for reclaiming lost time or preventing future time wastage. These young individuals have observed and internalised the notion that pursuing education can enable them to move and seek educational opportunities in other regions of the world. This inclination arises from their perception that the Nigerian government lacks a comprehensive strategy to address their educational needs. According to David (2022), education serves a dual purpose as not only a temporary method of escape, but also as a pathway to

securing work opportunities in foreign countries. This particular pathway holds significant appeal because of the escalating levels of unemployment among recent graduates in Nigeria. Education is commonly perceived by Nigerians as the most accessible avenue for migration.

Liu Jing Jing (2023) argues that individuals who are pursuing immigration or residing in Japan are experiencing economic dissatisfaction, which the current government seems to overlook. The erosion of faith in the government is not solely attributed to its actions, but also its inactions. Specifically, the government has failed to address economic concerns such as the inability to revive the economy, control inflation and the high cost of living, and provide adequate wages that can sustain workers' livelihoods. The insufficiency of workers' income to sustain a livelihood in Nigeria is not attributable to a lack of exertion, but rather to a dearth of efficacy. The concept of "Japa" underscores the incapacity to thrive in an environment where one's individual endeavours are persistently undermined by both political and economic ramifications. The sense of urgency has undoubtedly been accelerated by the concerning devaluation of the currency, specifically the naira. Olanrewaju asserts that in December 2015, the naira was being exchanged at a rate of 230 naira per 1 US dollar in the informal market, which is where a significant portion of the population is compelled to convert currencies. However, by October 2022, this rate had escalated to 800 naira per 1 US dollar, indicating a depreciation of approximately 248 percent over the span of seven years. The situation has experienced additional deterioration over the course of the past two years, marked by the occurrence of fresh nadirs at regular intervals. In the present scenario, the emotional intensity of this unparalleled event has come to represent the nation's deterioration. In October 2022, the naira was observed to be trading at a rate of 443 naira per US dollar on the official market, highlighting a quantitative discrepancy that amplifies the qualitative gap within Nigeria. It is worth noting that access to this official market is limited to a select few. The potential to acquire foreign cash as a means of mitigating

the escalating cost of living has served as a significant impetus for individuals to pursue migration or relocation to Japan.

One additional factor that individuals involved in Japa or emigration are witnessing, which appears to be disregarded by the government, pertains to the discontent experienced by Nigerian youth as a result of socio-economic barriers that are further intensified by unfulfilled government obligations and ineffective governance characterised by a dearth of transparency and responsibility. The aforementioned situation led to a deceleration in progress, as well as the allocation of scarce resources away from initiatives aimed at improving infrastructure, education, and public health. Additionally, it further compounded the challenges encountered by the underprivileged demographic.

Moreover, the Nigerian youth are completely marginalised from the aforementioned factors. Rather than experiencing empowerment, these individuals have undergone a process of disempowerment, resulting in a disillusioned citizenry. Many among them have become political pawns and agents of destruction, manipulated by the nation's adversaries. Meanwhile, the children of these politicians pursue education in prestigious foreign institutions and achieve academic success. Nigerian undergraduate students encounter enduring disruptions in the form of strikes and worrisome inadequacies in instructional resources.

Theoretical Underpinning

The theoretical framework underpinning this study is the constructivism theory. The idea of constructivism asserts that the learner is actively involved in a process of constructing information within a specific context, as opposed to passively absorbing it. The constructivist perspective posits that knowledge is constructed via the integration of personal experiences and the formulation of hypotheses pertaining to the surrounding environment. Learners regularly validate these notions through the process of social bargaining. Each individual have a distinct perspective and strategy when it comes to the process of obtaining

and developing knowledge. The learner is not regarded as a wholly void receptacle, but rather incorporates preexisting experiences and cultural influences into the provided context. The inclusion of novel information is dependent on prior knowledge, leading to the subjective nature of cognitive representations. Furthermore, the credit for formalising the concept of constructivism is frequently attributed to Jean Piaget, who explicated the processes by which learners internalise information. The proposition put forward suggests that individuals gain new information from their experiences by means of the cognitive processes known as accommodation and assimilation. When individuals undergo assimilation, they incorporate the new experience into their preexisting cognitive framework without making any modifications to that framework. This phenomena may occur when individuals' perceptions align with their internal cognitive representations of the world. Nonetheless, it might also materialise as an inability to revise an erroneous comprehension. For example, it is possible for individuals to experience failures in seeing particular occurrences, misinterpret information received from others, or disregard an event as a random incident, thereby considering it inconsequential in terms of providing insights into the world. On the contrary, individuals often exhibit a proclivity to modify their perception of events when their personal experiences are incongruent with their internal representations. This adjustment is made in an effort to achieve alignment between their subjective understanding and their internal cognitive frameworks.

Accommodation, in accordance with the concept, pertains to the cognitive mechanism by which individuals modify their existing mental structures to assimilate new information and align with novel experiences. Accommodation pertains to the cognitive processes via which learning takes place as a consequence of encountering and responding to failure. When individuals possess specific assumptions regarding the functioning of the world and these assumptions are contradicted, they often experience instances of failure. Nevertheless, via the process of

assimilating to this novel encounter and modifying our comprehension of the functioning of the universe, we have the potential to acquire significant discernments from both our personal setbacks and the setbacks encountered by others. The theory of constructivism asserts that learners engage in an active process of knowledge construction through their experiences. However, constructivism is frequently associated with pedagogical approaches that endorse active learning or learning by practical experience. The roots of constructivism can be traced back to the seventeenth century, namely to the philosophical concepts put out by Giambattista Vico. According to Vico, individuals are only capable of comprehending knowledge that they have personally generated. Constructivism embraces an interdisciplinary methodology by integrating many perspectives from psychology, sociology, philosophy, and critical education. Constructivism is a comprehensive theoretical framework that seeks to enhance and expand upon established ideas of teaching and learning, rather than advocating for their complete dismantlement. The primary emphasis lies in foregrounding the learner as a prominent participant in the learning process, rather than undermining the authority of the teacher. Numerous philosophers and educational scholars have extensively explored these theories; nonetheless, it was Jean Piaget and John Dewey who emerged as the initial famous contemporaries to build a comprehensive comprehension of constructivism. The list of prominent contributors in the field of study encompasses Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Lev Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner, Herbert Simeon, Paul Matzlawick, Wladyslaw Streezeminski (1893-1952), Heinz von Forester (1911-2002), Ernst Von Glaserfeld, Edgarmorin, and lastly Maria Montessori. The correlation between this theoretical framework and the phenomenon of migration or Japa among Nigerian residents lies in their shared emphasis on fostering individual initiative, generating novel ideas, creating new information, innovating products and services, advancing technological advancements, and cultivating self-reliance.

Conclusion

This study investigates the role of socio-economic factors in influencing migration patterns among Nigerian citizens, specifically focusing on migration to Japan. This study elucidates why individuals engage in international migration from Japan in search of better opportunities, as the current government has been unable to adequately address the needs of its residents, particularly the youth and recent graduates. Moreover, empirical evidence has demonstrated that a considerable proportion of individuals currently afflicted by the Japa syndrome have articulated a sense of disillusionment towards Nigeria, perceiving the nation as bereft of opportunities for their personal advancement. The individuals presently maintain the belief that moving to various global areas would afford them access to superior educational opportunities, improved professional prospects, higher-paying jobs, and unquestionably, a more secure and stable future for both themselves and their descendants. The perception of these advantages is widely seen as being exceedingly elusive and presently unattainable within the context of Nigeria.

Suggestions

After doing an analysis of the influence of socio-economic reasons on migration to Japan among Nigerian residents, it is essential to consider the future prospects for both the individuals and the government. In the initial scenario, it is imperative for the government of the nation to engage in a process of introspection by attentively considering the grievances expressed by the general populace. This is essential since a democratic system of governance entails that the government represents the interests of the people, ensuring their well-being, rather than allowing a situation where the ruling authority prospers while their constituents endure hardship. Additionally, it is imperative for the current government to address the pervasive problem of corruption inside the nation, in order to ensure equitable distribution of the country's wealth among all its citizens. Moreover, it is suggested that individuals involved in the misappropriation of public funds should face severe

consequences, such as capital punishment, similar to the approach adopted by the government of Saudi Arabia. This measure is proposed with the aim of enhancing the economic growth of the nation. Furthermore, it is imperative to generate employment prospects for the younger generation and individuals who have recently completed their education. Upon completion of this endeavour, the matter of individuals travelling from Japan to other nations in search of better economic opportunities would be significantly diminished. It is imperative to significantly limit the remuneration and benefits of political office holders in order to enable the government to allocate resources towards the welfare of the general population. In conclusion, it is advisable for individuals to consider the potential option of migration or relocation, should the government fail to address the needs of the youth and general populace by adequately offering employment opportunities.

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