

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON NIGERIA'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROWTH

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Abstract

The failure of governance in Nigeria in recent times has manifested in persistent insecurity, high inflation, poor socio-economic performance, unemployment, hardship, suffering, poverty, low development, and frustrated hope. As of today the level of poverty, unemployment, and inflation in Nigeria has skyrocketed to an extent that an average man can hardly afford one square meal a day. These precarious conditions in Nigeria have led to a massive migration of both trained and untrained professionals, such as academics, doctors, nurses, engineers, builders, and even students, to developed countries in search of greener pastures. This has far reaching implications for a developing economy like Nigeria. This paper therefore appraises the impact of migration on Nigeria's socio-economic growth. The paper finds that security, economic and political conditions in Nigeria have ignited the urge for people to migrate in search of better living conditions and safety. The paper argues that if these factors are not tackled, that the country will be plunged into dearth of experts in all human endeavours. The paper relies on doctrinal methodology, and where necessary, reference to the position in other jurisdictions will be relied on. The paper concludes by calling on the Nigerian government to expedient efforts in tackling insecurity in the country, formulate and implement good economic policies that will revamp the economy, create more job opportunities and improve the social amenities available to the common man.

Keywords: Migration, impact, socio-economic development, assessment, Nigeria

1.0 Introduction

Nigeria is a middle-income, mixed economy and emerging market, with expanding financial services, communications, and entertainment sectors.¹ Although much has been made of its status as a major exporter of oil, Nigeria produces only about 2.7% of the world's supply.² Despite the place of the petroleum sector in the the growth of the country's GDP, it has remained a small sect of the country's overall vibrant and diversified economy. The previously well-established subsistence agricultural sector has not kept pace with the rapid population growth, and Nigeria, once a large net exporter of food, now imports a large quantity of its food products.³

The past few years has seen an increasingly decline in the production and exportation of oil by Nigeria. Notwithstanding Nigeria's substantial endowment of fossil fuel resources, the economy has struggled to translate this wealth into broad-based development, with approximately 70% of

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¹ Olusegun Ojo, 'The impact of immigration on Nigerian Economy' www.papers.ssrn.com. Accessed March 12 2025.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

the population still living in abject penury. A scenario which economists have referred to as an anomaly. Thus, this irony where abundant natural resources exist concurrently with pervasive deprivation is commonly referred to by economists as the “resource curse”. Within the Nigerian context, “resource curse” refers to a situation whereby an abundance of natural resources fosters official corruption and incites violent competition among citizens for control of those resources. This represents the position in Nigeria where abundant natural resources co-exist with abject poverty on the part of the citizenry. Consequently, these precarious conditions in Nigeria have led to massive migration of both trained and untrained professional like academics, doctors, nurses, engineers, builders and even students to developed countries.⁴

The migration of professionals, skilled workers and high-level manpower from developing to the developed countries began at the middle of the 20th century. Brain drains in Nigeria became prominent as from the 1960s due to poor working conditions such as poor infrastructural system, inadequate social amenities, the devalued national currency, decreasing standard of education and irresistible corruption in public sectors, general insecurity till date to mention a few.⁵ The above-mentioned factors that propelled brain drain in Nigeria in the early 60s have quadrupled since the return of democratic rule in Nigeria. Migration remains a salient socio-economic phenomenon influencing developmental trajectories across the globe. In Nigeria, migration manifests in complex internal and international dimensions, with implications for human capital, economic development, demographic distribution, urban planning, and remittance flows. This paper therefore examines the multifaceted impact of migration on Nigeria’s socio-economic growth. It explores both the positive and negative implications, drawing from empirical studies, government reports, and international databases. The paper is divided into five parts. Part one is the general introduction and it gives an insight into the subject matter. Part two deals with the historical context of migration in Nigeria. Part three focuses on the root causes or drivers of migration in Nigeria. Part four deals with the positive and negative socio-economic impact of migration on Nigeria. Part five concludes the work and recommends the adoption of policy framework, and strategies that will curtail the negative impacts of migration on the economy of Nigeria.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ AA Afolayan, GO Ikuyatun, & O Abejide, ‘Dynamics of international migration in Nigeria: A review literature’, (2008) www.researchgate.net. Accessed January 15 2025.

2.0 Historical Context of Migration in Nigeria

Migration broadly may be defined as the movement of people from one place to another, often across administrative or political boundaries, either for employment or residence. Migration, simply defined, involves the movement of people from one location to another in a country or from one country to another for the purpose of establishing a new residence.⁶ Although the definition of migration varies from different perspectives, there is a consensus that it involves the movement of people across a recognized political boundary to establish permanent or semi-permanent residence.⁷ The period of residence also varies, but most experts believe that six months of residence in a new location is enough to categorize one as a migrant.⁸

From time immemorial, humans have consistently involved themselves in movement activities in search of the basic necessities of life. Therefore, migration can be traced as far back as the existence of man, most especially when man desired to go in search of food during various famine seasons.⁹ The search for greener pastures could be regarded as the major driver of migration in early times. Migration is a feature of social and economic life across many countries, but the profile of migrant populations varies considerably.¹⁰ Migration can be internal or international. Internal migration is the movement of individuals within same geographical territory which in this case can be from rural to urban or from capital of a country to rural settlement while, international migration has to do with any person who changes his or her country of usual residence for either of various reasons.¹¹ Thus, international migration includes movement of many kinds, such as people leaving their countries of origin for economic reasons, to join their families abroad or as refugees.¹² By the same token, an internal migrant includes an internally displaced person, a trader who relocated his or her business to another part of the country, a transferred civil servant or a citizen of a country on deployment for national engagement, like a Nigerian university graduate

⁶ International Organization of Migration, 'Migration and development in Nigeria' (2009). Thematic Document

⁷ Eberechukwu Faith Obani and Boris Happy Odalonu, 'Impact of Rising Migration on Socio-Economic Development of Nigeria' (2015-2022)' 10(1) (2023) *African Journal of Humanities & Contemporary Education Research*, 39.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Database on Immigrants in OECD Countries, www.oecd.org. Accessed March 12 2025.

¹¹ Eberechukwu Faith Obani and Boris Happy Odalonu (n 7).

¹² Ibid.

who is deployed by the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) to serve the nation in another location or state of the federation.¹³

The rising phases of globalization have contributed to influencing the tradition and culture of international migration in our immediate world, and this globalization which has unfolded itself in different phases has raised alarm of great benefits and an opportunity around the globe which is propelling Africans to be on the move.¹⁴ These benefits range from job opportunities, international education certifications, inter-connectedness, international relations between countries creating avenue for interdependence most especially in the aspect of manpower.¹⁵ Therefore, as there exist differences in people's desire, it significantly explains part of the variation in the rate of migration. However, prospect for a better life certainly is one of the most important push factors behind people's decision to migrate.¹⁶

In Nigeria, high levels of unemployment, migrant remittances, population growth, unstable politics, ethno-religious conflicts and poverty are the major factors promoting the massive movement of both men and women across and outside the country.¹⁷ Poor economic conditions and high level of poverty also force people to move as they search for better living conditions, especially the youths and young adults.¹⁸ The existence of inequalities between rural and urban areas in Nigeria in terms of access to economic resources and development also promotes both internal and international migration.¹⁹

Migration in most cases does not only empower the migrant, but is also known for its relationship with the geographical and occupational mobility of labour, as the probability of moving within

¹³ BA Oyeniyi, 'Internal Migration in Nigeria: A Positive Contribution to Human Development' (2013) Research Report ACPOBS/2013/PUB01, commissioned by African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and funded by the EU.

¹⁴ OO Fayomi, 'The Diasporas and Nigeria-Ghana Relations' (1979-2010): Ph.D thesis, www.eprints.covenantuniversity.edu.ng, accessed 5 March 2025.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ SA Darkwah, & V Nahanga, 'Determinants of international migration: The Nigerian Experience' 62(2) (2014) *Acta Universitatis Agriculturae et Silviculturae Mendelianae Brunensis*, 321-327; A Adepoju, 'Migration management in West Africa within the context of ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons and the Common Approach on Migration: Challenges and Prospects' in M Tremolieres (ed): *Operationalizing the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons*, (2009) 161-174.

¹⁸ S Bezu & H Stein, 'Are Rural Youth in Ethiopia Abandoning Agriculture?' *World Development* 64(2) (2014) 259-272.

¹⁹ H Ghebru, A Mulubrhan, M George & O Adebayo, 'Role of Land Access in Youth Migration and Youth Employment Decisions: Empirical Evidence from Rural Nigeria' (2018). (No. 58). Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

occupations is often higher with migration.²⁰ The recent wave of Nigerians relocating out of the country represents the largest movement of people out of the country since the end of the civil war, over fifty years ago.²¹ Migration trend in Nigeria has remained constant. As the economic reality in the country gets tougher, it is likely that many more people will flee the country in the next coming years.

2.1 Migration Trends in Nigeria

Migration in Nigeria has deep historical antecedents transcending colonial rule to the present generation. Pre-colonial patterns were predominantly influenced by trade, conflicts, and kinship. Labour migrations orchestrated by infrastructural projects and administrative demands characterized colonial migration. Post-independence, migration patterns have emerged with urbanisation, industrialisation, and, much more recently, globalisation. Large-scale rural-urban migration, resulting in the expansion of cities like Lagos, Kano, and Port Harcourt were the aftermath of the oil boom of the 1970s. The recent international migration particularly to Europe, North America, and other African countries were as a result of the economic downturns and political instability of the 1980s onwards. Migration in Nigeria is not a recent phenomenon; it has evolved over centuries, shaped by environmental, political, economic, and socio-cultural forces. The historical trajectory of migration in Nigeria can be examined across four broad periods: pre-colonial, colonial, post-independence, and modern day migration pattern.

2.1.1 Pre-Colonial Migration Pattern

The search for fertile land, trade opportunities, conflicts, and environmental factors were predominantly the major factors that propelled pre-colonial migration in Nigeria. Various ethnic groups moved within the territory now known as Nigeria for purposes ranging from agriculture and pastoralism to conquest and commerce. For instance the Tivs and the Ibibios were known for agricultural migrations, while the Fulanis engaged in seasonal transhumance across the savannah belt, practicing mobile pastoralism to adapt to climatic variability. In the north, cities like Kano and Zaria became commercial hubs due to their strategic positioning as trans-Saharan trade route. The Inter-ethnic wars and the expansionist policies of powerful empires such as the Oyo, Benin, and Sokoto Caliphate resulted in the displacement and resettlement of populations. In this era

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Eberechukwu Faith Obani and Boris Happy Odalonu (n 7).

therefore, migration was often fluid and adaptive, with communities integrating and coexisting despite ethnic and cultural differences.

2.1.2 Colonial Era Migration Pattern

The colonization of Nigeria by Britain introduced more structured and economically-driven migration patterns. For instance, the establishment of cash crop economies and infrastructural projects like ports and railways created demand for labour especially in southern Nigeria. This necessitated the recruitment of migrant workers from rural areas to serve as labourers in cocoa plantations in the west and coal mines in Enugu. Again, the creation of colonial administrative centres in Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna and Enugu attracted internal migrants seeking employment in civil service and trade. Equally, colonial educational policies led to migration by individuals seeking missionary or government-sponsored schooling, often across ethnic or regional lines. It is clear from the foregoing paragraph that colonial migration patterns gave birth to the modern day urbanization, regional labour flows and educational mobility.

2.1.3 Post Independence Migration Pattern

The Political, economic and social transformations following the 1960 independence led to astronomical increase in internal and international migration in Nigeria. The Nigerian Civil war caused internal displacement especially amongst the Igbos of the southeast. The post-war period saw a reconfiguration of settlement patterns, and regional tensions that continued to affect migration dynamics. The oil boom of the 1970s led to a rapid economic growth and a surge in rural to urban migration. Commercial cities like Lagos, Aba, Port Harcourt, and Warri experienced unprecedented growth driven by the concentration of oil wealth and job opportunities. This period also marked the beginning of significant emigration of Nigerians to Europe, USA, and other neighbouring West African countries like Cameroon and Ghana.

A new wave of emigration was triggered in Nigeria by the collapse of oil prices in the early 1980s, coupled with the worsened living conditions orchestrated by mismanagement and corruption, economic downturn, the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) by the IMF and World Bank. This period saw the mass exodus of professional doctors, engineers, academics, and students who left Nigeria in large numbers seeking better opportunities abroad; a phenomenon

later termed “brain drain.” Even within Africa, many Nigerians sought work in neighbouring countries even though xenophobic backlash complicated regional mobility.

2.1.4 Modern Day Migration Pattern

Insecurity, demographic pressures, and socio-political instability have intensified internal and international migration in and out of Nigeria since the beginning of the 21st century. A notable feature of the recent years is the ‘Japa Syndrome’ wherein a large percentage of the teeming population of Nigerians are leaving the country in their numbers. Insecurity, poor job prospects and governance failures have led to mass emigration of Nigerian youths particularly skilled workers to Europe, Australia, UK, America, Canada etc in search of greener pastures. This movement is not peculiar to Nigeria as other third world countries have similar problems.

Armed conflict (especially the Boko Haram insurgency), farmer-herder clashes, and banditry have displaced millions of people internally in Nigeria. Nigeria faces one of Africa’s largest internal displacement crises. Conflict from Boko Haram insurgency, banditry in the northwest, and herder-farmer clashes in the Middle Belt have displaced over 3 million people.²² As of 2023, the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI)²³ reported over 3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Internally displaced populations face precarious living conditions and limited access to employment, healthcare, and education. Most of these internally displaced persons migrate to other states in search of food, security and shelter. Furthermore, climate change and environmental degradation particularly desertification in the North, erosion in the southeast and flooding in the Niger Delta have added new layers to Nigeria’s migration story. The loss of fertile land due to drought, overgrazing, deforestation, and climate change in the north force people to leave the affected states to other states in search of better economic opportunities. The erosion in the southeast, flooding in the Niger Delta often leads to loss of homes and farmlands, environmental degradation, uninhabitable living conditions forcing communities to relocate to urban centers thereby causing urban overcrowding. The much more recent kidnappings in the southeast, southwest and other states have equally forced a lot of people

²² See the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) Report 2023, www.internal-displacement.org. Accessed April 6 2025.

²³ See the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons Report 2023, www.ncfrmi.gov.ng. Accessed April 4 2025.

to flee from the rural communities to the urban centers. These ecological stresses force populations to move to cities, contributing to unplanned urban sprawl.²⁴ It is clear from the above that migration in Nigeria has historically reflected a complex interplay of environmental, economic, social, and political forces. Understanding this history is crucial to assessing how migration has shaped, and continues to shape, Nigeria's socio-economic development.

3.0 Underlying Drivers of Migration in Nigeria

Migration could be voluntary or involuntary depending on the situation under which the migrant left. Migration is voluntary when a citizen of a nation or state willingly leaves his country or state of origin to another country or state in search of better living conditions. Under involuntary migration, the person has no intention to migrate but was forced to do so by circumstances around him.²⁵

In Nigeria, there are certain factors fueling voluntary migration which has never been seen since independence. These factors include the desire for better career opportunities, heightened insecurity in the country, the need to provide a better future for one's children, the requirement of further education, and poor governance in the country.²⁶ Uneven development, unstable political systems, availability and affordability of modern communication media and transportation system have raised the pressure on migration and supply-driven migration movement.²⁷ Secondly, demographic and economic developments within European nations themselves have produced new demand-driven movements into some European nations, and as a result, the facts of immigration are to some extent the same but the perception is not the same everywhere.²⁸

Lee²⁹ grouped factors causing migration into two segments, and called them push and pull factors. The push factors are usually those conditions/situations which are discomforting to a person within the environment in which he/she resides, while the pull factors are conditions/situations which lure an individual to other environments.³⁰ The push factors include insufficient job opportunities,

²⁴ O.R Ugwoke, & O.C. Chukwu, 'Climate Change and Environmental Migration in Nigeria' 23(1) (2021) *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 1–16.

²⁵ S Bell, S Alves, E S De Oliveira, & A Zuin, 'Migration and land use change in Europe: A review; 4 (2010) *Living Reviews in Landscape Research*, 2-49.

²⁶ Eberechukwu Faith Obani and Boris Happy Odalonu (n 7).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ ES Lee, 'A Theory of Migration' 3(1) (1966) *Demography*, 47–57.

³⁰ Ibid.

unsafe environment, poor crop harvest, insufficient rainfall, desertification, flooding, persecution, slavery, natural disaster, death threats, poverty and war.³¹

Evidently, Nigeria has abundant and varied resources which portray it as a rich nation, but these resources are mismanaged, pushing the inhabitants to extreme poverty. As the poverty is biting hard and the population is increasing, the people seek for various strategies to survive. One of such strategies is migration, an age-old strategy for human survival.³² On the other hand, the pull factors are those attractive conditions in other countries that lure or entice people to move over to those other countries. They include better job opportunities, higher wages, more wealth, better services, attractive climate, safer/less crime, political stability, security, better crop yields and less rate of natural disasters.³³

3.1 The Push Factors

High rate of unemployment, low wage, devaluation of the naira, and poverty remain the major push factors fueling migration in Nigeria. Despite being Africa's largest economy by GDP, more than 40% of Nigerians live below the poverty line with youth unemployment surpassing 35% in some regions.³⁴ Economic policies are often influenced by political interests rather than national development. It is unarguable that these economic realities push individuals especially the youths to seek better livelihoods abroad.

Another propelling push factor in Nigeria is political instability and governance failure. The political climate of Nigeria is a major driver of international migration, especially among the young, skilled and disillusioned citizenry. Young people often feel that they have no voice or say in the governance of the country which reinforces their desire to leave the country. The belief that western countries offer fairer systems and stronger protections fuels international migration. Again, political instability undermines investor's confidence in a country, leading to fewer jobs and shrinking economic opportunities. The implication being that fewer employment opportunities are available for the youths.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Obani and Odalonu (n 7).

³³ BN Nanzip, 'Migration: Meaning, types, causes, effects and economic importance of migration' www.jotscroll.com. accessed March 26 2025.

³⁴ See National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2021). *Poverty and Inequality Report*. Abuja: NBS.

Corruption has been linked to governance failure and undoubtedly a push factor for migration. Nigeria consistently ranks high on global corruption index.³⁵ This has forced many Nigerians especially professionals to leave the country in search of countries with more stable political environment and transparent system. Insecurity and armed conflict are also push factors driving migration. Nigeria has witnessed series of armed conflict and insurgency in the last two decades. The violent activities of Boko Haram and other extremist groups in the north have led to the internal displacement of over 2.5 million people.³⁶ Many people lost their lives in the conflict, communities and farmlands destroyed, and many areas ungovernable. Equally, the escalation in the clashes between herders and farmers in the middle-belt and some states in the north have resulted in internal migration and food insecurity.³⁷ Armed banditry and kidnappings in so many states in Nigeria have also intensified insecurity-related migration. All these internal crises have increased the number of internal and international migrations.

Demographic growth is another push factor fueling migration in Nigeria. Nigeria's high population which has been estimated to 237.5 million,³⁸ intensifies migration pressures. Although Nigeria is blessed with rich human and natural resources, the rate of graduates being turned out yearly and pushed into the labour market far outweighs the available jobs. The high population in the country invariably exerts pressure on the labour market, infrastructure and public services with the implication that a large percentage of the graduates cannot be assimilated into the workforce.

3.2 The Pull Factors

The factors which will lure individuals to leave their countries of origin or state can be summarily classified into better living conditions. The desire for better job opportunities, higher wages, more wealth, better services, attractive climate, safer/less crime, political stability, security often propel people to migrate. Migration for educational purposes often leading to settlement abroad has become common in Nigeria. It is a common knowledge that most of the people who migrate through the educational route use that as the quickest route to gaining permanent residency. The vast majority of Nigerians that migrated recently through educational route only did so to secure visa for themselves and their immediate families, and to secure post-study work visa on graduation.

³⁵ See Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2024, www.transparency.org. Accessed April 10 2025.

³⁶ See Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (n 22).

³⁷ International Crisis Group (ICG). (2021) *Ending Nigeria's Herder-Farmer Crisis*. Africa Report No. 302.

³⁸ See Worldometer 2025 World- Population, www.worldometers.info. Accessed March 27 2025.

Professionals who migrate through the skilled worker route are attracted by the availability of better job opportunities, higher wages and other job prospects. Many professionals in Nigeria earn salaries that do not match the cost of living or global industry standards. The high inflation, low wages and unstable currency make it difficult for professional to build wealth or financial security. Besides, the chronic lack of resources, tools, infrastructure and support often frustrates professionals in fields like medicine, engineering, education and research. Poor career progression equally frustrate professionals and force them to seek better environments. An examination of the foregoing reveals that people migrate to saner climes to seek better economic opportunities, safety, education and improved living conditions. The impact on the economy and social well-being of its people is enormous and is the subject of the next discussion.

4.0 The Socio- Economic Landscape of Nigeria

Socio-economic growth according to Todaro and Smith³⁹ refers to the process by which a nation improves the economic, political, and social well-being of its people. It can also refer to the progressive and sustained improvement in the living standards, employment opportunities, income levels, and equitable distribution of resources among the people of a society.⁴⁰ Socio-economic growth therefore, is the improvement in the economic and social conditions of a country. It encompasses increases in income, employment, literacy rates, life expectancy, and overall human development.

Growth is not solely determined by GDP but by the quality of life and the equitable distribution of opportunities. Socio-economic development is the parameter for determining the respect accorded to any nation in the international sphere. This invariably means that all sectors that make up the government must be effective. Thus, there is socio-economic growth or development in any nation when there is meaningful improvement in the nation's economy and most especially the comfortable standard of living of her citizens. The development of a nation is manifest in the living standards of her citizens.⁴¹ Development is also evident in a nation when there are varieties and opportunities present for the citizens such as in products, health care facilities, education, housing

³⁹ MP Todaro and SC Smith, *Economic Development* 10th edn (London: Pearson Education Ltd, 2009) 265.

⁴⁰ See JK Olayemi, 'A Survey of Approaches to Poverty Alleviation', A paper presented at the National Workshop on Integration of Poverty Alleviation Strategies into Plans and Programs in Nigeria Ibadan: Nigeria 1995.

⁴¹ BA Adah, & UD Abasilin, 'Development and its challenges in Nigeria: A theoretical discourse' www.covenantuniversity.edu.ng, accessed March 13 2025.

among other thinkable choice that fits into the political, economic, social and environmental areas of the nation.

The increased productivity through effective labour force is also an evidence of development in that specific nation.⁴² Thus, Socio-economic development explains the affordable lifestyles as well as the suitable living standards of individuals in that society.⁴³ Socio-economic development in a nation cuts across improvements in various areas of the state, which includes the educational system, employment, social amenities provisions among other areas. Socio-economic development is associated with positive transformation in a state's economy.⁴⁴ Using the above indices to assess Nigeria, it is clear that Nigeria has not attained the height it is expected to attain due to mismanagement of resources and her low productive status. In the area of provision of basic amenities like clean water, electricity, healthcare, education, and housing, notwithstanding the recognition of these rights by the constitution as a function of government,⁴⁵ their classification as non-justiciable social and economic rights has made it difficult for the citizens to legally compel the government to provide these amenities to them. The implication is that government at all levels in Nigeria fail to provide these amenities to the citizens with impunity. Again, despite the efforts made by the various administrations in introducing policies aimed at improving access to basic amenities, their implementation remains weak due to corruption, mismanagement, poor planning and inadequate funding.⁴⁶ The socio-economic status of Nigeria is therefore faulty with many issues which can be related to mismanagement, corruption, and poor policy framework. The deficiencies of the various institutions in Nigerian are responsible for her unworthy socio-economic status.⁴⁷ These deficiencies therefore, have far-reaching implications for her socio-economic growth.

⁴² A Oladiran, 'Security Challenge and Development in Nigeria: Leadership to the Rescue' 1(1) (2014) *International Journal of Academic Research in Public Policy and Governance*, 50-59.

⁴³ Eberechukwu Faith Obani and Boris Happy Oдалonu (n 7).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ See for instance s 16(1) that states that the state shall control the national economy in such manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen. See also s 17(3) (d) which obliges the state to direct its policy towards ensuring that there are adequate medical and health facilities for all persons and equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels.

⁴⁶ See for instance the Rural Electrification Projects, National Water Supply and Sanitation Policy, Basic Health Care Provisions Fund, the National Social Investment Programmes (NSIP), and the National Development Plans eg the Vision 2020, Economic Recovery and Growth Plan, and the National Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

4.2 Impact of Migration on Socio-economic Growth of Nigeria

The economic crisis in Nigeria has led to various massive emigrations of individuals into other countries in search of greener pastures. These experiences have made Nigeria more of emigration nation-state than a nation-state of destination as it has been known to be.⁴⁸ Migration can have a range of social, cultural, political and economic effects. It involves transfer of know-how and skills, financial assets (including remittances), and the transfer of people from one location to another. Migration also has consequences for the individual, the area of origin and the area of destination on the family, household, society, the economy and development as a whole.⁴⁹

Migration has far-reaching effects on Nigeria's socio-economic landscape, influencing various sectors including labour, education, healthcare, and national income. On the positive side, migration contributes to economic growth through remittances. Diaspora remittances are critical sources of foreign exchange. The central Bank of Nigeria reports⁵⁰ that Nigeria received over 4.22 billion dollar in remittance in 2024, a substantial growth of 61.1% from the 2.62 billion dollar recorded in the same period in 2023 surpassing oil revenues in some quarters. These funds support household consumption, education, healthcare and small business investment.

Another positive impact of migration is diaspora investments, and transfer of skills, and knowledge. Nigerians in diaspora are investing in real estate, education, fin-tech and agriculture back home. This has the tendency to promote home country development. It also contributes to cultural exchange and advocacy. Similarly, international migration reduces labour market pressures at home. Nigerians in diaspora often support extended families indirectly reducing domestic dependency ratio. It can also reduce domestic unemployment and foster global networks. The effect of internal and international migration is not limited to positive impact. It also involves a wide range of negative effects ranging from developmental issues, governance and legal protection, employment and social protection, health services and education, tertiary education, knowledge and skills development, economic growth, financial services and growth, agriculture and rural infrastructural development, and environment issues. All these could be grouped under migration and human development. Nigeria government could not guarantee the safety of her citizens and provide needed basic needs of survival, this paved way for increased or mass exodus

⁴⁸ Obani and Odalonu (n 7).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ CBN Report, April 9 2025, www.cbn.gov.ng. Accessed May 2 2025.s

of Nigerian citizens. Talking about the negative impact of poor economic policies of Nigeria fueling migration, the World Bank⁵¹ reports that:

In 2018, 40 percent of Nigerians (83 million people) lived below the poverty line, while another 25 percent (53 million) were vulnerable, and with Nigeria's population growth continuing to outpace poverty reduction, the number of Nigerians living in extreme poverty was set to rise by 7.7 million between 2019 and 2024. While the economy was projected to grow at an average of 3.2 percent in 2022-2024, the growth outlook is subject to downside risks including further declines in oil production and heightened insecurity.⁵² Meanwhile, continued scarcity of foreign exchange and tighter liquidity could affect the economic activity in the non-oil sector and undermine the overall macroeconomic stability. The uncertainty is also expected to be accompanied by high inflation and continued fiscal and debt pressures. Since 2021, the fiscal deficit narrowed to 4.8 percent of GDP in 2021 from 5.4 percent in 2020, due to a modest uptick in revenues, and was financed by borrowing. Public debt stood at \$95.8 billion in 2021, or about 22.5 percent of GDP. Annual average inflation stood at 17.0 percent in 2021 against 13.2 percent the previous year and above the central bank's 6–9 percent target. Inflation was fueled by food price rises at the start of the year and exchange rate pass-through.

Equally, speaking about the constituents of an economically vibrant nation, Obi⁵³ has opined that:

to become an economically productive nation, the first thing government needs to do is to invest in education, human infrastructure and capacity development. The more educated the people, the better the economy, which in the long run helps national development. Human development should be prioritized before physical infrastructure because human capital is too low in Nigeria. Education is an important element of human development, and investment in education is regarded as the best form of human capital development. The 129 universities, plus other tertiary institutions, in Nigeria have not met the demand for tertiary education in the country. Thus, a large number of Nigerians migrate yearly in search of university education. Nigeria government has not taken education seriously which prevent healthy competition in international arena.

Another negative impact of migration on the socio-economic development of Nigeria is the increase in the number of students migrating from the country to study abroad. The world system has witnessed an astronomical increase in the number of students who have decided to study outside their home countries. By this decision, they become international students. International students have increased in number from 2.1 million in 2001 to over 6.4- 6.9 million between 2022 and 2023 academic year.⁵⁴ Apart from the increase in the enrolment rate of international students,

⁵¹ World Bank (2022, September 14). 'The World in Africa; Overview' .

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ P Obi, 'Why Nigerian's economy is not doing well? *Vanguard Newspaper* May 22, 2022.

⁵⁴ Institute of International Education, 2024, www.iie.org. Accessed March 12 2025.

there is also the emergence of large numbers of new host countries that are educationally attractive to international students. Their emergence has come to challenge the traditional big five educationally attractive host countries in the areas of students' subscription and destination choice. These big five according to Kell & Vogl⁵⁵ are the United States of America, France, United Kingdom, Australia and Germany. Significant changes have occurred in students' migration trends and patterns over some time.⁵⁶ These changes are brought about by policies and strategies that are put in place by some countries to attract higher international subscription.

The policies adopted by these institutions such as jobs and career incentives, scholarship/tuition waiver and introduction of courses to be delivered in English language have given a boost to international students' enrollment in the emerging big players in higher education. This enabling environment created by the developed countries lured citizens from developing countries to migrate thereby resulting in loss of revenue which would have accrued to their home countries.⁵⁷ Most of the Nigerian public funds and resources used for Nigerian students in terms of scholarships are now little or no investments as these individuals find it unnecessary and a sort of punishment to return back to Nigeria after their studies, as they believe they can be worth more than what Nigeria really has to offer. Such an action undermined economic development and loss of technical manpower in various sectors of Nigerian economy.⁵⁸

Another negative impact of migration on the socio-economic growth of Nigeria is brain drain. Brain drain occurs when significant numbers of highly skilled nationals leave their countries of origin to seek employment or establish businesses abroad. According to Idio,⁵⁹ Nigeria lost over 10,000 academics that would have developed the Nigerian educational system to its maximum. This event was traced back to the Babaginda administration between 1986 and 1990. The administration brought about the drastic emigration of skilled individuals out of the nation state due to the obvious and perceived push factors of international migration at that time. It was revealed that while the developed industrial countries see the benefits of strengthening her labour force through immigration of qualified individuals from the developing nation-states (known as

⁵⁵ P Kell, & G Vogl, (eds) 'Transnational student mobility: Introducing new paradigms for researching international students, in *International students in the Asia Pacific. Education in the Asia-Pacific region: Issues, concerns and prospects* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012) 1-24.

⁵⁶ Institute of International Education (n 54).

⁵⁷ Obani and Odalonu (n 7).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ EE Idio, W Rogers & PA Akadi, 'The impact of international migration on socio-economic development of Nigeria' (8) (2015) *GOJAMSS*, 32-35.

source nation-states) in which Nigerians are not excluded, the developing countries suffer drastic shortage of qualified skilled individuals in the work force as a result of this there is low turnout of productivity.⁶⁰

In the field of medicine, according to the Senior Medical Officer of the British General Medical Council,⁶¹ between 2015 and July 2021, a total of 4,528 Nigeria-trained medical doctors have moved to the United Kingdom to practice. The figure is aside from the number of Nigerian doctors who were trained in the UK and are practicing there.⁶² This number has skyrocketed to about 11,000 in 2023.⁶³ Fayomi⁶⁴ asserts that Nigeria's inability to develop is traced to the loss of manpower as well as the appropriate skill and expertise to develop the economy. Revealing that when a nation state's labour force grows with the needed and quality skill there is bound to be productivity obviously experienced in the nation state. But in a situation whereby skilled Nigerians engage in emigration from the nation-state the reverse is said to be the case. Similarly, Idio⁶⁵ posits that one of the negative effects of international migration (emigration) on Nigeria is reduction of already low -quality skilled manpower. It is undoubtable that brain drain has a negative effect on the economies of developing countries, because the skills of the remaining nationals are not sufficient to grow industries, academia and other sectors of the economy. Also, brain waste occurs when skilled migrants engage in menial occupations abroad, resulting in deskilling.⁶⁶

When the youths are empowered and contribute their quota, the economy will bounce back. The exodus of Nigerian youths who are at the productive age for economic development is a setback to socio-economic development of Nigeria.⁶⁷ Furthermore, internal and international migration lead to social disruption in the families. Family separation, absentee parenting, and cultural disintegration are common issues arising from migration. Migration creates big vacuum in families and oftentimes result in strain in the relationship between couples. The young ones are mostly affected as they are sometimes stuck with one of the parents who struggle to fill the gap in parenting.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Report of the Senior Medical Officer of the British Medical Council, www.britishmedicalcouncil. Accessed March 20 2025.

⁶² D Tolu-Kolawole, 4,528 'Nigerian Doctors moved to UK in six years' Punch Newspaper August 12th 2021.

⁶³ See Punch Newspapers Report of 18th March 2025, www.punchng.com. Accessed March 25 2025.

⁶⁴ OO Fayomi (n 14).

⁶⁵ Idio (n 55).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Obani and Odalonu (n 7).

Migration no doubt leads to cultural disintegration as the migrants overtime begin to lose the cultural values, norms, beliefs, institutions, and practices that they imbibed from their communities. As young people migrate from rural areas, traditional languages, customs, and social obligations are often lost, resulting in diminished sense of communal identity. The adoption of foreign and conflicting values by international migrants sometimes leads to complete disconnection from their cultural roots or heritage. The foregoing discourse has shown that migration has a multifaceted impact on Nigeria's socio-economic development. On the one hand, it has fostered transnational linkages that benefit education, healthcare, and entrepreneurship, eased unemployment pressures, and facilitated the inflow of remittances. On the other side of the divide, it has resulted in significant brain drain, urban overcrowding, pressure on infrastructure and public services, cultural disintegration, and social disruption. These mixed outcomes highlight that while migration can serve as a catalyst for socio-economic transformation, its benefits are not automatic or evenly distributed.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Migration has remained a powerful factor shaping Nigeria's socio-economic growth. Understandably, it has served as both a coping strategy for individuals facing economic hardship and insecurity, and at the same time as a conduit pipe for national growth through remittances, diaspora investment, and global exchange of skills and ideas. The benefits notwithstanding, migration has posed a lot of challenges to the development of the economy of Nigeria. The loss of skilled professionals to international labour markets, the pressure on national infrastructure, the depopulation of the rural communities, and the social fragmentation caused by displacement all highlight the adverse effects of migration. These challenges underscore the need for Nigeria to adopt a more strategic and inclusive approach to migration that will in addition to harnessing its developmental potentials, will also mitigate its negative consequences.

For Nigeria to drastically discourage her citizens from moving out of the country, the following measures and recommendations should be adopted in order to discourage Nigerians from migrating in large numbers to other countries for better opportunities and living conditions.

Firstly, Nigerian Government should solve the problems or issues that make people migrate. This could be done by proportionately translating the country's economic growth to developmental projects, such as providing infrastructural facilities, ensuring security of lives and properties,

providing better jobs and equal chances to the youths. Secondly, government should strive to reform the academic curricula to be more technical and vocational so that on graduation, the graduates can be self-reliant. Again, government should create partnerships between educational providers and industries to encourage job placement of graduates. Furthermore, government should expedient efforts in tackling persistent insecurity confronting the nation. Again, government at all levels should create more job opportunities and improve the environment to stop people from migrating. Finally, good economic policies geared towards development and empowerment of youths should be formulated and implemented to revamp the Nigeria economy to compete with developed world.