



ABSTRACT

The trending slogan (JAPA) in Yoruba language of the south-west Nigeria, with the "meaning to escape or flee", is increasingly becoming a disturbing trend. In the early 60s and 70s until late 80s, those who used to travel abroad from Nigeria and other African countries were always eager to return home because fantastic offers were waiting for them. Of course, migration is considered as a feat to someone's life. Especially, to some of the people from the third world,

JAPA SLOGAN IN NIGERIA: SPATE OF PERENNIAL MIGRATION IN THE POSTCOLONIAL AFRICAN STATES

***ADEKUNLE ALAYE, PhD.; & **BOIKE REHBEIN, PhD.**

*Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria.

**Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany.

Corresponding Author: sunday.alaye@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng

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Introduction

The rate at which Nigerians are leaving the shores of the country for the supposedly greener pastures, is becoming worrisome. Obviously, times are hard, and there is no doubt about that. Moreover, the economy is reported to be in a comatose state and it appears there is no solution in sight. Recently, some Nigerians were interviewed on the national television concerning the state of the economy and the majority of them were of the view that all hands must be on deck to salvage the economy, while a few referred to *japa* as the only solution left for them. Having seen it as the means to an end of several socio-economic challenges they experience in the country, some of course, differed and believe that *japa* cannot be an end rather, a means to an end or tentative strategy, to escape several challenges bedevilling the country.

The new normal in Africa's regular or irregular migration can be directly traced to the last two decades (Nwalutu et al., 2022). This involves a massive transnational migration of Africans, including Nigerians, to other parts of the world, especially Europe, through illegal routes, porous land borders, the Sahara, and across the Mediterranean into Europe, or through legalised



including Africa. Where barely every basic sector is rated almost dead or horribly functional. Thus, apparently makes Japa as fondly called, become very imperative for some of the vulnerable residents. They do, regardless of whatever may likely be negative consequences of embarking on such trips, their concerns are just to depart the shores of the continent first. Japa or any form of illegal migration, indeed poses a very serious danger. This study adopts a qualitative research design, utilising a case study approach. Hence, we explore three theoretical frameworks, Realist, Modernization and Dependency theories, to give the in-depth analysis of whether we shall raise research questions like what has gone wrong. Or why has “Japa and migrating to the western world in the recent time now become a prevalent development in Nigeria and Africa at large? No doubt, the implication has further deepened and impacted on the socio-economic development of Nigeria, through the “brain-drain” as professionals across all sectors, including the academia, are consistently departing the country and other African countries for purported greener pastures in Europe, America, Australia and other developed world.

Keywords: Brain-drain, Japa, Migration, Socio-economy Travelling.

routes with the required documents. The irregular migration culture is a notorious endeavour that, over the years, has led to the deaths of many Nigerians and fellow ‘backway’ migrants in the Sahara Desert, the Maghreb region, and the Mediterranean (Awosusi et al., 2021; Ikuteyijo, 2020; Okunade, 2021a).

Relevant literatures have argued that some of the core reasons behind the japa slogan in Nigeria, has primarily revolved around the high unemployment rate cum underemployment among the youths who constitute about 65 per cent of the nation's population, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). Also the spate of insecurity, erratic power supply, insensitivity of the government to the plight of the common man, poor remuneration, lack of motivation and other basic social amenities that can sustain a good standard of living.

A recent media report revealed that not less than 51 healthcare workers had left the Federal Medical Centre in Jabbi, Abuja. Every department in the hospital, according to the report, was affected by the brain drain. The Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria, based on a report, lost 6,000 pharmacists to brain drain in the last six years, while more are preparing to leave. Another worrisome news has to do with the data that was obtained from the International Organisation for Migration which showed that 1,200 Nigerians died



between January 2023 and July 2023 while trying to cross over to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea.

A Nigerian immigration lawyer based in the United Kingdom advised Nigerians seeking to relocate abroad for greener pastures to think twice before they make their decisions. According to him, there are lots of people who have *japa* or migrated to Europe and they now live miserably. He cited an example of a particular family that sold all its belongings because of relocation to the UK but on getting to the port of entry, the wife had a serious problem and their entry visa was cancelled.

According to Professor Toyin Falola, *Japa* is a Yoruba word that means to flee, and once achieved, a celebration comes with it as it feels more like gaining freedom at last (Premium Times, 2022). *Japa again* means ‘fleeing’ beyond the shores of Nigeria. That is, deploying any migration strategy (regular or irregular) to escape from Nigeria’s territory to other parts of the world. Although novel in literature, *Japa* is not a new development in Nigeria. As a concept, it explains not only the exodus of Nigerians through its international air borders (a phenomenon that attracted the terminology), but also the age-long practice of irregular migration, which seems to be ignored by the people and the concerned local actors.

Available statistics have further put the *japa* syndrome among Nigerians into better perspective. In 2018, for instance, Schengen countries such as Germany, Hungary, Finland, Italy, and Spain, which are Nigerians’ popular destinations, saw an increase in visa applications from Nigeria (The Guardian, 2019). A total of 88,587 visa applications were received, of which 49.8% were rejected (The Guardian, 2019). This means that 44,076 applications were denied (Sahara Reporters, 2018). The most recent statistics show an increase of 51% in the rejection rate of Schengen visa applications lodged by Nigerians (Schengen visa info, 2022). Furthermore, according to recent statistics released by the UK government, 486,869 study visas were granted as of June 2022, 71% more than in 2019. Nigeria ranks third after India and China, increasing from 8,384 to a record high of 65,929 in study visas to the UK. This shows a geometric increase in the mobility of people between Nigeria and the UK.

Access to accurate and timely information is very critical for those who want to relocate. Findings revealed that most of Nigerian travel agents do not provide their clients with relevant information. Aspiring immigrants are not guided properly. For instance, it is important to let them know some of the teething problems they are likely to put up with when they arrive over there, such as unfavorable weather conditions, culture shock, racial discrimination and loneliness.



Scores of Sub-Saharan migrants try to climb over the metallic fences that divide Morocco and the Spanish exclave of Ceuta and Melilla each year.

Source: InfoMigrants, 07.02.2025.

Morocco's Interior Ministry reported that it has stopped close to 80,000 attempts to reach the European Union in 2024, up 4.6 percent from the previous year. The majority of those intercepted originated from West Africa. In total, authorities say they stopped 78,685 attempts to cross the Mediterranean Sea in the year 2024. Some migrants try to cross the Mediterranean several times, so this does not necessarily equate to the number of people who tried to cross. The Interior Ministry added that 58 percent of the intercepted migrants had originated from West Africa, 12 percent from North Africa (including Morocco), and nine percent from East and Central Africa. The ministry told the Reuters news agency that the 4.6 percent rise in interceptions compared to 2023 showed the "growing migratory pressure in an unstable regional environment."

The high number of West African migrants, many from the ten countries in the Sahel (the UN defines Sahel countries as Senegal, Gambia, Mauritania, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria) stopped on Morocco's shores can be partly explained by years of armed conflict, often involving violent Islamist groups such as Boko Haram and Islamic State (IS) that has scarred much of the region. Several governments in the Sahel meanwhile have been taken over by military juntas, creating an atmosphere of fear among opposition members, with increasing reports of persecution. Meanwhile, the impact of global warming is also increasingly cited as a chief reason for people seeking to



leave their home countries and head towards Europe —especially those from farming communities who are suffering the effects of prolonged droughts.



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This migrant boat arrived in El Hierro, Canary Islands, in August 2024, where arrivals have increased in recent years | Photo: Antonio Sempere/Europa Press/ABACA/picture-alliance.

Source: InfoMigrants, 07.02.2025.

EU member Spain relies heavily on its border cooperation with Morocco, which has been beefed up since 2023. Most migrants departing from Moroccan shores head directly to Spanish territory, in most cases crossing the Atlantic to the Spanish archipelago, the Canary Islands.

The sea route is considered to be particularly dangerous; in a recent boat tragedy in January, as many as 50 migrants are believed to have died while trying to make it to the Canaries. Last December, 70 people went missing and are presumed dead in a similar tragedy.

Moroccan authorities said that of the nearly 80,000 people intercepted last year, 18,645 were migrants who were saved from unseaworthy boats, marking a rise in rescues of almost 11 percent from 2023.

Few also try to reach Europe via the Western Mediterranean, aiming for the southern coast of Spain.



However, the Spanish exclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in northern Morocco also continue to draw irregular migrants, some migrants attempt to scale the fortified border fences, and others endeavor to swim round by sea.

In 2024, there were 14 attempts by larger groups to get into Ceuta and Melilla via the border fences — more than twice the number from the previous year.

Methodology:

This study adopts a qualitative research design utilising a case study approach. This was most suitable for this study, as we delved into the mass outmigration of Nigerians into the UK through study channels. Secondary data, such as literature, reports, online commentaries, reviews, video clips, and others, on migration, were consulted, while primary data were obtained via interviews. The target population for this study comprised Nigerian students in the UK. The participants included cisgender males and females. Through telephone discussions and the Google Forms Survey Tool, 36 Nigerian students across 17 universities in the UK were interviewed. This enabled us to reach our targeted audience quickly and seamlessly. Of the total sampled population, responses were gotten from 23 respondents via the online Google forms, 6 via WhatsApp chats, and telephone interviews were conducted with the last 7 respondents. The respondents were between the ages of 20 and 50 and hail from different geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Out of the total study population, the age bracket of 36–40 years has the highest number with a percentage of 38.8%, while the age bracket of 20–25 years has the lowest percentage of 8.7%. The age bracket of 46 had an appreciable rate of 13%. The majority is 13%. Many of the respondents were postgraduate students, while a very small proportion of 7% were undergraduate students. The male population was the highest, with a percentage of 52.2%, while the female population had 47.8%. Before leaving Nigeria, 87% of the respondents were middle-class individuals. And business owners, while 13% of the respondents were unemployed. Of the 87% in the middle class, 73.5% were gainfully employed and had businesses running, while 26.1% were underemployed. 69.6% had dependents in the UK, while 30.4% had no dependents. The collected data were thematically analysed vis-à-vis the crux of the study. For ethical reasons, the respondents were anonymously cited.

Realist Theory

According to Donnelly (2000), realism (sometimes called ‘political realism’) claims to offer an account of world affairs that is ‘realistic’, in the sense that it is hard-headed and (as realists see it) devoid of wishful thinking and deluded moralizing. For realists, global politics is, first and last, about power and self-interest. This is why it is often portrayed as



a 'power politics' model of international politics. Donnely further assert that 'Politics is a struggle for power over men, and whatever its ultimate aim may be, power is its immediate goal and the modes of acquiring, maintaining and demonstrating it determine the technique of political action'.

Heywood, Baylis and Donnely all agree that the key theme of realist theory can be summed up into egoism plus anarchy equals power politics. They suggest that this formulation betrays a basic theoretical fault line within realism, dividing it into two distinct schools of thought. One of these – classical realism – explains power politics in terms of egoism, while the other – neorealism, or structural realism – explains it in terms of anarchy. However, these alternative approaches reflect more a difference of emphasis within realism rather than a division into rival 'schools', as the central assumptions of realism are common to most realist theorists, even though they may disagree about which factors are ultimately the most important.

Modernization theory

Modernization theory is a global economic theory that talks about the process of restructuring societies. It is a progressive transition from a traditional to a modern society. The theory originated from a German sociologist called Max Weber, the theory examines the internal factor of a society and assumes that with aid it can move from traditional through the process of development the developed states went through to a modernized society. During the colonial era Britain was profit focused and so it focused on administrative styles (the indirect rule) that helped in the expansion of the British economy. France on the other hand was focused on demolishing the culture of its colonies and contracted on making them Frenchmen, it was focused on spreading French civilization by implementing an administrative style (policy of assimilation) that aided this goal.

Dependency theory

This is a theory that states, resources flow from the "periphery" also known as poor and underdeveloped countries to the "core" who are regarded as the rich and industrialized countries, thereby, enriching the core at the expense of the periphery. This simply means that wealth is being transferred from the economy of these poor countries to the economies of the core by means of trading. The periphery provides raw materials to the core, and it is refined and processed into finished products and are shipped back to the periphery to buy at a high price. For instance, Nigeria has an economy dependent on crude oil, however, Nigeria does not have a refinery, which means she sells her crude oil to countries that have refineries, and they sell the refined oil back to her at a high cost. A



common feature of the periphery is low level of industrialization and high level of importation which kills the economy of the poor and make the dependent on the core for things as little as toothpicks

Literature Review

Migration and refugee management have been extensively studied from various disciplinary perspectives, including political science, sociology, law, and economics. This literature review explores key themes in existing research, focusing on historical migration policies, border enforcement, refugee integration, economic impacts, and public perception of migration.

Successful refugee integration depends on access to employment, education, healthcare, and social services. Scholars like Bloemraad (2006) emphasize that refugees who receive early support, including English language training and job placement programs, integrate more successfully. However, restrictive policies, such as delays in work permits for asylum seekers, create barriers to economic stability. The literature also highlights disparities in integration outcomes, with refugees from Latin America and Africa facing higher unemployment rates compared to European refugees (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

Economic studies have shown that migration can have both short-term costs and long-term benefits for host countries. Research by Evans & Fitzgerald (2017) found that refugees in the U.S. contribute positively to the economy, paying more in taxes than they receive in public benefits over a 20-year period. Additionally, migrant labour is essential in industries such as agriculture, healthcare, and technology. However, some scholars argue that migration policies that prioritize high-skilled workers, such as the H-1B visa program, create imbalances that disadvantage lower-skilled migrants.

Public attitudes toward migration and refugee policies are influenced by political narratives and media representation. Studies by Hopkins (2010) suggest that economic downturns often lead to increased anti-immigrant sentiment, while humanitarian crises (such as the Syrian refugee crisis) can sometimes generate public sympathy. However, research also shows that communities with direct exposure to immigrants and refugees tend to have more positive attitudes toward migration (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014).

Japa and the Socioeconomic Development of Nigeria:

Nigeria's poor economic state accounts for many Nigerians' pushes to the western world with the hope of looking for greener pastures. Prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in late 2019, the living conditions of Nigerians were already on the brink of collapse while the pandemic unleashed its 'terror' on the national space and its people. This period welcomed inflation, unemployment, and other economic vices that have



overtaken the country. Many of the respondents from the interview survey noted that, as university graduates, they were underemployed for many years and had to move on in the quest for a better life.

The United Kingdom provides a better environment where Nigerians can thrive, explore their potentials and live a good life. In the words of one of the respondents, 'UK is a well-organised society, with a system that's working when compared to Nigeria, there are many job prospects here (the UK) and the health system is much better than Nigeria'. Another respondent noted that 'Nigeria is a no-go country. The situation is very bad at the moment' an assertion that mirrors the mentality of Nigerian youths, which Adeyanju and Oriola (2011) captured as a 'front page' portrayal of the West by immigrants to impress peers in their home countries.

However, the question to ask at this point is how some of the Nigerian youths in particular, were previously underemployed or unemployed in Nigeria, managed to raise the enormous funds needed for this capital-intensive project. Studying in the UK alone is financially demanding. Most of the higher education institutions in the UK require a minimum initial financial commitment from international students before they are even issued the required documents for visa processing. This payment ranges from 30–50% of the total tuition fee, which is about 3,000–7,000 euro, depending on the school. Besides, visa processing and other documentation come with costs. On the migration expenses and funding of their study, some respondents gathered funds from different sources, such as personal savings, the sale of private properties, and loans from friends, families, and financial institutions.

A respondent narrated thus: 'my mum sold our landed property inherited after the demise of my father, and I took a loan too'.⁹ This shows the extent a man can go in the quest for survival. This ongoing massive migration trend implies a colossal capital flight or transfers from an economically-backward country, like Nigeria, to a developed country like the UK.

Career Prospects:

Sequel to the earlier argument, the drive to study in the Western world was stirred by some respondents' desire to advance their careers, which the Nigerian space currently denies them. Some respondents believe countries like UK offers a better space for realising their visions and aspirations. Notably, however, although an average Nigerian youth is naturally career-driven with a fair for formal education, the educational system in Nigeria is currently failing due to non-payment of lecturers' salaries/arrears, and poor educational facilities, among others. For example, the leading academic body in the country, known as the ASUU-Academic Staff Union of Universities, was involved in industrial action which was conditionally halted over eight months later in October



2022.10 Notably, all academic activities ceased in public universities during the strike, thereby disrupting the academic calendar in all public universities. The respondents claimed that this worrisome situation in the country pushed them to the UK. According to one of the respondents, ‘too many strikes by the academic body (ASUU) in Nigeria has caused delays in completing a course, and with the huge dissatisfaction with the standard of study,’ hence japa became inevitable.

Similarly, a respondent stated, ‘I choose the UK because it allows self-development for global opportunities’. In the words of another respondent, ‘I took this decision to add to my professional qualifications and also work in a better environment.’¹¹ Also, some noted that the prolonged ASUU strike had made it difficult to complete their postgraduate studies, which could enhance their chances of getting desired jobs, and those who had paid jobs needed the certificate for promotion. As noted earlier, some were underemployed and were getting frustrated already. Since the ASUU and the government had failed to reach a compromise, meaning that the end of the strike was not in sight, they needed a ‘Plan B’, and that was to leave the country.

Career Saturation:

In sharp contrast to the above point, some respondents averred that they did not leave Nigeria because they did not have the financial capacity for the lives that they wanted to live in Nigeria. Those in this category are professionals in different industries, such as banking, education, and health as well as a few business individuals. According to many professionals, they had reached the peak of their careers and felt saturated; hence, they wanted a change of environment. According to a respondent who was a bank manager in Nigeria, “as a bank manager, I got to a point where I was no longer getting challenged in my career. I was totally exhausted and bored of the job and the country as a whole”. A businesswoman who ran a chain of supermarket stores in a major city in the southwest explained: “I got tired of everything because the cost of running these stores increased geometrically... had to buy heavy duty generators... the cost of fuelling them with diesel as well as the cost of maintenance... workers asking for a pay rise which I do not blame them for... terrible public infrastructure like bad roads and increased crime that made us close early even after arranging for private security. I just abandoned everything and left” with the sense of urgency, those in this group had, the study channel is currently the easiest path to achieve their aspiration. Hence, they utilised the opportunity. This equally explains why older Nigerians between the ages of 46–50 have also explored this route and are among the ‘japa-ists’ in the western world.



The Myth of Migration:

A category of individuals holds a strong opinion and a misguided conviction that they will never succeed in Nigeria unless they migrate to other countries. In other words, they believe that their success only lies beyond the shores of Nigeria. The responses of some sampled Nigerian students in the UK affirm this. A respondent confessed that he had since made plans to relocate. He, therefore, took the study route because of the ease of securing admission and a visa in the UK. According to him, 'the ease of gaining admission and the certainty of getting a visa makes it a good means to an end'

The end, in this instance, refers to relocation. Some gave other reasons for their decisions that do not sound logical and justifiable for study purposes. Another participant also confessed that he has been desperate to 'escape' Nigeria at all costs, as his siblings currently live in America. According to him, 'All attempts made to enter the United States proved abortive as I was denied multiple times by the Embassy in Lagos. I had no choice but to switch to the UK, which is much faster though expensive.'

This shows that the UK provided an escape route for him. In addition, a participant declared that he took the decision because of the opportunity to be in a multicultural space. He said, "I took the study route because of the 'multi-diverse culture' in the UK'. As much as the respondent understood what he meant, it is difficult to place the relationship between the acquisition of an academic certificate and being in a multicultural environment. These responses reflect the illogical mind-set of some Nigerian youths, an aftermath of anomie currently ravaging the Nigerian space. For them, it is not important wherever they go, as what is paramount to them is just to leave Nigeria. This resonates with the mind-set of many Nigerian youths who embark on irregular migration through the Sahara and the Mediterranean to cross Europe.

Study as a means to an end:

It is noteworthy that many of the respondents' intentions point to relocation. A question that arises here is, 'Why the UK?' There is a rush to the UK because of the seamless process for international students to gain admission into UK universities, especially for postgraduate studies. As a result, many Nigerians have decided to explore and exploit the study route to gain access to the UK, despite the huge demands required and the process involved.

These will be touched on in this section. This remains a pull factor responsible for this phenomenon. Whereas many stated that they took the decision to develop themselves and be better equipped for the labour requirements in the new sphere, the majority avowed that they would never return to Nigeria. A respondent noted that he had taken



that route to join his family in the UK. A participant asserted that ‘the study was a means to an end; the end is relocation’.

This shows that the intention was not to go study but only a sure way to exit Nigeria and transit into a better environment. Another maintained as follows: ‘the UK is the most open country that accommodates foreigners at the moment so, I decided to grab the opportunity’. She noted further that she encouraged many of her friends to utilise the opportunity while it lasts. While many had succeeded, some did not because of the huge financial demands required for the process. This implies that, though the process requires huge financial outlay, many commit themselves to it as they are more concerned about the result.

Effects of the perennial migration for Nigeria:

The stories of Nigerian immigrants to the western world, show that the impact of outmigration is complex and hydra-headed for both the home and receiving countries. Nigeria is renowned for having a sizable human capital, which continues to be one of its soft power assets in the international arena. For instance, other wealthy/developed nations in Europe and Asia are openly and secretly hiring professionals from Nigeria in addition to Nigeria’s deployment of human capital aid to several other African governments and the Caribbeans through its Technical Aid Corps Scheme (TACs).

There is a brain drain and a loss of international influence when the majority of these professionals, who are national assets, are now voluntary migrants to the UK. All sectors of the Nigerian state have been negatively affected by the current migration spike. University lecturers, high school teachers, medical doctors, bankers, and so on are resigning their appointments out of frustration to navigate their way to a sane system (the UK) in anticipation of a better life. This is one of the features of a fragile/failed state as citizens are pushed out in search of greener pastures and, in this case, it comes with so much desperation given the current situation of the Nigerian state.

One of the respondents, who had been a professional in one of the key sectors in Nigeria, lamented that, out of frustration with the country, he had been pushed to resign from his professional job in Nigeria and taken up an unprofessional one in the UK. In the authors’ phone discussion with one of the respondents, a computer engineer in Nigeria, it was revealed that the bulk of professional migrants, including himself and his wife, were employed in the health sector in the UK as caregivers (unprofessional health assistants). Adding that skilled medical practitioners from Nigeria are easily absorbed into the health sector with ‘better’ working conditions. Available records show that over 5,600 Nigerian-trained or licensed medical doctors have migrated to the UK in the last eight years. This record includes nurses/midwives and other health professionals.



Recently, the head of the Nigerian Medical Association publicly lamented that the Nigerian health sector is experiencing an unusual brain drain, with only 24, 000 licensed medical offers, less than 10% of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) minimum required standard. He noted further that the proportion of the available doctors to patients in the country now stands at a ratio of 1–30, 000 in some parts of the country. This is the current situation in all sectors of the country. Globalisation could be said to have assisted Nigeria's professionals to explore opportunities beyond the shores of Nigeria. While some have succeeded in relocating, the internet continues to provide information and as well facilitate communication between those that have emigrated and those still in Nigeria. With the process in place, there is constant exchange of opportunities and links which those in Nigeria continue to explore. As a result, there would continue to be outmigration of citizens, as students or professionals, from Nigeria.

Further, Nigeria's waning economic situation, which most respondents attributed to their migration, may be worsened, given the colossal capital transfer from the country to the neoliberal economy of the UK in terms of payment of tuition fees, relocating their families, and getting accommodation. In a survey carried out by SBM Intelligence, an estimated amount of 1,931,821,923.75 pounds was generated by the UK government from Nigerian students and their dependents during the 2021/ 2022 academic year. Given Nigeria's deteriorating economic situation, this aroused curiosity about how and where such funds were generated. According to the testimonies of the respondents, the majority of them sold their own assets, obtained loans, and invested all of their savings in the project. This goes along with the political economy of migration thesis, which places migration in the context of economic inequalities between wealthy and poor countries, whereby migrants are drawn to, or induced from, the former into the latter. The corollary effect of this is economic exploitation, which is what most student migrants who are temporary or casual employees in the UK health sector suffer. They receive little salary and few or no benefits. It is important to stress that, contrary to what many migrants believe, the UK is not El Dorado. The lived experience of migrants in the UK will be a topic of research in our future treatise.

According to Adeyanju and Oriola (2011), migrants' stories of life abroad typically disguise the unpleasant realities of their experiences, such as exploitation, racism, and unemployment. We predict a stark mismatch between the student migrants' experiences and their expectations, given the UK's neoliberal system. Also, given the massive dependents' migration cum unstable socio-political landscape of the country, we project that Diaspora remittances, which constitute a substantial percentage of Nigeria's GDP, may drastically drop. Aside from the fact that the migrants whose immediate families have relocated may have little or no one back home to send money to, the country's



security situation might discourage the migrants from building up their 'treasures' at home country. This is borne out of the many negative experiences of Nigerians in the diaspora who visited Nigeria for different purposes.

A recent story is that of a Nigerian who had invested in his hometown's agricultural and hospitality sectors and was kidnapped by bandits on arrival.⁴⁶ His abductors eventually killed him and others. Equally, the evidence reflects a decline in Diaspora remittances since 2019, when this massive migration peaked. According to available statistics by the World Bank, in 2018, the Diaspora remittance stood at 25 billion USD, which was 6.1% of the GDP. In 2019, it dropped to 23.81 billion USD; in 2020, it reduced to 17.21 billion-4% of the GDP.⁴⁷ The World Bank attributed the increased remittances to 19.2 billion USD in 2021 to the relative stability of the Naira-US Dollar rate (Olanrewaju, 2022). But with the current naira devalued status cum the massive migration in 2022, we project an enormous drop in overseas remittance in the country.

Finally, if the UK government eventually produces a policy to prevent Nigerian migrants from bringing their dependents with them into the UK, the implications may be grievous for the migrants and the Nigerian state. Aside from the fact that the rate of divorce and broken marriages will peak, the number of vulnerable populations in the country will increase. Considering that the Nigerian Government does not have a structure or system that caters for citizens' essential needs, most of the children left behind by their parents might become vulnerable to criminal gangs such as rapists, kidnappers, bandits, and terrorists in their quest to survive in an insecure country.

Conclusion:

Through an examination of the lived experiences of Nigerians in the western world, vis-à-vis the Nigerian states, this article unpacks the push and pull factors responsible for the japa syndrome that Nigeria currently faces. Findings show that though, many Nigerians have found their way into some of the developed countries especially the United Kingdom through the study channel, realistically, many used it to japa from Nigeria. Notably, since the process allows and accommodates immediate family members as dependents, it is a more effective pathway to be explored and utilised by many Nigerians as an escape route against poverty, under/unemployment, security threats and others.

The japa syndrome, discussed in the preceding section, shows more serious economic implications for an economically-declining state like Nigeria, given the colossal human and capital flight Nigeria is currently experiencing. It is critical to note that, despite the huge capital outflow in human and financial resources that this phenomenon affords the UK, it remains unacknowledged by the latter through factual statements and statistics. What is available so far in the public space is that Nigerian dependents account for 40% of all



dependents who accompany international students in the UK, without corresponding statistics to show the turnover the UK government has benefited from the process and Nigerians specifically. This calls for careful attention by the UK government, as the effect of the process might have negative implications for Nigerians in the country. Nigerians might soon be seen as intruders in the UK, resulting in possible Afrophobia or xenophobic prejudice or attacks, as they are experiencing in South Africa.

Therefore, a holistic appraisal of this phenomenon lands solutions on the tables of Nigeria's politicians and governments at all levels. It is high time they started to adjust and see why they must show intentional commitment towards the performance of their primary functions as custodians of public funds for their management and utilisation for the common good of all. This is the only way they would fulfil their part of its social contract with Nigerian citizens. However, scholars have established that development will never stop migration. Thus, we argue that a deliberate effort by the Nigerian government to address internal crises would mitigate the desperation amongst Nigerians to emigrate and address the Japa syndrome, and Nigerians would be more rational in their decisions as it relates to migration. This is suggested as a major measure that can adequately address the current Japa syndrome in Nigeria. As one of the respondents puts it, in line with our thought, 'the massive exodus of young Nigerians, I believe, is due to the economic hardship faced in Nigeria. Everyone is searching for a good life and wants that for their family.

This trend will keep repeating itself until the Nigerian government puts things in order back home rather than stopping people from leaving. This assertion presents a solution capable of addressing this phenomenon in Nigeria. Until the Nigerian state shows the political will to make things right, the Japa syndrome appears to be here to stay, and if the government only implements measures to stiffen the outmigration process of Nigerians through legitimate means without addressing the root causes of the drive, then many Nigerians would be pushed to consider the second option; that is, through irregular migration that comes with numerous dangers and horrors as previous studies have shown.

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