

MIGRATING TO CANADA: GOVERNANCE AND THE RELEVANCE OF PROTECTING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC RIGHTS OF THE MIDDLE CLASS IN NIGERIA*

Abstract

Citizens in the middle class in any society live above the poverty threshold. However, the unprecedented migration to Canada in the last 5 years among the middle class in Nigeria raises a cause for concern regarding their socio-economic conditions. This study examines the increasing aspiration of citizens in the middle class to migrate to Canada within the broader context of socio-economic rights in Nigeria. The study asks a pertinent question: will the protection and enforcement of socio-economic rights in Nigeria reduce the unprecedented level of migration among the middle class? The study adopts the mixed research method and employs quantitative as well as qualitative techniques. Although, the study reveals that some respondents aspire to migrate due to economic factors, such as job insecurity, however, the majority of respondents are social migrants that desire improved quality of life. A large percentage of the respondents indicated that the decision to migrate would not be a priority, should the government protect socio-economic rights and provide access to social protection benefits. The study argues that Nigeria will witness a significant level of reduction in migration among the middle class when socio-economic rights are protected and enforced. Importantly, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) should influence the government to enact legislations on social protection. These laws must be duly implemented in order to protect socio-economic rights and improve the quality of life of the citizens. In addition, the government should carry out comprehensive reforms in public institutions towards improving the standard and quality of services rendered.

Keywords: Governance, Socio-economic rights, Middle Class, Migration, Canada, Nigeria

1. Aims and Objectives

This study examines the impacts of the non-enforcement of socio-economic rights on migration. It focuses on married respondents in the middle class and seeks to interpret the socio-economic conditions of the respondents from the perspective of socio-economic rights. To this end, it examines the failure of government to fulfill the socio-economic rights of the citizens, particularly within the context of the social protection framework and how this influences the emigration aspirations of citizens in the middle class. Fundamentally, it justifies that migration is a consequence of the violation of socio-economic rights. The research is divided into five sections: Section one clarifies the aims and objectives of the study. Section two reviews existing literature and highlights the research questions. Section three analyses the methodology and research findings. Section four covers the conclusion and recommendations. Section five discusses the limitations of study and raises the issues for further investigation.

2. Literature Review

Globalization has made a considerable and significant impact on migration (internal migration, emigration and immigration) as it makes it easier for people to migrate for better opportunities and improved quality of life. Migration is not a new concept and the idea of migrating from one city, state or country to another has existed from time immemorial. Migration is a broad term that includes diverse movements of people from divergent backgrounds and different spheres of human endeavour to another territory for multifarious reasons.¹ However, there is a significant rise in the number of both illegal and voluntary migrants in recent years.² Migration especially among the youth population is driven by socio-economic and political reasons which include better employment opportunities, low salary, improved quality of life, violence and insecurity, poverty, under development, war, persecution, environmental factors, such as climate change, education as well as the desire to live a transnational life.³

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¹ D Hughes, F Akkök, G Arulmani & H Zelloth, 'Migration: theory, research and practice in guidance and counseling' *British Journal of Guidance & Counseling*, 2019 vol 47(1) 1-5

² C Ade-Johnson, 'Behavioral Modification of Nigerian Youths against Illegal Migration through Purposeful Advertising', *Annals of Journalism and Mass Communication*, 2019 vol 1(2) 42-48

³ E E Osaghae, *Trends in Migrant Political Organizations in Nigeria: The Igbo in Kano* (Ibadan: French Institute for Research in Africa, 1994); C Ojukwu, 'Globalization, migration and the philosophy of in-ward looking: The contemporary Igbo nation in perspective', *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 2009 vol 3(3) 084-091; A Odoemene & O Osuji, 'Nurses' International Migration and the Crystallizing 'Culture of Exile' in Nigeria: Historical Trends, Dynamics and Consequences', *African Population Studies*, 2015 vol 29 (1) 1542-1554; C Adeyanju, 'The West of Their Imagination': Transnational Impression Management and Canadian Migration in the Nigerian Youth Imaginary', *African Studies Review*,

Migrants, especially illegal migrants, are often confronted with several obstacles in the receiving countries which sometimes frustrate their integration and as a result some migrants decide to return to their countries, while some develop strong resilience.⁴ In Nigeria, migration is on the increase and according to Perpetua et al.⁵, the number of people emigrating from Nigeria are more than the people immigrating to Nigeria. It however appears that the inclination to migrate is predominant among the high skilled workers and middle class citizens due to poor governance and its attendant consequences that affect their career development and quality of life.⁶ Without doubt, bad governance is a symptom of a failing state and according to Uma et al.⁷, professionals and skilled Nigerians are forced to migrate to western countries due to bad governance. The recent attempt by over 500 Nigerian doctors to migrate to Saudi Arabia before the recruitment exercise was suspended further buttresses the challenges of skilled workers and the middle class in Nigeria. The migration of skilled workers to more advanced and developed countries fundamentally leads to brain drain and affects the transfer of knowledge and professional service deliveries in the country. On the contrary, Udentia and Nwosuji⁸ argue that migration contributes to the capital development of the home countries of migrants through 'brain gain, brain circulation as well as remittances'. Studies conducted on the impacts of foreign remittances on households in developing countries reveal that remittance significantly contributes to household income⁹. Hence, despite discouraging migration due to brain drain, countries encourage migration to the extent that it has potentials to contribute to development through brain gain as well as remittances. In the last 10 years, remittances from international migrants have contributed significantly to the economy of Nigeria. Migrants remit monies earned in oversea countries to Nigeria as a way of assisting relatives and meeting family needs back home. Equally, Nigerians in the diaspora invest in Nigeria through several businesses as a means to generate income for their families.

Research Questions

1. What are the factors motivating the emigration of citizens in the middle class to Canada?
2. What are the views of the respondents with regards to governance, public institutions and socio-economic rights?

3. Research Methods

The study employed the mixed methods research. Questionnaires were used as survey instrument and designed in a two-way response format of Yes or No. The Yes or No format was effective because it provided quicker responses from the respondents, thus making it easy for them to participate in the survey, while increasing the response rate. Questionnaires were sent to 250 respondents via e-mail. 12 of the respondents did not complete the questionnaires, while 238 respondents completed the questionnaires, which translate to 95.2% response rate. The questionnaire addresses questions relating to employment and job insecurity, social insecurity, public service and governance, as well as social protection and socio-economic rights. The respondents were gathered through voluntary response sampling via the Express Entry/Provincial Nominee members' platform on telegram. The voluntary response sampling method is a non-probability technique. It is cost-effective, provides the researcher easy access to sample and ensures that collection of data is less rigorous. In addition, 50 respondents were interviewed via zoom in order for the researcher to better understand and interpret the dynamic views of the respondents. Data gathered via the questionnaires were analysed through quantitative technique and results were interpreted in tabular format using frequency and simple percentages. Thematic analysis was applied to analyse qualitative data. To achieve this, data gathered were reviewed and coded into various themes. Afterwards, data with similar themes were classified and each

2017 vol 60(3) 141-158; L O Ikuteyijo, 'Irregular Migration as Survival Strategy: Narratives from Youth in Urban Nigeria' in M. L. McLean (ed), *West African Youth Challenges and Opportunity Pathways* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020) pp.53-77.

⁴ M Ajima, 'Critical Themes in Some Nigerian Diaspora Short Stories', *An International Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 2015 vol 4(2) 107-120

⁵ O Perpetua, C Chimaobi & J Jack (2018). 'Economic Recession and Migration: The Case of Nigeria', *Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Journal of Sociology*, 2018 vol 6(1) 1-12

⁶ M Eddy, R Wilcox & A Akadi, 'The Impact of International Migration on Socio-Economic Development of Nigeria', *Global Journal of Applied, Management and Social Sciences*, 2015 vol 8 30-35

⁷ K Uma, P Obidike, A Ogbuagu, S Ogba, P Ndubuisi & H Aniagolu, 'Eliminating the Impact of Poor Governance and Migration through Economic Transformation in Nigeria' *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 2019 vol 58(2) 83-102

⁸ J Udentia & P Nwosuji, 'Migration and National Development: A Comparative Analysis of The Attitude of The First Generation South-East Nigeria Migrants and The New Generation', *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, 2015 vol 4(8) 98-111

⁹ O Akanle & J Adesina, 'International Migrants' Remittances and Kinship Networks in Nigeria: The Flip-Side Consequences', *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 2017 vol 73(1) 66-91

class was labeled and evaluated. The researcher did not utilise all the qualitative data gathered, however data utilised provided a deeper insight into the subject matter of research. The research was conducted within 8 weeks through the support of research assistants.

Findings

Table 1.0 Demographic statistics of respondents

S/N	Attributes	Frequency	(%)	
1	Age			
	25-30	67	28.2	
	31-40	151	63.4	
	41-50	20	8.4	
2	Sex			
	Male	113	47.5	
	Female	125	52.5	
3	Education			
	Primary School	0	0	
	Secondary School	0	0	
	Tertiary Institution	238	100	
4	Occupation			
	Accountant	27	11.3	
	Architect	3	1.3	
	Banker	6	14.0	
	Businessman	4	2.5	
	Building Contractor Surveyor	1	1.7	
	Civil Servant	7	0.4	
	Doctor	21	2.9	
	Engineer	15	8.8	
	Financial Advisor	16	6.3	
	Human Resources	8	6.7	
	I T Specialist	47	3.4	
	Laboratory Scientist	11	19.7	
	Lawyer	5	4.6	
	Lecturer	3	2.1	
	Movie Producer	1	1.3	
	Nurse	14	0.4	
			5.9	
		Pharmacist	6	2.5
		Public Servant	10	4.2
5	Number of Children			
	0	27	11.3	
	1	74	31.1	
	2	113	47.5	
	3	21	8.8	
	4	3	1.3	
	5	0	0	

As shown in Table 1.0 above, the respondents are within the age bracket of 25-50 years. 8.4% of the respondents are within the age bracket of 41-50 years and this signifies the lowest percentage in terms of age group participation. On the other hand, 63.4% of the respondents are between the ages of 31 - 40 years and this represents the highest percentage of respondents in terms of age group. Furthermore, the table reflects that the percentage (52.5%) of female respondents is higher compared to the percentage (47.5%) of male respondents. All the respondents (100%) attended higher institution, indicating that the respondents are literate and have an understanding of the subject matter of research. On the basis of occupation, 19.7% of the respondents are IT specialists, representing the highest percentage while movie producer has the lowest percentage (0.4%). Data reveals that 47.5% of the respondents have 2 children, which represents the highest percentage in terms of number of children.

Table 2.0 - Frequency of responses to questions on the factors that motivate migration, respondents' interest in public institutions, house ownership by the respondents and the impact of the non-enforcement of socio-economic rights on migration.

S/N	Attributes	Yes		No	
		Frequ.	(%)	Frequ.	(%)
1	Are you migrating due to job insecurity?	156	65.5	82	34.5
2	Are you migrating due to insecurity/ insecure environment?	221	92.9	17	7.1
3	Is improved quality of life for your family a factor for migrating?	238	100	0	0
4	Do you attend public hospitals?	15	6.3	223	93.7
5	Do your children attend public schools?	7	2.9	231	97.1
6	Are you a house owner?	43	18.1	195	81.9
7	Will you migrate supposing your socio-economic rights are protected?	79	33.2	159	66.8

3.1. Discussion

In recent years, a lot of concerns have been raised with respect to job insecurity and unemployment in Nigeria. The views of the respondents were sought on whether job insecurity is a factor motivating their aspiration to emigrate. A large majority of the respondents, 65.5% answered that job insecurity is a factor motivating their aspiration to emigrate. According to Abolade¹⁰, the level of job insecurity in Nigeria has increased in the last 30 years due to several factors such as merger and acquisition in the banking sector, re-engineering, automation, lack of requisite skills, financial challenges faced by companies as well as global recession. There is no doubt that job insecurity has significantly contributed to the rising level of unemployment in Nigeria. A 2021 report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) indicates that the level of unemployment in Nigeria is 33.3%, which translates to about 23.2 million citizens.¹¹ A male respondent, an engineer noted: 'In the last 3 years, my organisation has laid-off over 70 members of staff due to down-sizing. I am vulnerable and may lose my job as well'. Another male respondent who works in an oil and gas company commented:

There is a new policy in my company to recruit contract staff who will take up the job responsibilities of some permanent staff on a last-in, first-out basis. I have worked in this company for just 8 months and the policy is likely to affect me. It is not easy to get a good job in Nigeria. I want to migrate because there are more and better employment opportunities in Canada.

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the rising level of unemployment in Nigeria as it has affected the profitability of most businesses. As a result, companies have in turn cut down on the number of employees in their payroll. The result of a study on the effect of the pandemic on business enterprises reveals that two-thirds of businesses operating in Nigeria have shut down as a result of the pandemic¹². A female respondent working in a law firm stated: 'My firm laid-off 35% of the workforce due to the Covid-19 pandemic'. As it appears, most employees are not sure of job continuity and the challenge of limited job opportunities as well as the rising level of unemployment presents a conundrum to every employee in Nigeria. Consequently, emigrating to Canada and other western countries for job opportunities has become the norm for Nigerians, most especially employees in the middle class strata who can afford the cost of migrating. In their responses to the question on insecurity and migration, 92.9% of the respondents stated that the high level of insecurity in the country serves as a factor that has shaped their decision to migrate to Canada. The nature of insecurity

¹⁰ D Abolade, 'Impact of Employees' Job Insecurity and Employee Turnover on Organisational Performance in Private And Public Sector Organisations', *Studies in Business and Economics*, 2018 vol 13(2) 5-19

¹¹ Premium Times 'Nigeria's unemployment rate rises to 33.3% — highest in over 13 years' (2021). <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/449150-nigerias-unemployment-rate-rises-to-33-3-highest-in-over-13-years.html> accessed on 24 September 2021

¹² National Bureau of Statistics 'The Impact of Covid-19 on Business Enterprises in Nigeria' (2021). <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary> accessed on 24 September 2021

in Nigeria include; Banditry, kidnapping, Fulani Herdsmen/Farmers Crisis, Robbery, Rituals, Boko Haram Insurgency and many more. As it stands, Nigeria is designated as one of the terrorist countries in the world and evidently, it is becoming dangerous to live in Nigeria¹³. A male respondent explained: 'I was attacked by hoodlums in Ojota, Lagos in February 2021. My car was smashed and not too far from the scene of crime, police officers who could not rescue me sat in a van. A female respondent lamented: 'I no longer feel safe living in Nigeria. My father and brothers were kidnapped by Bandits along Akure-Owo Highway. We paid a huge ransom before they were eventually released after 5 weeks'. Another female respondent stated angrily: 'My cousin and his wife were killed by unknown gun men while travelling to Edo State for Christmas holiday in 2019'. I was lucky not to have travelled with them because I had to go to the office'. The views of these respondents corroborate the findings of the study conducted by Kirwin and Anderson¹⁴ which reveals that the majority of Nigerians lack confidence in local security institutions and this importantly strengthens their desire to migrate. In the last 3 years, Insecurity in Nigeria has become unprecedented and complex, that even the government is overwhelmed without any probable solution. The dire consequences of insecurity transcend political, economic and social challenges, and now include negative impact on human capital. The impact of insecurity on human capital is evident as citizens in the middle class with the professional expertise and experiences in various fields of endeavours continue to migrate to western countries. Responses indicate that the respondents are influenced to migrate for better quality of life. All the respondents (100%) answered in the affirmative when asked if they want to migrate because of better quality of life for their families. Poor quality of life can be traced to the low level of infrastructure in the country. A female respondent in her 20's remarked: 'I cannot continue to live in a country where there is no constant supply of electricity'. In my house, we spend more than ₦50, 000 (Fifty Thousand Naira) monthly to fuel the generator'. Another female respondent expressed her view:

I live in Surulere and work in Apapa. Ordinarily, the Journey from my house to the office should not take more than 20mins, but because of the traffic gridlock at Apapa, I spend close to 2hrs on the road before getting to the office. This needless stress is telling on me and has an adverse effect on my health.

A male respondent echoed a similar view:

It is a shame that all other alternative means of transport in Nigeria are not effective and we end up wasting man hours in traffic congestion, sometimes caused due to bad roads. A cosmopolitan city like Lagos should boast of a functioning and efficient rail transport system'. I want to migrate to Canada, the stress in Nigeria is too much.

The poor state of basic infrastructure such as water, electricity, motorable roads, clean water, rail system, to mention but few have led to migration of Nigerians to countries in America, Europe and even South Africa.¹⁵ Investment in infrastructure serves as a fundamental mechanism towards attaining economic growth and impacting positively on the quality of life of the citizens. It is important to elaborate that good quality of life improves the general well-being, and productivity of citizens.

Results from the study indicate that majority of the respondents (93.7%) do not attend public hospitals. A male respondent stated: 'My parents were poor, so while growing up, I attended public hospitals and the experiences were not palatable. There were issues of shortages of medical personnel and bed space. I am financially comfortable and can afford better quality healthcare in private hospitals'. A female respondent added her voice: 'My father died in a government hospital in Lagos. He was on admission for 11 days until his death. The attitudes of the medical personnel were unprofessional and there were issues of shortage of drugs. I seek for medical attention in private hospitals because I do not trust public hospitals'. Another female respondent who is a doctor stressed that: 'It is sad that healthcare management is underfunded in Nigeria, while our leaders travel to developed countries for medical checkup'. During my housemanship, I visited a public hospital. It was in a deplorable state and rain water dropped on the floors of the offices and wards due to the leakages from the ceilings'.

Over the years, Nigeria's healthcare system has deteriorated that it is identified as one of the worst healthcare systems in the world. The poor quality and deplorable state of public healthcare system in Nigeria is as a

¹³ N Purity & T Anigbuogu, 'Insecurity in Nigeria: the Implications for Industrialization and Sustainable Development', *International Journal of Research in Business Studies and Management*, 2019 6(5) 7-16

¹⁴ M Kirwin & J Anderson, *Identifying the Factors Driving West African Migration* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2018)

¹⁵ C Ezeogidi, 'The Impact of Poor Infrastructural Development on Nigeria Education And Global Economy 1960-2014', *COOU Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, 2014 vol 1(1) 78-86

result of the low implementation of the National Health Policy (NHP) as well as other health schemes and programs. Although, there is a National Health Insurance Scheme in Nigeria (NHIS), however since the inception of the scheme in 2005, only 5% of Nigerians have subscribed to health insurance, while 70% pay for their healthcare needs from personal funds.¹⁶ There are so many companies struggling for survival, and for this reason, not all companies can afford to subscribe to the NHIS for members of staff. Again, majority of the 5% that have subscribed to the NHIS are civil and public servants whose contributions are paid for by the government. The Nigerian healthcare system is not only weak, but increasing numbers of doctors are emigrating from Nigeria for better remuneration and good quality of life.¹⁷

The study reveals that 97.1% of the respondents will not enroll their children in public schools. A male respondent stated: 'I will not enroll my kids in public schools because of the low quality of education and poor facilities'. In the words of a female respondent: 'I cannot enroll my kids in public schools. The quality of education in public schools is poor, that even our leaders and politicians do not enroll their children in these schools'. A 49 year-old male respondent explained:

My son was admitted to a federal university, but before he resumed, the Academic Staff Union of Universities embarked on a strike action. Following the strike, he applied to a private university where he is studying presently. Although, the school fees are expensive, but I am ready to make a huge financial sacrifice in this regard'.

Ojedokun and Aladejana¹⁸ emphasise that in some public schools, especially state schools, teacher-student ratio is 1:90, way above the UNESCO's recommendation of 1:30 for teacher-student ratio. The practice of having 90 students in a classroom leads to classroom congestion, negatively affects the concentration of students and subdues the whole learning process. Over the years, successive governments have failed to develop the education sector. The sector like many other areas in the public sector has been underfunded. Consequently, the education sector is bedeviled by huge infrastructure deficit, dearth of facilities and learning materials, low remuneration for teachers, strike action, unqualified teachers, as well as the challenge of teacher-student ratio.

Furthermore, the study exposes the challenges of the average middle class to own a house. A male respondent highlighted: 'I have been working for the past 17 years and live in a rented apartment. Although, I am building my house but it is taking time because of other numerous commitments'. Another male respondent retorted: 'I secured a high interest loan from my bank to buy a house from an estate developer. The loan has deeply affected my income and expenditure'. A female respondent stated: 'My husband who has worked for over 15 years wanted to buy a house. He approached his bank to secure a loan facility, and was shocked when he heard the interest rate. He was discouraged to apply for the loan'. According to Etim¹⁹ and Ibimilua and Ibitoye²⁰ housing scheme as a social policy has dominated the policy agenda of various government since the colonial era with the provision of staff quarters for expatriates and few indigenous employees in public service. Successive governments in Nigeria including the present administration of President Buhari have formulated several housing policies without any meaningful impact. As far back as 1990, the Federal Military Government formulated a housing policy to provide housing benefits for millions of Nigerians by 2021.²¹ In contrast, the average Nigerian still lacks access to decent and affordable housing. The study reflects that most of the respondents, 81.9% do not own a house despite being classified as middle class citizens. 66.8% of the respondents answered that they would not aspire to migrate supposing their socio-economic rights are protected. A female respondent stated: 'The government does not offer any form of support to elevate our socio-economic status. I feel vulnerable living in Nigeria and this has influenced my

¹⁶ G Alawode, & D Adewole, (2021), 'Assessment of the design and implementation challenges of the National Health Insurance Scheme in Nigeria: a qualitative study among sub-national level actors, healthcare and insurance providers', *BMC Public Health*, 2021 vol 21(124) 1-12

¹⁷ A Adebayo & O Akinyemi, 'What Are You Really Doing in This Country? Emigration Intentions of Nigerian Doctors and Their Policy Implications for Human Resource for Health Management', *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 2021 vol 15 1-20

¹⁸ O Ojedokun & F Aladejana, 'Standards Responsible for the Decline in Quality of Secondary Education in Nigeria', *World Journal of Education*, 2012 vol 2(2) 76-84

¹⁹ E Etim, J Atser & F Akpabio, 'The new social housing scheme in Nigeria: How beneficial for the less privileged?', *Global Journal of Social Sciences*, 2007 vol 6(1) 1-6

²⁰ A Ibimilua & Ibitoye O, 'Housing Policy in Nigeria: An Overview', *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 2015 vol 5(2) 53-59

²¹ O Okafor, 'Shelter for All: An Appraisal of Implementation of The National Housing Policy', *Review of Public Administration and Management*, 2013 vol 2(3) 203-216

decision to migrate to Canada'. An exasperated male respondent replied: 'Maintaining good standard of living is expensive in Nigeria because the government does not care about protecting socio-economic rights'. It is better I migrate to a country where the government cares about the welfare of its citizens.' Another female respondent answered: 'My husband and I aspire to migrate to Canada because the socio-economic conditions in Nigeria are not favourable and the government does not provide any support to protect the masses'.

In developed countries, citizens in the middle class enjoy good quality of life.²² But in Nigeria, the opposite is obviously the case as the government offers little or no social protection for the middle class citizens. While it appears that middle class citizens earn average salaries, capable of taking care of the needs of their families, a major challenge for the middle class is the lack of social support and assistance from the government. Citizens in the middle class in Nigeria are vulnerable to poverty.²³ The majority of citizens in the middle class do not benefit from public institutions because they are not adequately managed and the quality of services rendered is usually substandard. As deduced from the study, a large percentage of the respondents do not attend public hospitals and will not enroll their children in public schools. The middle class should benefit from social services such as public schools, healthcare services and social housing schemes. But because of the poor quality of social services, most of the citizens in the middle class in Nigeria pay exorbitant fees for these services in private institutions. In addition, the poor state of the economy has impacted negatively on the cost of living with daily increase in the prices of goods and essential household commodities without commensurate increase in salaries and incomes. The failure of the government to provide social protection and ensure quality services in public institutions means that citizens in the middle class depend solely on their salaries/incomes to meet their socio-economic needs. What this means is that survival for the middle class is expensive and this class of citizens hardly have enough funds to improve their quality of life. Worst still, citizens in the middle class are the main targets and victims of bandits and kidnappers because these criminals believe that they can afford ransoms. It is needless to state that high level of insecurity has its root in the failure of government to protect the socio-economic rights of the citizens and address the menace of poverty, social inequality and unemployment. Although, some scholars; Shehu²⁴, Oluwadayisi²⁵, Olayinka²⁶ have emphasised that the level of resources available to a state determines the extent to which a government is able to fulfill its obligation to protect the socio-economic rights of the citizens. However, the argument premised on the limited resources of a state should never justify the failure of any government to protect and guarantee the socio-economic rights of the citizens. Nigeria's problem is not the lack or non-availability of resources but rather corruption, lack of visionary leaders, and mismanagement of public funds. The mismanagement of public fund has not only increased the debt profile of Nigeria but made it difficult for the government to guarantee social protection and fulfill the socio-economic rights of the citizens. The failure of government to enforce the socio-economic rights of the citizens is a push factor driving the emigration aspirations of the middle class. The components of socio-economic rights are contained in Chapter 2 (Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN).²⁷ Critically, it is important to emphasise the set of rights that define socio-economic rights. These rights include; right to health, education, housing, adequate standard of living as well as social security. Sadly, the objectives stated in Chapter 2 of the CFRN are non-justiciable. The importance of the justiciability of socio-economic rights cannot be derided. The non-justiciability of socio-economic rights in the constitution does not in reality prevent the government from fulfilling these rights. What this means is that if the government does not protect socio-economic rights, citizens cannot approach the courts to enforce these rights. In the perspective of human rights, a veritable benefit of ensuring that all human rights are justiciable is that government and its agencies can be held accountable for failure to protect the fundamental rights of the citizens.

²² O Okafor, 'Shelter for All: An Appraisal of Implementation of The National Housing Policy', *Review of Public Administration and Management*, 2013 vol 2(3) 203-216

²³ R Corral, V Molini & G Oseni, 'No Condition is Permanent: Middle Class in Nigeria in the Last Decade', *The Journal of Development Studies*, 2017 vol 55(2) 294-310

²⁴ A Shehu, 'The Enforcement of Social and Economic Rights in Africa: The Nigerian Experience', *Afe Babalola University Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy*, 2013 vol 2(1) 101-120

²⁵ A Oluwadayisi, 'Economic and Socio-Cultural Rights in The Democratic Governance of Nigeria: Enforcement Mechanisms Beyond justiciability', *Nnamdi Azikiwe University Journal of International Law and Jurisprudence*, 2014 vol 5 105-117

²⁶ O Olayinka, 'Implementing the Socio-economic and Cultural Rights in Nigeria and South Africa: Justiciability of Economic Rights', *African Journal of International and Comparative Law*, 2019 vol 27(4) 564-587

²⁷ Chapter 2, 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN).

It is pertinent to underline that the justiciability of socio-economic rights is fundamental in promoting the enforcement of socio-economic rights of the citizens. Needless to state that without protection and enforcement, human rights are at best mere nomenclatures without the influence and strength to promote human existence. As it appears, there is a struggling middle class in Nigeria and to this end it is necessary to offer social protection to the middle class in order to avoid increasing the level of poverty in the country. Social protection in this sense does not necessarily mean providing cash and stipends for citizens in the middle class. Social protection benefits for the middle class can be achieved through efficient and effective functioning of public institutions that render quality social services. Thus, citizens in the middle class should be able to benefit from public institutions that render quality social services at subsidised rates as well as policy and legislative frameworks that protect their welfare. Access to public infrastructure and amenities such as; schools, health facilities and housing that improve standard of living and quality of life should not be achieved at exorbitant costs. Offering social protection to citizens in the middle class provides them with the leverage to maximise the monies earned as salaries/incomes. The government through effective and efficient public institutions that deliver quality social services will significantly uplift the socio-economic conditions of the middle class and improve their quality of life. The large majority of middle class citizens are migrating because there is no social protection from the government to improve their quality of life and they make huge sacrifices to maintain their standard of living and improve their quality of life. Regardless of these sacrifices most citizens in the middle class still do not enjoy the level of quality of life enjoyed by their contemporaries in developed countries. Section 14(2)(b) of the CFRN states that ‘the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government’’. Protecting and fulfilling Socio-economic rights is not only necessary to improve the socio-economic conditions of citizens suffering from poverty but equally to improve the quality of life of every citizen through effective social protection benefits and the provision of quality social services.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Migration is not in particular a negative phenomenon. However, when a large percentage of the population in the middle class in a country aspires to emigrate, then it becomes a challenge. On the other hand, the importance of promoting and protecting socio-economic rights cannot be over-emphasised. It is obvious that emigration of citizens to western countries will not abate should government fail to improve the standards of public institutions and formulate social protection policies towards fulfilling the socio-economic rights of the citizens. Protecting and fulfilling the socio-economic rights of the citizens will improve the standard of living and quality of life of the citizens. Assuredly, improved quality of life will increase the citizens’ trust in government and reduce the level of emigration from the country. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) should influence both the Federal and State Governments to enact legislations on social protection and welfare schemes to improve the standard of living and quality of life of the citizens. To this end, CSOs should monitor government actions and exert their influence as agents of social change to ensure that these laws are implemented. Furthermore, government should reduce the large number of political appointees as a way of reducing the cost of governance and investing in social protection schemes. In order to ensure economic growth, government should invest in infrastructural development. This will no doubt reduce the level of unemployment, poverty and insecurity in the country. Importantly, there is need for the government to conduct a comprehensive reform of public institutions to improve the standard and quality of services rendered. Lastly, the constitution should be amended to recognise socio-economic rights as justiciable rights.

5. Limitations of Study and Issues for Further Investigation

As with every research work, this study has its limitations. The study focused on married respondents and did not include unmarried respondents. Furthermore, the study is limited in terms of sample size, considering that only 238 respondents participated in the survey out of over 10,000 members on the platform as at the time of conducting this research. The views of unmarried respondents and those of other members on the platform that declined to participate could have broadened the findings as well as analytic perspectives of the study. Going forward, it is pertinent to investigate if there are any plans and efforts by the government to reduce the level of migration among the middle class through policy and legislative frameworks. Further research should also focus on understanding how migration influences the career choices and decisions of middle class Nigerians that have migrated to Canada. These further studies suggested will compliment this study in contributing in broader terms to the themes of governance, migration, and socio-economic rights.