

“Japa Syndrome”: The Implication of Brain Drain and Migration on National Development

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Introduction

The trans-Atlantic slave trade was a practice that resulted in the forced removal of millions of our ancestors to foreign countries where they had no prior knowledge. Able-bodied men were among the few remaining males, while women, children, and our land were left without any males. Many African mindset experts believe that the slave trade prevented the richly endowed continent from developing, both in terms of its population and natural resources, as stated by Walter Rodney in his 1972 publication *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. This migration has returned after more than 200 years, although in a different shape than the one they were in before shipped away involuntarily, while the former is a deliberate method of looking for a way out of Nigeria. This occurs in two ways: on the one hand, those who are educated look for ways to put their skills to use because the country lacks favourable platforms, a phenomenon known as brain drain; and on the other, those who move in search of greener pasture even when they have nothing to offer to the country of their destination, a phenomenon known as emigration.

In addition, there's no denying that Nigeria has a sizable population of citizens living in Europe and America due to the creativity of many Nigerians and the lack of opportunities for them

to develop their skills. The country’s inability to offer the means for its people to express their talents has irritated these mobility concerns, and migration and brain drain have exacerbated Nigeria’s problems with anti-development. Going to study overseas has become a source of pride, even in neighbours like Ghana and the Benin Republic, whereas our colleges have been deserted as a result of bad government policies. It has been noted that a sizable number of Nigerian doctors and nurses practice their craft in the medical field, whereas our political leaders when they are sick or need medical attentions seek medical care in the UK because they can’t improve the healthcare system at home.

The emphasis on the issue of immigration has been primarily placed on the subject of nepotism, but migrants from Nigeria just want a “better life”—there is nothing wrong with that—and this study aims to show why such migration occurred and how it may be stopped. Despite the fact that several studies have been done on the effects of migration and brain drain on emerging countries. However, this paper tends to give the reader an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of migration and brain drain and its implications for the development of Nigeria. It also issues a strong call to action to all well-meaning Nigerians to become active participants in the issue on the ground and be successful in bringing the epidemic of brain drain, which impedes Nigeria’s progress, to bare-minimum.

Statement of the Problem

The “Japa syndrome” is a Yoruba word which means to *run* or *flee* for something and this term used is critically describing the present brain drain trend in Nigeria, which is a wave of departure of the country’s talented and young population that, regrettably, cannot be stopped. When our existing situation threatens to endanger our survival, it is in our nature as humans to look for better living conditions. Even if I detest disparaging my own nation or casting a pessimistic eye on its future, we must face some realities if we are to go forward. Blackmailing people who ‘jump ship’ is pointless and distracting. We can only be saved as a nation by acknowledging our issues and making courageous efforts to address them. Nigeria

currently has a net migration rate of -0.273 per 1000 people, which indicates that more people are emigrating from the country (Doris, 2023). Nigeria is presently seeing a severe brain drain, which is burdening the employees who have already departed for Japan with a lot of labour. Unfortunately, Nigerian youths are leaving Nigeria in an unprecedented manner, and most of them do not entertain the hope of returning. Those who have not left are planning to leave. Our economy lacks adequate human capacity development, and any continuous departure of our labour force will only worsen our national economy, already plagued by poor indices of growth. These alterations, as well as the consequent rise in performance expectations, have a negative impact on employee wellbeing. It is on this basis that the researcher seeks to investigate the trend flow of Japa syndrome and its implication of brain drain and migration on national development.

Objective of the Study

This paper amongst others is:

- i. assessing the factors responsible for brain for drain;
- ii. examining reasons for emigrations;
- iii. evaluating the relationships between brain drain and emigration,
- iv. assessing the effects of brain drain and emigrations on national development;
- v. the potential strategies for reversing brain and emigration.

Research Question

- i. What the factors responsible for brain for drain;
- ii. Are there reasons for emigrations;
- iii. What are the relationships between brain drain and emigration,
- iv. Could the effects of brain drain and emigrations impede national development;
- v. What are the potential strategies for reversing brain and emigration.

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

Brain Drain is described as “the situation in which a significant number of educated and highly skilled people leave their home country to live and work in another country where pay and conditions are better” by the Cambridge Dictionary (2016). Additionally, according to Nadja (2008), “Brain Drain is the preponderance of the migration of highly skilled and educated persons from poor, developing, and less industrialised countries to richer, more developed ones.” A country’s loss of highly educated and skilled employees in particular professions to other countries is often referred to as brain drain. Brain drain is largely seen as a problem, for the reason that competent persons leave their country and exercise their expertise to boost the economy of other nations. Their home country is left to suffer, because most of those who remain don’t have the ability to make a difference or because their contributions are insignificant. Meanwhile, migration is the movement of people from one place to another. Migration can be international or local. The former means the movement from one country to another while the latter implies the movement within a country from one city to another (Gregory, 2019).

Factors Responsible for Brain Drain

The following reasons are considered as the causes of brain drain. Ernst Georg Ravenstein, in his work, *Law of Migration* (1885), explained that there are two laws that guides migration principles, namely, the principle of push factor and the pull factor, hence, Brain drain is studied under the theoretical frame of migration theories under the two main factors such as push factors and pull factor.

There are certain push factors causing brain drain, to leave the less developed country to developed countries which are substandard living conditions, dearth of conveyance, accommodation; Under-utilization of skilled and semi- skilled personnel; lack of adequate working conditions; low panorama of specialized development; Low and corroding wages; Discrimination in recruitments and

promotions; Social unrest, Political instability, conflicts and wars; Lack of research facilities, including support staff; meagreness of research funds, lack of professional apparatus and tools; Lack of freedom and autonomy and Deteriorating excellence of educational system.

Similarly, numerous attractive pull factors at the destination states permitting the brain drain to occur at a higher leap: Sophisticated standard of living, Employment opportunity, greater income and Higher wages, Extensive resources for research, unconventional and advanced technology, modern facilities of laboratory equipment; availability of experienced support workforce, Healthier working conditions; employment and occupation opportunities with the proficient development, Modern educational schemes; prestige of ‘foreign training’, Political stability & foreigner secured policies, Meritocracy, transparency, Scholarly & Intellectual autonomy and Appreciation & rewards on governmental level.

The Causes of Nigerians’ Brain Loss and Migration

Nigerians with advanced degrees and artistic aptitude have moved in greater numbers to Europe, the Americas, and Asia since the turn of the new century. It is important and harmful since the recipient, a developed country, reaps more of the benefits of our labours while Nigeria falls behind in development. Nigerian nationals are spread out around the globe and are engaged in a wide range of remarkable activities. As a result of migration, the people who are academically talented and gifted enough to advance the country are emigrating. Nigeria’s progress has been hampered by migration since many of its young people are achieving success in numerous sectors abroad.

The proportion at which Nigerians who are professional in their fields leave their fatherland to practice their expertise in foreign lands in the last two decades has worsened the brain drain issue. The migration of specialists out of the Nigeria to other countries of the world where economic certainty and good standard of living is guaranteed is a pest to the development of Nigeria while host nations

enjoy the fruits of the nations that have trained the individual without paying the cost of educating them, Nigeria languish in development. Adeyemi *et al.* (2018), states that “this development is being seen as a problem, due to the fact that the most competent and highly skilled labor travelled out of their countries to contribute their quota to the development of other nations while leaving their countries underdeveloped” (p. 67).

The migration of skilled and highly trained individual ought to be from nations that are developed and to be beneficial to developing nations in which the migrant now reside, but in the case of Nigeria, a nation which lingers in under-development, the case is the other way round. Adeyemi *et al.*, (2018), expresses that between 1980 and 1990, Nigerian universities faced the most disturbing effect of the brain drain scourge. It all began in the late 70s and early 80s when medical doctors migrated to the Middle East especially Saudi Arabia for greener pastures (p. 69). Just recently, the Nigerian Minister of labour, Chris Ngige discussing about the issue of Brain Drain in the medical field states that Nigeria have surplus Doctors. Thus “If you have surplus, you export... Who said we don’t have enough doctors? We have more than enough. You can quote me. There is nothing wrong in them travelling out. When they go abroad, they earn money and send them back home here. Yes, we have foreign exchange earnings from them and not just oil.”

High Level of Unemployment: Unemployment is one of the main reasons why Nigerians depart overseas for greener pastures, getting most jobs in Nigeria is not based on merit but they depend on how connected the person seeking the job is to those in top positions. To get a job one has to know someone who knows someone, and those who have no connection find it difficult to be employed regardless of their quality of education and grades. Also most employers believe that Nigerian graduates are unemployable because of the state of the educational institutions, particularly public schools. Education is constantly promoted and encouraged, but then there is limited opportunity for employment (Gregory, 2019).

Also, Akusoba, (2014) states the obvious truth is that “many Nigerian graduates are unemployable because of the deplorable state of Nigeria universities. Most employers prefer to employ graduates with foreign certificates in place of those with local certificates because they think that Nigeria education lacks quality” (p. 19). Many of our graduates are uneducated flaunting certificates which they cannot defend. Another factor responsible for lack of jobs in Nigeria is the rapid growth in population and an inadequate supply of jobs, there is massive shortage of employment opportunities, funds meant for building industries are syphoned into private pockets, this also creates unemployment. Furthermore, the advent of oil has been a bane and led to low level of diversification of the economy, the absence of white-collar jobs and less level of creativity, many Nigerians are only concerned about graduating from the University and getting a white collar job.

Poor Educational Sector: So many of our public educational institutions lack the basic infrastructure and facilities which has led to the migration of some our undergraduates to foreign universities for studies and who do not come back to help in the rebuilding of the nation, they become accustomed to their newfound society and this spells doom for Nigeria. Also, the constant strikes organised by the Academic Staff Union of Universities has affected the duration students are supposed to spend in tertiary institutions, it is common to find some undergraduates spending up to six or more years for a course duration that is supposed to last for four years. These strikes are not in any way beneficial to the students or for the infrastructural development of the institution, rather, they are sometimes driven towards a selfish motif of the lecturers. Also, our educational sector has been affected by corruption, to the level that most examinations conduction are not free of malpractices, malpractice to some extent has even become a regular practice. Therefore, these irregularities in our universities often prompt some of our young ones to migrate to other countries to study.

Economic Reason: The fluctuating nature of the Nigerian economy has led to many migrating overseas in search for greener

pasture. Poverty is no doubt on the increase in Nigeria, many Nigerians live below a dollar daily, and making ends meet becomes difficult for an average Nigerian and leads to the migration of many youths across the Mediterranean borders in search of greener pastures where some have met their untimely death. Also the poor economic condition in Nigeria has resulted to Brain Drain, whereby a skilled worker leaves Nigeria for another country in search for better economic conditions in order to secure a better job, increase standard of living, get a better salary package etc.

Corruption: Chinua Achebe stated that “Nigerians are corrupt because the system they live under today makes corruption easy and profitable” (2012). Little wonder the former British Prime Minister stated that Nigerians are fantastically corrupt. The dominance of corruption in Nigeria has persistently call for serious worry and attention. “A corrupt free environment gives room for investment and efforts to increase the pie other than merely fighting over its distribution and thus promote growth. To this end, good governance and low level of corruption accelerate the process of development” (Adeyemi, 2018).

Insecurity: Taft and Haken (2015), states that Nigeria’s Fourth Republic, which began in 1999 with the election of Olusegun Obasanjo has been fraught with security challenges, including spikes in communal and sectarian violence in the Middle Belt, militancy and criminality in the Niger Delta, and insurgency in the Northeast. Coupled with the threats and widespread of the Fulani Herdsmen in various nook and cranny of the country as well as the poor level of our security forces has also contributed to the growth of these violence and insecurity. Most importantly, unresponsive attitude of the government to bring to an end the recurrent issues of violence has forced many Nigerians to flee the nation in search of security in other countries (Gregory, 2019).

Effects of Brain Drain in Developing Countries

Negative Effects

The phenomena of brain drain has left harmful effects in the region

poor African countries like Nigeria, because of their great hope, talents and skills have immigrated to the richer countries. As seen pragmatically, developed and rich countries become richer and more developed and poor and developing countries become poorest and failure states. Consequently, some of the outcomes have produced the poorer rates of growth and development, highly unstable politically some are in the condition of cold war like Pakistan, fewer productive educational funds, and worse health care system and Loss of potential modernizers who might have paved the way to rejuvenation and up gradation through their advanced and creative abilities.

Source: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.CD.DT?end=2022&start=1970&view=chart>

- Doctors, Engineers, scientists and students leave for the industrialized world
- Africa loses the best brains it needs for its trade and industrial development
- African recruitment of thousands of expatriates from the industrialized West at a cost of billions every year
- Increased deterioration of higher schooling
- Universities have to be close, extension of higher education not possible
- Poor people seriously affected by the epidemic, infectious diseases
- Universities unable to run and achieving Development Goals
- In the global knowledge economy, Africa becoming sidelined
- Due to the pitiable environment, Lack of skilled people.
- Crumbling poor and middle classes
- Political instability and religious persecution
- Corruption of income tax equal to less basic goods and services
- Economic instability leads to increased rate of unemployment and inflation

- Lack of industrial growth and innovation.

The United Nations Global migration database is a comprehensive collection of empirical data on the number of international migrants by country of birth and citizenship, sex and age as enumerated by population censuses, population registers, nationally representative surveys and other official statistical sources from more than 200 countries and territories in the world. The data contained in the database were derived from numerous sources, including the *Demographic Yearbook*, produced by the Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, tabulations collected by the Population Division as well as official publications available from resource centers, libraries and the internet. It is widely recognized that migrants make a positive contribution to inclusive growth and sustainable development in countries of origin and destination. The Population Division collaborates with other members of the United Nations Network on Migration in supporting the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The Division also produces estimates of the number of international migrants – the “migrant stock” – at the global, regional and national levels. The data set *International Migrant Stock* is updated on a regular basis (UN, 2023).

Positive Effects

The brain drain may cause numerous positive effects for source countries. It is well documented that remittances of employees’ played a significant support to GNP of a country and are a viable spring of income in several developing countries. Remittances and transmittals intrude on family decisions in terms of professional choice, labor supply, education, investment migration, and fertility, with hypothetically essential aggregated special effects. Especially in the case of poor countries, where market inadequacies available to members of low-income classes reduce the set of possibilities.

- Brain Circulation equalizes Brain Drain
- Transnational corporation and increase in Foreign Direct

Investment

- When possibility of migration is real, level of education in sending countries rises
- Amalgamation in global economies.

Incentives, Law and Policy Making

“The irony of international migration today is that many of the people who migrate legally from poor to richer lands are the very ones that Third World countries can least afford to lose: the highly educated and skilled. Since the great majority of these migrants move on a permanent basis, this perverse brain drain not only represents a loss of valuable human resources but could prove to be a serious constraint on the future economic progress of Third World nations” (Todaro, 7th Edition, 2001).

Convention signed by the organization of economic corporation and development (OECD) among twenty countries in 1960's create a keen competition among all member countries to fascinate human possessions, they lack and to preserve those who might emigrate. Various countries edited their legislation and step forward for numerous amendments to legalize the foreigner qualified brains and somehow to cheap their labour in the developed world. The policy or the legislation to work allowed but not giving them the full work visas compelling to do illegal work on cheap labour benefited the state capital and a legal system of exploitation is running to pressurize the foreign labour to do work illegally for their survival in the most metropolitan areas of the world Most countries announced more flexibility in labour migration policies, while some propelled the definite recruitment packages to meet labour dearth.

Furthermore, brain drain and migration has caused a high level of shortage of important, skilled workers across different sectors in Nigeria. This also results to a reduction in the quality of service due to the absence of skilled personnel in Nigeria. The issues of bad leadership, corruption, poor infrastructure and lack of visionary plan can be tied back to brain drain and migration, in the sense that those who are supposed to govern or hold various offices are

far from the shores of Nigeria. The mass exploration of Nigerians has also increase drastically our level of dependence on foreign aid by Nigerian government, (Osinowo, 2005), explains that it costs Nigeria billions of naira (huge foreign exchange) to replace Nigerians with expatriates from the West; it brings about separation of family members and leads to less adequate family cohesion thereby promoting delinquency While Brain Drain and Migration are linked together, Emeghara, (2013), introduces a third concept to this problem of mass exploration of Nigerians overseas, he calls it brain waste, which he explains that “it is a situation whereby foreign nationals or workers are often hired to do jobs for which they are over qualified. For instance, there are many Nigerian doctors and European scientists working as taxi drivers in some large United States of American cities like New York, Chicago, Texas, Michigan, Washington, etc.

Potential Strategies for Reversing Brain and Emigration

The issue of mass exploration of Nigerians is an issue which must be address with immediate effect. The migration of Nigerians who are highly educated and gifted with different talents to developed nations will continue as long as the poverty level remains. Najda, (2008) explains that “The smaller and less developed the country is, the more difficult it will be for it to compete globally and retain a skilled workforce”. How then can this movement be curtailed? It is in this sense that Adeyemi *et al.* (2018), offers five ways in which Nigeria can solve the problem of brain drain and migration.

Firstly, he explains that the policymakers need to put in place sufficient incentives and mechanisms for migrants and their families to invest remittances in capital-accumulation projects that benefit the whole Nigerian economy. Secondly, he views that there is a need for the government to create programmes that can enable youths to realize their potentials, particularly in areas of Information Technology innovation hubs, encourage local contents and also provide opportunities for her citizens to study specialized programmes. Thirdly, he suggest that there should be an increase in the number of lucrative jobs in the Nigeria and a reduction in the

number of educational visas that allow young Nigerians to study abroad. Fourth, a sound macroeconomic policy should be put in place. Finally, the government should eradicate corruption and nepotism at all levels of government.

In as much as there is no place like home, home has to be made safe, home has to provide the enabling environment for her citizens to develop, home has to provide the platform. No person would sojourn abroad if the condition of service as well as the general outlook of the economy is relatively okay. Government should, therefore, address those issues highlighted above which compels Nigerian professionals to travel abroad. Although, this paper expounds that Brain drain and migration are some of the factors which negates the development of Nigeria, however, some benefits that can be derived from the phenomena, which implies that having acquired expertise and skills in developed countries, it will be of benefits if these Nigerians return home to develop their Fatherland. Also, the remittances; the migrants send home is used to develop the economy. But in general the problem is that the Nigeria society does not offer the enabling conditions and environment for them to practice, whereas going abroad enable them to acquire more expertise and outshine their colleagues who are based in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the obvious implication of this scenario is that Nigeria is being deprived of the valuable contributions of this highly skilled manpower who are migrants in other countries. In as much as brain drain has crippled the development of Nigeria it has also not placed the nation in the place it deserved through the achievements of her citizen who reside in other nations. This mass exploration is one of the reasons Nigeria has developed poorly in the areas of science and technology, because the nation does not create the platform for those talented in the field to practice their expertise which would consequently lead to their migration.

Thus, the educational system needs to be reformed in order to produce skilled graduates, innovators, and entrepreneurs, also, practice and research should be a priority, not just theoretical learning. Furthermore, the government needs to create schools, good amenities, infrastructure and job opportunities in rural areas. This

will cut the level of migration to cities, thus reducing high population and unemployment in the cities. The Nigerian government must implement new policies and diversify the economy to ensure that there are available employment opportunities for the labour force.

In conclusion, unless concerted efforts by all well meaning Nigerians especially those in government in a tackling the problems of Brain Drain and migration. we shall remain the giant or Lion of Africa that cannot roar and blossom into rapid development that will propel us into belonging to the comity of developed nations.

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