

“Hordes of Struggling African Youths Will Continue to Migrate En Masse to Developed Countries”: The Political Economy of “Japa” from Nigeria to the United Kingdom (2015-2023)

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the mass emigration from Nigeria to the United Kingdom, commonly referred to as ‘Japa,’ and its implications for Nigeria’s political economy. The research employs a documentary method, analysing secondary data sources through qualitative content analysis. The study is grounded in the push-pull theory, which posits that adverse conditions in Nigeria act as ‘push’ factors, driving individuals to seek better opportunities abroad, the ‘pull’ factors. The findings reveal that unemployment, and uncertainty about Nigeria’s economic and political future are significant push factors fuelling the mass exodus of Nigerians to the UK. The brain drain associated with this phenomenon has profoundly impacted Nigeria’s political economy, resulting in the depletion of skilled labour, loss of human capital, reduced productivity, and stagnated innovation. Furthermore, the study highlights the economic implications, including diminished GDP contributions, diversion of funds for medical tourism, and loss of educational investments. The research recommends economic diversification, job creation, enhanced governance, political stability, investment in education and infrastructure, incentives for skilled professionals, diaspora engagement, and international cooperation to mitigate the challenges of mass migration and brain drain. These strategies aim to address the root causes of emigration and facilitate brain gain.

Keywords: “Japa”, Brain drain, Nigeria’s political economy, Push-pull factor, Migration.

INTRODUCTION

In the past two decades, Africa has witnessed a paradigm shift in migration patterns, both regular and irregular, with a notable exodus from Nigeria. The journey often perilous, has seen many traverse the Sahara, navigate porous borders, and take unofficial routes, leading to tragic losses in the desert, the Maghreb region, and the Mediterranean (Awosusi et al., 2021; Ikuteyijo, 2020; Okunade, 2021a). Despite the risks, the allure of better opportunities abroad continues to draw many Nigerians, contributing to the country’s status as one of the world’s leading sources of emigrants. Since 2021, Nigerian emigrants were about 1.7 million, with visas given to 16,000 health and skilled worker recipients (Adegoke, 2023), with the middle class forming the bulk of this migratory wave (Dakuku, 2022).

The socio-political and economic fabric of Nigeria, particularly its relationship with Western nations like the United Kingdom, is intricately woven with migration dynamics. The decision to emigrate is often driven by a combination of push factors—political, environmental, and ethno-nationalistic—and the pursuit of financial, educational, or social aspirations (Adeyanju, 2017). Historically, the period from the 1950s to the

1980s marked a time of decolonization and nation-building, with many Nigerians temporarily migrating to acquire higher education and economic prospects, aiming to return and lead their nation. However, the economic downturn of the 1970s, exacerbated by an over-dependence on oil and political turmoil, shifted the migratory trends, linking them to unemployment, political instability, and the decay of infrastructure in home countries, alongside the attractive promises of destination countries (Nwosu et al., 2022).

Migration in the 21st century has escalated to unprecedented levels, becoming a significant global phenomenon. This trend is particularly noticeable in Nigeria, where socio-economic and political conditions have played a substantial role in its intensification. The desire to emigrate among Nigerian youths is alarmingly high, leading to the widespread use of the term 'Japa' to describe the mass exodus. As noted by Professor Toyin Falola, 'Japa' is a Yoruba term meaning 'to flee.' The achievement of 'Japa' is often celebrated as it symbolizes a sense of liberation (Falola, 2022).

A myriad of factors, both internal and external, have contributed to this trend. A notable example is the EndSars youth protests in October 2021 and the subsequent Lekki Toll Gate massacre. These events have been posited as significant influencers of the increased emigration from Nigeria. The youth protests, a manifestation of long-standing grievances against police brutality, were allegedly met with a brutal crackdown by the Nigerian government (Ojewale, 2021). This response, which was met with widespread public criticism, particularly from the youth, triggered a surge in the emigration of Nigerian youths (Okunade, 2021b).

The phenomenon of mass emigration, colloquially known as 'Japa' among certain segments of the Nigerian population, has emerged as a common strategy for individuals seeking to escape the socio-economic and political challenges plaguing Nigeria. Factors such as political instability, ethno-religious conflicts, and the pursuit of improved job prospects, educational opportunities, and living conditions are frequently cited as drivers of this mass exodus. Notably, unemployment rate rising five-fold between 2010 and 2020, from 6.4 percent to 33.3 percent, affecting the youth and their employment prospects (The World Bank, 2021).

Statistical data provides further insight into the 'Japa' phenomenon. For instance, in 2018, Schengen countries – popular destinations for Nigerian emigrants – such as Germany, Hungary, Finland, Italy, and Spain, witnessed an uptick in visa applications from Nigeria (The Guardian, 2019). A total of 88,587 visa applications were submitted, with a rejection rate of 49.8%, equating to 44,076 denied applications (The Guardian, 2019; Sahara Reporters, 2018). More recent data indicates a 51% increase in the rejection rate of Schengen visa applications submitted by Nigerians (Schengen visa News, 2022). Additionally, the UK government's statistics reveal that as of June 2022, 486,869 study visas had been issued, marking a 71% increase compared to 2019. The number of study visas granted to Nigerians rose dramatically from 8,384 to a record 65,929, placing Nigeria third behind China and India. This trend signifies a substantial increase in the movement of individuals between Nigeria and the UK. Consequently, brain drain – the emigration of Nigeria's intellectual capital – has become increasingly prevalent, driven by the nation's economic challenges, leadership issues, and environmental conditions that hinder personal growth and development. Recent studies have also highlighted the 'Japa syndrome,' the post-Covid-19 trend of out-migration of Nigerians to the UK, which has multifaceted implications for both countries (Okunade & Awosusi, 2023).

Given the recurring nature of these issues leading to mass emigration, this research aims to explore the causes of mass emigration of Nigerians to the UK, and understand how the mass emigration phenomenon, colloquially known as 'Japa,' has affected Nigeria's human capital and economic development, particularly concerning the brain drain of skilled professionals and youth.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative methodology. Documentary method of data collection is employed to collect

data from secondary sources such as journal articles, books and memoirs from Non-Governmental Organisations. Collected data are analysed by qualitative content analysis. This involves the succinct review of literatures on the subject matter which aids in the clear analysis of the arguments and informs conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Drivers Of Mass Migration from Nigeria to The United Kingdom

The primary catalyst for the voluntary movement of populations within and across national frontiers in recent times is anchored in the burgeoning disparity in development among nations. This movement's causes and repercussions span economic, political, social, and demographic realms (Omoroghomwan et al., 2023). In Nigeria, emigration is perceived as a form of social capital and a mark of prestige, benefiting not just the individual but their family as well (Nwosu et al., 2022).

Academics have linked the emigration trend to a plethora of predominantly socioeconomic factors. The ramifications of COVID-19 have been acknowledged, although the motivations for migration significantly antedate the pandemic (Bhagat et al., 2020; Dustmann & Okatenko, 2014; Lee & Shahar, 2022). Lanre Ikuteyijo posits that the mass exodus can be attributed to “escalating unemployment, scarcity of opportunities, allure of an idealized West, and unawareness of the perils of illicit immigration” (Ikuteyijo, 2020). However, the primary drivers of mass emigration encompass social disorders, political instability coupled with democratic totalitarianism, and economic volatility.

Social Disorders:

Nigeria is beleaguered by a multitude of social disorders. Fundamental social amenities such as electricity, security, and education are inadequately provided to the populace. Oyemwinmina & Aibieyi (2016) notes that security is largely self-provided, as the police force is severely dysfunctional due to infrastructural deficits in funding, training, and recruitment. This indicates a significant failure on the part of the government in terms of security. Despite Section 14 (2)(6) of the Nigerian 1999 constitution stating that “the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of the government,” the reality in Nigeria starkly contrasts this provision. Adegami, (2013) observed that insecurity profoundly affects people's lives and well-being. Insecurity, with its multifarious manifestations such as bombings, kidnappings, property destruction, and fear creation, has become a hydra-headed monster that Nigerian security agents seem ill-equipped to tackle. Consequently, people are likely to emigrate when their security is not guaranteed.

Regarding the health sector, Nigeria's healthcare system appears insufficient for the country's population. Hospitals and health clinics, poorly equipped, are scattered across Nigeria (Aregbeshola, 2019). Similar to educational institutions, healthcare facilities in Nigeria lack the cutting-edge 21st-century medical science and technologies necessary for healthcare workers to deliver high-quality services to the people (Balogun, 2022). In 2021, Nigeria's annual budget allocation for health was a meager 15%, purportedly intended to cover the nation's entire health expenditures. This translates to approximately ₦2,960 (or ₦8.2 per day) budgeted for each of Nigeria's 200 million citizens for all medical expenses in 2020 (Muanya, 2020).

The United Nations Education and Socio-Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has stipulated that a nation should allocate 26% of its total budget to the education sector. Regrettably, Nigeria has never surpassed a 10% allocation in this sector (Odigwe & Owan, 2019). This underfunding has led to a significant consequence: the production of a largely unskilled population and workforce. Beyond the issue of funding, there is a lack of strategic focus on the type of education necessary to propel Nigeria's development. It's a well-known fact that the academic curriculum in Nigerian educational institutions – spanning nursery,

secondary, and tertiary levels – is antiquated, in some cases predating the country itself (Udofia, 2021). This state of affairs has prompted many Nigerians to seek superior educational opportunities abroad, particularly in countries like the UK and the U.S. This trend contributes to the mass emigration from Nigeria, as individuals strive for better prospects in their educational and subsequent professional journeys (Hope Reconnect, 2023).

Political Instability and Democratic Totalitarianism:

In Nigeria, democracy appears to be more of a ceremonial spectacle than a functional system. Dike (2015) argued that the country is suffocating under its democratic experiment, as the leaders fail to embody the principles and characteristics synonymous with democracy. A prime example of this is the erosion of freedom of speech and expression. The Buhari administration, for instance, has been implicated in the Lekki Toll Gate shootings on October 20, 2020, where peaceful protesters advocating for an end to police brutality were reportedly shot and killed by the Nigerian military (Hill and Lawal, 2020; Busari et al., 2021; Premium Times, 2020). This repressive and oppressive political climate has fostered fear, distrust, and political apathy among Nigerian citizens. As of September 13, 2022, no one has been held accountable. The Buhari administration demonstrated this autocratic tendency once again with the ban on Twitter in Nigeria, following a tweet by the President that incited tribal conflict in reference to the Nigeria-Biafra civil war (Egbejule et al., 2023).

Corruption and other malpractices have led to political instability in Nigeria, denying its citizens the benefits of good governance they deserve. Adejumobi (2001) affirmed that the “absence of commitment to the virtues of honesty, equality, social justice, accountability, trust, peaceful coexistence among co-ethnics, and respect for human rights” contributes to Nigeria’s political instability. The widespread poverty and unemployment in the country further exacerbate this instability. Nigeria’s political instability manifests in various forms, including the Sharia crisis, Niger Delta militancy, the Boko Haram insurgency, clashes between herdsmen and farmers, ethno-religious conflicts, electoral and post-election violence, and politically motivated killings (Alfa, 2012). Collier (2009) posits that societies plagued by political instability are likely to experience significant emigration.

Economic Volatility:

Nigeria grapples with significant economic volatility, exacerbating the nation’s poverty crisis. As per the 2019 report from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), approximately 83 million Nigerians, accounting for 40% of the country’s total population, subsist below the national poverty line of N137,430 per annum (NBS, 2019). Despite Nigeria’s GDP standing at \$448.1 billion, the highest in Africa, the daily realities of many Nigerians starkly contrast with this figure (World Bank, 2020). The Nigerian economy has recurrently depended on loans to alleviate its ongoing economic challenges, often overlooking domestic avenues for capital growth. This frequent borrowing, coupled with the inability to service these debts, may be steering Nigeria towards a debt trap (Nairametrics, 2021).

Beyond poverty, the economic morass also fuels unemployment. A staggering 21.7 million individuals of working age are unemployed (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2020). This grim reality renders the prospect of seeking a better life elsewhere not just attractive, but essential, making emigration an inevitable consequence. As of Q4 2022, Nigeria’s public debt stock, which includes external and domestic debt, stood at N46.25 trillion (US\$103.11 billion), indicating a growth of 4.96% from Q3 2022 (Debt Management Office Nigeria, 2024). As many as 4 in 10 Nigerians live below the national poverty line (The World Bank, 2022). Furthermore, the unemployment rate in Q2 2023 was 4.2%, marking an increase of 0.1% from Q1 2023 (NBS, 2023). These figures underscore the urgency of addressing the economic instability and its repercussions on poverty and unemployment in Nigeria.

The Mass Exodus of Nigerians to the UK and the Implications for Nigeria's Political Economy

The term 'Japa', a Yoruba expression denoting 'to abscond' or 'flee', has become a colloquialism in Nigeria, symbolizing an attempt to evade societal challenges. In the 21st century, migration, particularly international human migration, has emerged as a global trend, facilitated by an interconnected world of advanced communication technologies and transportation (Wilczek, 2012). This trend has significantly contributed to the brain drain phenomenon in Nigeria. Brain drain is defined as the international transfer of resources in the form of human capital, involving the migration of highly educated and skilled individuals from developing countries to developed nations (Kalu & Ede, 2022). For example, between 2016 and 2018, over 9 000 medical doctors were reported to have left Nigeria in search of greener pastures in the United Kingdom (UK), USA and Canada (Fatunmole, 2021).

As reported by the Migration Policy Institute (2015), Nigeria has the largest African migrant population in the United States. Ikuteyijo (2020) highlighted that the majority of this demographic are youths—the Japa generation. This migration trend is driven by various factors such as poor leadership and governance, insecurity, substandard living conditions, high poverty levels, unemployment, and income inequality, which compel individuals to seek improved economic opportunities abroad (Williams, 2024). Dakuku (2022) posited that Nigerian youths voluntarily migrate primarily due to the country's insecurity, the pursuit of quality education, poor governance, and enhanced career opportunities. Based on student migration growth rates, some studies project that the Nigerian student population in the United Kingdom will increase from 2,700 in 2007 to 30,000 in 2030 (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2009).

The effect of mass emigration on Nigeria's economy has been a topic of considerable debate. Some scholars like John et al. (2020) argue that emigration can yield positive outcomes such as remittances that augment household income and alleviate poverty. Remittances from Nigerians abroad serve as a potential tool for economic development. Nigeria is the largest recipient of remittances in Sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for nearly 65% of the region's officially recorded remittance flows and 2% of global inflows. Adhikari et al. (2021) reported that "remittances from Nigerians abroad increased in 2019 to US\$ 25 billion, representing 5% of the country's gross domestic product and quadrupling Nigeria's foreign direct investment earnings."

Conversely, a number of researchers have underscored the detrimental effects of mass emigration on Nigeria's economy. These adverse impacts manifest in forms such as brain drain and the depletion of skilled labour, both of which can pose significant obstacles to Nigeria's economic development (Docquier & Rapport, 2012).

A substantial body of literature and studies, conducted by scholars and researchers, exists on the topic of mass emigration from Nigeria. However, a conspicuous gap is observed in the research conducted on mass emigration from Nigeria to the UK during the period of 2015 – 2022. Furthermore, there is a noticeable dearth of research on the long-term impacts of mass emigration on Nigeria's political economy. While some studies have explored the immediate effects of emigration, such as the loss of skilled labour and the financial benefits of remittances, a significant void remains in the literature. The long-term implications, including the brain drain phenomenon, the effect on Nigeria's social and political fabric, and the impact on economic development, are areas that remain largely unexplored.

Research Hypotheses

1. The exodus of Nigerians to the United Kingdom can be attributed to the lack of employment opportunities and the uncertainty surrounding the nation's economic and political trajectory.
2. The mass emigration of Nigerians to the UK has resulted in a brain drain, significantly affecting the country's political economy through the depletion of its skilled workforce.

Theoretical Framework

The analytical framework for this study is grounded in the push-pull theory, a concept introduced by Ernest Ravenstein, a leading British migration theorist. The theory's foundation lies in the idea that adverse conditions in less developed countries act as 'push' factors, driving individuals from their temporary residences to seek permanent ones (Ravenstein, 1885; Obi-Ani et al., 2020). These adverse conditions encompass a range of issues, including human rights abuses, inadequate educational facilities and resources, conflicts, food insecurity, high unemployment rates, excessive taxation, high mortality rates, wars, unfavourable climatic conditions, and environmental challenges such as floods and erosion. Conversely, migrants are drawn or 'pulled' to new environments by factors that offer a stark contrast to the conditions they previously endured (Obi-Ani et al., 2020). These pull factors include ample employment opportunities, efficient transportation, quality education, and security.

The push-pull theory posits that the primary drivers of emigration are specific push factors present in society, leading individuals to perceive pull factors in other environments and consequently decide to relocate (Ravenstein, 1885). This theory underscores the push factors prevalent in Nigeria as the primary catalysts for the mass emigration from Nigeria to the United Kingdom and other European countries. In essence, migration occurs in Nigeria when the allure of a potential destination outweighs the reasons for staying. Onyekwuru and Egenuka (2019) note that Nigeria ranks among the top 13 African countries whose citizens express a desire to emigrate to Europe and other regions due to poverty and hardship. Contemporary push factors in Nigeria include political instability, insecurity, poor working conditions, poverty, high unemployment rates, and human rights abuses. The massive emigration from Nigeria is thus driven by pull factors found in the UK and other Western countries, such as improved living and working conditions, security, and advanced technology.

The theory further emphasizes that these push factors can be interpreted as the government's failure to meet the needs of its citizens. Consequently, these individuals have no alternative but to succumb to the pull factors they encounter in other environments. It can be inferred from the foregoing that the superior working environment absent in Nigeria is a significant pull factor contributing to brain drain.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, is grappling with numerous challenges, including unemployment, uncertainty about the economic and political future, political instability, insecurity, and poverty (Sasu, 2023; Beaumont, 2021). These factors have been identified as significant drivers of emigration, particularly to the UK (Uchechukwu, 2022).

Unemployment and Mass Emigration of Nigerians to the UK

According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria's unemployment rate rose to 5% in the third quarter of 2023. This is a significant increase from the 4.2% reported in the previous period. The jobless rate among young people aged 15-24 rose to 8.6% from 7.2%. Unemployment in urban areas also increased marginally to 6% from 5.9% in the previous quarter (Trading Economics, 2023).

The high unemployment rate, particularly among the youth, has been a significant push factor for emigration (Makinde & Adegami, 2019). "Hordes of struggling African youths will continue to migrate en masse to developed countries" (Donkor, 2021). The high unemployment rate in Nigeria is a result of various factors including economic instability, corruption, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of job opportunities. These factors have led to a situation where a large portion of the population is unemployed and seeking better opportunities abroad. The UK, with its strong economy and opportunities for education and employment, has become a popular destination for Nigerian emigrants (Makinde & Adegami, 2019). According to a

report by the UK Home Office, Nigeria had the highest number of migrants to the UK in the year ending June 2022. Nigerian nationals saw the largest relative increase in Sponsored Study grants compared with 2019, increasing by 57,545, which represents a 686 percent increase, to a record high of 65,929 migrants (Uchechukwu, 2022). As at June 2023, the top five non-EU nationalities for immigration flows into the UK were: Indian (253,000), Nigerian (141,000), Chinese (89,000), Pakistani (55,000) and Ukrainian (35,000) (Ogunseyin, 2023). This data clearly shows a significant increase in the number of Nigerians migrating to the UK, which can be linked to the high unemployment rate in Nigeria.

Uncertainty about Nigeria's Economic and Political Future and Mass Emigration of Nigerians to the UK

Uncertainty generally refers to when something is unknown, or when there is a lack of information concerning the probability of future events and their possible outcomes (i.e., awaiting the result of an academic exam or medical test) (Carleton, 2016; Morriss et al., 2019). Both animals and humans are driven to minimise uncertainty, in order to conserve energy and accurately estimate the occurrence of motivationally relevant events (i.e., avoidance of predation, receiving comfort from conspecifics) (Hirsh et al., 2012; Peters et al., 2017). The psychological impact of living in a state of constant uncertainty cannot be understated. The desire for a predictable and stable future is a fundamental human need, and when this is not attainable in one's home country, looking outward becomes a viable option.

In recent years, Nigeria has faced significant economic and political challenges that have led to uncertainty about the country's future. This uncertainty has been a driving factor behind the mass emigration of Nigerians to the United Kingdom. The economic instability, characterized by fluctuating oil prices and a declining Naira, has eroded the purchasing power of many Nigerians. In recent times, Nigeria, which boasts the largest economy on the African continent, has grappled with severe economic setbacks. These setbacks have been intensified by the instability of oil prices, persistent inflation, a downturn in GDP growth, fluctuations in the currency, and mounting debt issues. The repercussions of these economic difficulties are far-reaching within the Nigerian society. Escalating inflation, increasing rates of unemployment, and a surge in poverty have exacerbated social inequalities. This has, in turn, led to a state of political unrest, a rise in criminal activities, and widespread societal distress. The Naira's devaluation has also eroded the purchasing power of the populace, leading to an uptick in the cost of imported commodities and further fuelling the inflationary trend (Umeh, 2024). This economic scenario has undermined consumer confidence and curtailed consumer expenditure, imposing considerable hardship on families, especially those earning meager incomes. Politically, the country has grappled with governance issues, corruption, and security challenges that have undermined public trust in government institutions (Folarin, 2021).

The impact of these factors on emigration is evident in the increasing number of Nigerians seeking better opportunities abroad. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), there has been a significant rise in the number of Nigerian-born residents in the UK over the past decade (ONS, 2022). The pursuit of higher education, stable employment, and a more secure environment are among the top reasons cited by migrants (IseOlorunkanmi et al., 2021).

The relationship between Nigeria's economic and political uncertainty and the mass emigration to the UK is further substantiated by empirical evidence and statistical data. According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2020), the number of Nigerian-born immigrants residing in the UK increased from approximately 190,000 in 2010 to over 230,000 in 2019, reflecting a significant surge in emigration. Additionally, the UK Home Office (2022) reported that in 2021, Nigeria ranked as the third-highest nationality for asylum applications in the UK, with over 10,000 applications received. These figures underscore the extent to which economic and political instability in Nigeria has driven its citizens to seek refuge and opportunities in the UK.

Mass emigration of Nigerians to the UK and the Nigerian Political Economy

The mass emigration of skilled professionals from Nigeria to the United Kingdom has become a significant socio-economic challenge, often referred to as “brain drain.” This phenomenon has far-reaching implications on Nigeria’s political economy, particularly through the depletion of its skilled workforce. The term “brain drain” describes the emigration of trained and talented individuals to other nations due to better prospects abroad. This movement is not a new occurrence; however, recent trends indicate a substantial increase in the scale at which Nigerian professionals are relocating to the UK.

The departure of highly skilled professionals from Nigeria has several adverse effects on the country’s political economy:

Loss of Human Capital: The exodus of skilled workers results in a significant loss of human capital, which is essential for the development of various sectors within Nigeria. This loss is particularly felt in critical areas such as healthcare and education, where the expertise of these professionals is crucial (CREM Nigeria, 2023).

Economic Implications: The brain drain leads to a reduction in the potential economic contributions of these individuals to Nigeria’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Their absence translates to a decrease in innovation, productivity, and overall economic growth (Raji et al., 2018). The phenomenon of brain drain has a profound impact on Nigeria’s economy, particularly in terms of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The migration of highly skilled professionals and academics from Nigeria to more developed countries results in a significant loss of human capital, which is a crucial component of economic growth. This exodus of talent leads to a decrease in innovation, productivity, and overall economic growth.

The economic contributions of skilled professionals are multifaceted. They not only contribute to the GDP through their direct labour but also through the consumption of goods and services, payment of taxes, and participation in the development of technology and innovation. When these individuals leave, their potential contributions to the economy are lost. According to a report by Vanguard News, Nigeria has spent upwards of \$2 billion training doctors who have subsequently migrated (Vanguard, 2022). This represents a direct financial loss and a reduction in the potential GDP growth.

Innovation is driven by the presence of educated and skilled individuals who can create new products, improve processes, and develop new technologies. The absence of such individuals due to brain drain can lead to a stagnation in innovation. Odunsi (1996) asserts that Nigeria has suffered adversely from the devastation imposed by human resource imbalance, which has significantly undermined national development efforts. The shortage of qualified professionals crucial for economic development has greatly diminished Nigeria’s leadership role in Africa and the world community.

The overall economic growth of a country is dependent on the productivity of its workforce. Brain drain in Nigeria occurs as a result of a lack of investment in education, health, and infrastructure, which leads to an exodus of the most educated and talented individuals (Emmanuel, 2023). This deprives Nigeria of the resources it needs to develop its economy, as well as the potential to create new industries and sectors. Furthermore, with a depleting number of medical doctors, Nigeria annually spends between \$1.2 billion and \$1.6 billion on medical tourism (Aliyu, 2022). The brain drain cuts across many sectors and professions, as funds are taken away from the country’s economy to boost that of another country.

Educational Investment Loss: Nigeria’s investment in education is substantial but still falls short of meeting the needs of its burgeoning population. According to UNESCO (2021), Nigeria’s budget allocation to education is below the recommended 26% of the total budget, with only 7.02% of the national budget allocated to education in 2021. Despite this, the government has made efforts to improve education in the

country, aiming to provide quality education to its citizens. Nigeria invests in the education and training of its workforce. When these individuals emigrate, the country loses its investment, and this can hinder the development of future generations.

CONCLUSION

The large-scale migration of Nigerians to the United Kingdom, informally known as ‘Japa,’ has emerged as a notable trend with profound effects on Nigeria’s socio-economic landscape. This study underscores the complex factors propelling this migration, encompassing unemployment, economic volatility, political instability, and the quest for improved prospects overseas.

The brain drain associated with the large-scale departure of skilled professionals poses a significant hurdle for Nigeria. The exit of these individuals results in a considerable depletion of human capital, impeding Nigeria’s economic expansion, innovation, and productivity. Moreover, Nigeria’s considerable investments in education and training are negated when these skilled individuals opt for more promising opportunities abroad.

The economic repercussions of brain drain are manifested in the diminished potential contributions to Nigeria’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the stagnation of innovation, and the diversion of funds towards medical tourism due to the scarcity of medical professionals. This trend has also compromised Nigeria’s leadership position in Africa and the international community, obstructing its national development initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Economic Diversification and Job Creation: It is imperative to diversify the Nigerian economy beyond its dependence on oil and generate more employment opportunities, especially for the youth. This can be accomplished through investments in diverse sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, and technology, and by encouraging entrepreneurship and the growth of small businesses.

Enhancing Governance and Political Stability: It is crucial to address corruption, insecurity, and poor governance to rebuild public confidence in governmental institutions and cultivate a stable political climate. This can be achieved by enforcing stringent anti-corruption measures, fortifying democratic institutions, and upholding the rule of law.

Investment in Education and Infrastructure: Allocating a larger budget for education to meet international standards, as well as investing in state-of-the-art educational facilities and infrastructure, can enhance the quality of education in Nigeria. This will not only retain talented individuals but also attract those who have migrated in pursuit of superior educational opportunities.

Incentives for Skilled Professionals: The implementation of incentives and the creation of appealing working conditions for skilled professionals can aid in retaining and attracting talent. These incentives could encompass competitive remuneration, opportunities for professional growth, and improved living standards.

Diaspora Engagement and Brain Gain: Nigeria should proactively engage with its diaspora community, particularly those in the UK, to capitalize on their skills, knowledge, and resources for the country’s benefit. Initiatives such as temporary return programs, knowledge transfer programs, and investment opportunities can facilitate brain gain and tap into the potential of the Nigerian diaspora.

International Cooperation: Collaboration with other nations, particularly the UK, through bilateral

agreements and partnerships can help mitigate the challenges of mass migration and brain drain. Such cooperation could include initiatives to regulate migration flows, encourage circular migration, and facilitate knowledge and technology transfer.

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