

Japa-Japada and Its Effect on Socio-Business Development in Nigeria.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2024.1110040>

Received: 08 October 2024; Accepted: 12 October 2024; Published: 14 November 2024

ABSTRACT

Japa-Japada the two opposite words used for emigration and relocation in Nigeria are not quite unfamiliar particularly among the Nigerian youths. With the exodus occurring daily in the country despite the financial implications, this decision that a large number of citizens have taken, are taking and may continue to take calls for concern. The move has caused so much brain drain with its attendant effects on socio-economic and socio-business development in Nigeria. It is in the light of this, that this study hopes to investigate the resultant effect of migration and brain drain on Nigerian socio-economic and socio-business development. It is expected that if the enabling environment, good governance, adequate security and massive investment in social overhead capital are adequately put in place, the country stands to benefit if these emigrants come back home with the wealth of experience garnered overseas.

Key words: Japa, Japada, Socio-economic development, Socio-business development, Migration, Brain Drain.

INTRODUCTION

Emigration and Migration are not new to the Nigerian system. Over the years, movement of individuals in and out of the Country is a known fact. After the Covid19 Pandemic, when the world had to take varying decisions on so many economic parameters, the masses faced so much challenges and the most evident being reduction in purchasing power as we see the dynamics of work change and so many organizations had to embrace the remote system of working as well as hybrid work structures where workers had to pick some days to work from home in a bid to find a lasting solution to the pandemic. More importantly was the sporadic job losses which had huge impact on individuals and house holds as a ripple effect of organizations going comatose and manufacturing companies shutting down, while those with affiliates returned to their home countries, all these further increased the exodus of citizens from the Country.

Migration is considered as the movement of people from one geographical region to another, which may be on temporary or permanent basis. People migrate based on the prevailing conditions and the reasons for it vary from one person to another depending on the situation that brought about the decision. Migration is a selective process affecting individuals or families with certain economic, social, educational and demographic characteristics. Migration occurs as a response to economic development as well as social, cultural, environmental and political factors and effects on areas of origin as well as destination. People tend to move away from a place due to need to escape violence, political instability, drought, congestion in various dimensions and suspected or real persecution Adewale (2005).

The National Bureau of Statistics Nigeria (2023) stated that the 2022 and 2023 editions had similar patterns and trends. Migration was less prevalent among females than males. The migration prevalence among females in 2022 was 47.4 per cent, and that of males was 52.6 per cent. Similarly, in 2023, females had lower record of prevalence with 48.6 per cent and the males with higher record of 51.4 per cent. Also, in the likelihood of noncompliance to travel requirements, the 2023 edition indicated that males were mostly culpable with 51.9 per cent than females with 44.8 per cent. Some of the reasons why migrants travelled vary across states in Nigeria, however, on the aggregate, business constituted the highest reason, while marriage accounted for the least. Other reasons being work, greener pasture, tourism, medicals and study amongst others.

Adegoke (2023), posited that following the COVID-19 pandemic, developing countries experienced massive socioeconomic challenges that led to a significant increase in migration in search of better opportunities outside their countries. This phenomenon is not new—humans have always migrated from environments with inclement climatic conditions to more temperate terrains. North American and Western European countries are the preferred destinations of this new wave of migrants, although they are not necessarily the only final destinations of choice.

There are different types of migration. It can be within the country or external; it may be voluntary or involuntary and it can be seasonal. It can be permanent, if a migrant return home (ancestral home); long term, if a migrant stay outside his place of origin for up to a year such that the place of migration effectually becomes the new residence/home. Migration is referred to a short term when a migrant stay outside his place of residence for a period of at least 3 months Harmon (2020).

According to Afunugo (2023), Migration is not a futile, burdensome, vainful, gainless or evil venture. It is actually a gainful venture, and the prospects are favourable and positively inclined. However, as it is in every life endeavour, once balance is not maintained and a peculiar venture tilts to any extreme, it backfires and suffers diminishing returns.

Adewale (2005) considered migration as the movement of people from one geographical region to another, which may be on temporary or permanent basis. According to the researcher, people migrate based on the prevailing conditions and the reasons for it vary from one person to another depending on the situation that brought about the decision. Migration is a selective process affecting individuals or families with certain economic, social, educational and demographic characteristics. Migration occurs as a response to economic development as well as social, cultural, environmental and political factors and effects on areas of origin as well as destination. People tend to move away from a place due to need to escape violence, political instability, drought, congestion in various dimensions and suspected or real persecution.

The search for a better life than what individuals have at the time of taking a decision for migration will make them have a detach from their respective places of work. This movement which is massive has left a drain in such sectors causing a strain on nationals trying to access some kind of service in such sectors. A typical example is in the medical sector.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

JAPA

Japa syndrome is the recent high rate of emigration of Nigerian citizens to foreign countries in search of greener pastures Afunugo (2023). According to Okunade & Awosusi (2023), Japa means ‘fleeing’ beyond the shores of Nigeria. That is, deploying any migration strategy (regular or irregular) to escape from Nigeria’s territory to other parts of the world. Although novel in literature, Japa is not a new development in Nigeria. As a concept, it explains not only the exodus of Nigerians through its international air borders (a phenomenon that attracted the terminology), but also the age-long practice of irregular migration, which seems to be ignored by the people and the concerned local actors.

Bugra, (2004) defined Migration as a change in the location of residence. According to the researcher, it is a universal phenomenon and has occurred in all nations at all times. The process of migration is both qualitatively and quantitatively a highly heterogeneous process. It may involve one individual who moves to study, seek better employment, attempt to better their future, to avoid political and religious persecution or to marry. Such individuals may also move in a group for military, political, or financial purposes. The process of migration may concern a family or a group of families who seek a better life elsewhere or join other members of their families who may have already moved to establish themselves. Migration may concern a group of individuals moving together to avoid religious persecution or seek religious freedom. This may be an intrinsic feature of the way of life of a group of people such as nomads or gypsies. It may also be important for students, anthropologists, diplomats, charity workers and popstars to keep moving from one nation to another for short periods or long periods.

Japa migrants cut across different social stratification, there are those travelling on student visas with their dependents to Europe and America and others who are highly mobile professionals leaving for better opportunities in developed economies. Their unifying characteristic is that they are largely regular migrants because it is very expensive to meet the visa requirements through either route; hence, apart from those who left the country on scholarship, the new Japa migrants consist of relatively middle-class and upper middle-class Nigerians. Adegoke (2023).

Castelli (2018) identified factors such as socioeconomic, environmental, and political factors; the meso factors include diaspora kinship affinities, effects of armed banditry due to political destabilization, and, in recent times, digital social media alluring appeals of better opportunities in Western countries; and micro factors such as religion, education, and marital considerations are also responsible for these migration patterns.

Japa, The Genesis Before the Exodus

Prior to this exodus, that is now at an alarming rate, we have had Nigerians moving abroad for various reasons top of which was majorly a search for greener pastures. This is so evident in the names some Yoruba speaking groups named their children when such journeys were made “Abidemi” a child born when the father had traveled or “Tokunbo” a child birthed overseas and brought back home, suffice to say that persons had been going out of the country and returning since time immemorial. The Igbos also pray as a norm that when their families go abroad, may they come back home after they have flourished with goodies.

In relation to japa, Czaika (2014) posited the decision about migration is a decision taken in the context of uncertainty and risk. According to the researcher, information about the future is incomplete, and whether migration turns out as a success or a failure for individuals depends very much on circumstances that are unknown. Migration can be considered as an investment project; the decision about realizing this project is based on information and prospects about the future. The researcher argued that migration decisions are influenced intelia by future prospects about the general economic situation and unemployment in both the home country and the potential destination country.

The pictorial image of japa in the mind of people looks more like fleeing from impeding disaster. Individuals with good income, who can be classified as middle class in the economy have also joined the bandwagon, leaving well paying careers, property and family to look for “greener pastures” forgetting that the grass is green where the ground is watered. The hope is that after climbing the ladder of success, they will come home and replicate the experience garnered more often than nought, few ever bring this to reality.

Castles (2000) posited that the decision on migration, comes with high hopes and fear, the researcher went on to explain that the dramatic images of African migrants trying to enter the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla on Morocco’s Mediterranean coast by scaling the tall border fences; the daily attempts to cross the Strait of Gibraltar to mainland Spain, or the Atlantic to the Canary Islands, using fishing boats; and the persistent efforts of Mexican migrants to cross the Rio Grande or the desert all reinforce the perception of increasing pressure on the borders of wealthy nations. In the West, immigration of people from developing countries is increasingly perceived as a problem in need of control. Nyberg-Sørensen, Van Hear & Engberg-Pedersen (2002a)

Migration can either be legal that is going through the right channel and documentations or illegal. Kari, Malasowe & Collins, (2018) in their study posited that central to the understanding of illegal migration flow is the traditional push-pull causes. “Push factor” refers to circumstances at home that repel; examples include famine, drought, low agricultural productivity, unemployment etc. while “pull factor refers to those conditions found elsewhere (abroad) that attract migrants. Their study also pointed that the frightening economic and political instability may as well be a push for migration trend giving reasons such as opportunities for job mobility, business ventures, personal leisure/relaxation and greener pastures opened outside the frontiers of a nation’s domestic boundary while insecurity and political crisis were seen as posing challenges as well as trade in illicit businesses like drugs, human part/organs to smuggling of contraband goods and services as some other reasons for the pull factors of migration. Albert-Makyur (2022), also corroborated this position and opined that the elements that drive individuals to migrate are stimulated and encouraged by three main types of influences demand-pull factors around the destination, supply-push factors in the country of origin, and the network factors

that connect destination and origin. The researcher further established that international migration could be because of knowledge and technology that substantially positively impacts productivity and economic growth. Some immigrants have willingly relocated to a new country. At the same time, others have been placed by their employers temporarily on foreign shores as expatriates. Others have chosen the global worker lifestyle, chasing opportunities from one country to another.

The National Bureau of Statistics (2023) stated that the net migration rate for Nigeria in 2023 was -0.273 per 1000 population, a 2.5% decline from 2022. The net migration rate for Nigeria in 2022 was -0.280 per 1000 population, a 2.78% decline from 2021. The net migration rate for Nigeria in 2021 was -0.288 per 1000 population, a 2.37% decline from 2020. The NBS data revealed that socio economic problems was the dominant reason for embarking on migration and even the choice of routes both from the perspective of returned and potential immigrants was impacted by it. More than 30per cent of all intended migrants in 2022 wanted to travel out in search of job, with a slightly larger share in 2023. To show how much economic factors drove migration, both the 2022 and 2023 survey drew parallels correlation of 51.8 per cent and 51 per cent of intending migrants are without means of livelihood in that order. Evidently, findings from the 2022 survey showed that the United States of America was the most preferred destination for intending migrants among the states that they carried out their study on.

The recent End Sars national youth protests of October 2021 and the attendant Toll Gate Massacre have been argued to have influenced the massive outmigration of Nigerians. The Nigerian youth's protest, which was an outburst against police brutality over the years, was alleged to have been ruthlessly aborted by the Nigerian Government (U.S. News, 2020). The response, which was greeted with public criticism, especially from the youths, instigated an increased outmigration of the Nigerian youth (Okunade, 2021b).

According to Adepaju (2003), Poverty, another factor causing japa, has become both widespread and intense and the proportion of the population living in abject poverty is on the increase. Rural to urban migration intensified as farm laborers, deprived of the means to improve their living conditions, abandoned work and life in rural areas in search of wage labour in the cities. In recent years, macro-economic adjustment measures and huge increases annually in the number of entrants into the labour market have fueled the job crisis, creating sustained pressure for emigration. Retrenchment of public sector workers, a stressful socio-economic environment coupled with declining real incomes has spurred emigration of skilled and unskilled workers, both men and women, and the outflow of professionals to various African countries, Europe and North America. Highly skilled migrants – doctors, nurses, lecturers, engineers, scientists and technologists – have moved from Ghana and, recently, Nigeria to South Africa and Botswana attracted by higher salaries and better living conditions.

De Haas (2007), posited that Restrictive immigration policies and the militarization of external border controls by the US and the EU have failed to significantly curb immigration from Latin America and Africa. Rather, they have led to greater reliance on increasingly risky and costly irregular migration and have paradoxically encouraged permanent settlement. A commonly presented 'smart solution' to curb immigration is to address the perceived root causes of migration through increasing aid or liberalizing trade with origin countries. Recently, policies to stimulate remittances and to promote temporary and circular migration have also been advocated as enhancing home country development, so that these forms of migration become a medicine against illegal and permanent migration. However, besides the limited scope and credibility of such policies, empirical and theoretical evidence strongly suggests that economic and human development increases people's capabilities and aspirations and therefore tends to coincide with an increase rather than a decrease in emigration, at least in the short to medium term. Under unfavourable conditions, trade, aid and remittances can be complements to, rather than substitutes for, migration also in the longer term. At the same time, demand for both skilled and unskilled migrant labour is likely to persist. Trade, aid, return migration and remittances are no short-cut 'solutions' to migration, and sustained immigration therefore seems likely.

Japada A Renewed Hope for National Development

Amidst the rhetorics of japada, when an immigrant returns home and the society learns that the person came back home, they usually see such persons as failure and pity them for their decisions without caring to find out

the reasons for such steps, may be health issues, unfavourable weather conditions to start and nurture a business or even deportation. One of the reasons japa looks attractive is because developed countries have a system which is almost on autorun and works.

In 2024, Dr Julius Oni, “japadaed” to Nigeria to set up a world class hospital in Nigeria. He had studied in the States and decided to come and use all he had gastered to spring up development in his own country. This act has brought value addition in the creation of job opportunities, access to health care that meets world class standards, increase in revenue, and a renewed hope that there is light at the end of the tunnel amongst others. Oni, (2024).

The Business Day news paper publication of 7th September, 2024 reported 9 African Entrepreneurs who returned home to build successful businesses after living abroad. Of the Nine entrepreneurs were two Nigerians, Iyinoluwa Aboyeji, one of the founders of Flutterwave which was launched in 2018 after studying in Canada with a goal of becoming a lawyer and Olatorera Oniru of Dressmeoutlet.com who studied and lived in the USA whose business was launched in 2015. These businesses have generated billions of Dollars and have thousands of employees on their payroll bringing growth and development to the Nigerian economy.

Other scenarios exist and will still happen for several individuals are waiting to get it right, waiting for a little ray of light in the power sector, waiting for a little dedication to the educational sector, waiting for the forex indices to be totally left to demand and supply as well as fully honing their skills and making a little money that gives them a solid foundation financially and making a turn back home when all concerned boxes are ticked.

SOCIO BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Nigeria, the business hub of Africa, has crossed several hurdles in the past decades and has tried to keep her head above water even though it is glaring that she has the strength and capacity to do better. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, Consumer price inflation in Nigeria averaged 13.0% in the last ten years to 2022, above the Sub-Saharan Africa regional average of 9.4%. The 2022 average figure was 18.8%. The NBS explained that the number of unemployed Nigerians rose to 35.20 million in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2020 on the back of jobless occasioned by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and its stifling impact on business during the period. Uwaleka (2021). This issue coupled with other factors aggravated the brain drain in the Nigerian economy.

According to Ighoshemu & Ogidiagba (2022), Nigeria under performs due to a lack of state capacity to deal with the present-day complexities of governance, thereby leading to poor governance, massive unemployment, and brain drain in the Buhari led administration. According to the researchers, poor governance is the absence of good governance and a close observation of governance in Nigeria during their study indicated a poor attempt at democratic consideration and unstable politics thereby leading to a battered economy, impoverished citizens, corruption, mismanagement of public funds, infrastructure decay leading to massive unemployment which results in human capital flight, a barrier to Nigeria’s quest for consolidating democracy, as a result of decisions taken by visionless, selfish, nepotic, mediocre, tribalistic and opportunistic persons in the political space of the country. The researchers also identified the following as the causes of unemployment, one of the precursors of japa:

i. Poor governance: Poor governance is one of the major causes of unemployment. When the government in power does not have the capacity and the intellectual capacity to govern and open up opportunities to engage the youths in job or better still create a platform where their acquired skills can be put to good use particularly as pertaining to electricity and other basic amenities, the resultant effect will be a push factor for japa.

ii. Neglect of the agricultural sector: The agricultural sector should be the fore runner for expansion in Nigeria but is really underutilized, undermanaged and underdeveloped. Prior to the discovery of oil, this sector was doing well in cocoa production, groundnuts, kola nuts, tie and dye, batik, cashew, palm kernel to mention a few and we were even major exporters of such! The agricultural sector has experiences so much neglect that at present, Nigeria which is rich in cassava and produces garri from it now has on the shelve of its business centers garri exported from China!

iii. Lack of enabling environment: The poor economy and the lack of enabling environment that has characterized the economy over the years have continued to pose a serious challenge to employment generation in Nigeria. This, coupled with insecurity has hampered investors coming to invest in the country, the peak was during Buhari's regime, where kidnapping, banditry, and insurgency enjoy the patronage of the administration with kid-glove treatment on them. The factors are further exacerbated and as a result, millions of people move to the urban cities with the hope of securing lucrative jobs in the industries and also being able to enjoy the social amenities that abound in the urban cities/centers. The implication of this has been that most rural areas have remained neglected in the allocation of social and economic resources. Since it now appears that both rural and urban areas seem to be feeling the same pains, most have now resorted to leaving the country by all means.

iv. Systemic problems in education: The educational sector has also had a lot of set backs, right from the foundation, an overhaul is needed. We see a lot of evidences in the incessant strike actions and even the results from our JAMB examinations. The platform for evaluating academic prowess should be same so as to get to the desired goal .

v. Gradual collapse of the manufacturing sector: The absence of a vibrant manufacturing sector which can absorb the massive unemployed people in Nigeria is a cause of unemployment. The First, Second, and Third Republics and the military regimes were able to build some industries, and factories that absorbed some good numbers of Nigerians in work thereby unemployment was insignificant. According to Chiazor, Ozoya, and Udume (2017), "over 800 industries collapsed in Nigeria today and over 37 factories closed shop since 2009. Half of the remaining operating firms have been classified as "ailing" a situation that poses a great threat to the survival of the manufacturing sector in the country in the years ahead.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Movement within and outside the County of residence will always happen for several reasons. With the state of the economic indices in Nigeria, this can be a game changer if some issues are addressed and structures with can aid the workability of Japada are put in place.

Some of these include:

i. Security challenges ranging from kidnapping and banditry need to be addressed. The individuals who want to "japada" need to know that they will be safe when the return home.

ii. Infrastructural revamping of all sectors particularly the power sector, if the power sector can be put to work optimally, the Country will feel the impact and it will also open more opportunities for job creation as well as increase in revenue and profits for business owners. Returning immigrants will also feel comfortable to move because having access to power will bring down overhead costs significantly.

iii. Educational content and context need to be reworked to demystify white collarism thereby encouraging skill sets development such that dignity in labour is reawakened again. After-all, most immigrants have to do odd jobs at first to integrate into the system after relocating.

iv. Anti-Corruption Policies to ensure that the common wealth of the Nation is protected from misappropriation and is evenly distributed for use such that the poor and vulnerable have access to the basic amenities that make their livelihood meaningful.

v. Giving a decree that every household must plant two of the crops they eat and putting structures in place to ensure compliance.

vi. When all these are put in-place and Nigeria wears the garment that most of the Citizens and the World long to see her wear and bears the name the "Giant of Africa" in words and in action with the indices and parameters showing in the economy, Japada will not be a strange word and no Nigerian will feel inferior in another land because "home is good too"

vii. If no 6 above is achieved, Government can put in Return policies in place in form of a census that encourages

Nationals to come into the Country to capture proper data on demographics and reform economic policies that enhance growth and development.

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