

IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND GOVERNANCE: IMPLICATIONS FOR NIGERIA

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Abstract

The global irregular migration crisis has gained momentum in the 21st century due to the high fatality rates and risks among vulnerable migrants in their quest to cross the scorching desert and violent sea. Irregular migration is the movement of people illegally and without the required or proper documentation across international borders. Migration is as old as humanity. Today, Africa faces the enormous challenges of high migratory flows across the Sahara Desert via North Africa and the Mediterranean Sea into Europe. The challenges of this trend include human trafficking, xenophobia, organ harvesting, and insecurity. Nigeria is not exempt from this crisis irrespective of its endowed natural/human resources, the advent of democracy, and its prominent role as the biggest economy in Africa. Nigeria is rated low in infrastructural and human capital development among nations. Many vulnerable youths are leaving the country in droves for a better living standard. This study examines the trends, triggers, and problems of governance on irregular migration and the implications for Nigeria. The study employs data from secondary sources such as journals, reports, books, and the internet for analysis. Also, the security theory of migration was employed to explain the irregular migration trends. The findings reveal that significant Nigerian youths are irregularly migrating in droves to Asia, the Middle East, and some African countries, But not only to Europe. It shows a thriving and growing industry of irregular migrants' handlers in the country because of ineffective migration policies, unemployment, poverty, and porous borders. The study concludes that a more comprehensive public policy approach towards addressing unemployment, crushing poverty, humanitarian crises, insecurity, poor governance with attendant consequences of mismanagement of resources, and corruption would perhaps reduce the rise in irregular migration.

Keywords: *Irregular Migration, Mediterranean, Desert Crossing, Governance, Migration Policy, Security Theory.*

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1. Introduction

Increasingly, we are witnessing an unusual irregular migration pattern across the globe in this millennium and it has reached a level that one can view as a global crisis. International migration is not a new wave as it predates historical times, and it is as old as humanity. The characterization of human communities throughout history hinged on the movement of human populations across the globe. International Migration is multidimensional and deals mainly with social, economic, and political factors, and can be internal or international. International migration entails the movement of people across political and cultural boundaries to a different country than the country of origin.

In contrast, internal migration involves people's movement within a specified country's national boundary. As a perceivable hallmark of human existence, International Migration has tremendously affected the world in many ways than ever. Hence, the migration of people from one place to another in search of better living standards is not new.

The most challenging is irregular migration, which from the perspective of the country of origin, is the migration of persons across international borders without valid travel documents or passports to live temporarily or permanently in foreign countries other than their birth country. This movement violates the immigration laws of both countries of origin and destination. Irregular immigrants are also known as undocumented or unauthorized immigrants. Most migrants outside Africa are irregular migrants (IOM, 2019). Furthermore, those found to be Nigerians seem to be on the increase in recent times (United Nations, 2020). Presently, there is a rising trend of visible irregular migration worldwide, especially from the Global South to the countries of the North. Although there are recorded benefits of social remittances from irregular migrants, the negative complexities of human trafficking, brain drain, forced labor, prostitution, and ineffective government policies preventing the investment in human capital in Nigeria also exist. However, the changing trends and growing scope of irregular migration, specifically the unsafe and risky migratory flows of people into the continent of Europe and North America through the Sahara deserts and the Mediterranean Sea, have gained global attention.

A plethora of research in recent years has shown that the migration trend tends to be on the increase, rather than slowing down (Adepoju, 2000, 2003, 2008, and 2010; Brown & Bean, 2006; Ramune & Vilmante, 2011; Boswell, 2002; Deirdre, Gideon & Helmut, 2019; Stephen,

2019; and Ikuteyijo, 2020). Today, many people make one of the most complex and challenging choices which are to leave their homes and villages in the pursuit of a better and safer life. International migration encompasses various situations and movements involving persons from all backgrounds and spheres of life. The increased movement of humans from one place to another has affected several people and countries throughout the years. It is exacerbated and made accessible in a period of deepening globalization (Martin, 2001; Stalker, 1997; and Zubiashvili, 2017). The embedded trend is in socio-economic, institutional, and cultural exchange. It has provided better opportunities for millions of people across the globe to forge meaningful and safer lives outside their countries of origin.

However, the decision to migrate is often an individual's choice driven by the need and desire for greener pastures and a better living standard. 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. 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.

In contrast, others migrate illegally and continue to hide from the face of the law. This migration pattern is known as irregular migration (IM), as those citizens involved fail to meet the regulatory demands for leaving the country of origin. Much of this movement is in total violation and disregards the international migration governance (IMG) policies. Defining *international migration governance* as all laws and policies governing persons' movement from one country to another, the study will hereafter refer to the movement that breaches these governance policies as irregular migration (IM). Home to about one-fifth of the world's migrant population currently is in Europe and North America. Through globalization, migration rates have accelerated, and the diversity of origin points has increased (Ramune & Vilmante, 2011).

Many criticisms have arisen from policymakers and scholars worldwide regarding the term illegal migration. They argue it connotes criminality, whereas many irregular migrants are not criminals. Validation by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Non-Citizens recommends that destination countries refrain from maltreating immigrants (even those

without valid documents) as criminals (Koser, 2005). Second, defining irregular migrants as illegal would deny their human rights, regardless of their status (Guild, 2010; Ikuteyijo, 2013). There are records of benefits of social remittances from irregular migrants. However, there exist negative complexities in the lives of individuals and countries of origin, which is a considerable concern. These factors include human trafficking, brain drain, unemployment, organ harvesting, insecurity, and ineffective government policies preventing investments in human capital.

Globally, irregular migration (IM) has been one of the most rapidly growing types of migration. Mexico is a primary emigration country in North America, crossing into the United States despite the border controls. The crisis led to President Trump's border wall initiative to prevent the inflow of Mexicans into the US. Across the Pacific, in Asia is Afghanistan, as most leave for Pakistan and Iran. At the same time, the Philippines is also a country of origin, as most Filipinos live outside their country. Additionally, the Maghreb countries in North Africa, such as Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Egypt, and Tunisia, which border the Mediterranean Sea, are heavily affected as countries of origin.

Nigeria is in the west of the African region, known as the most populous black nation in the world. Nigeria is the giant of Africa due to its enormous rich natural and human resources and its fame as the largest economy on the continent with geopolitical relevance. However, the persistent poverty in the country poses a considerable push factor challenge for irregular international migration in the sub-region.

Accordingly, recent studies and official reports suggest that Nigeria has more people living in extreme poverty than any other country (Adebayo and Afolayan, 2019). In the 2016 third quarter, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) also revealed an overall unemployment rate of 13.9%, with youth unemployment rising to 25% from 24% in 2015. These socio-economic trends, coupled with other variables such as poor international migration governance, waves of conflict, and political instability, have led to an increasing number of irregular migrants in specific categories leaving Nigeria for other countries perceived to have tremendous potential. Nigerian youths are vulnerable and seen as a "nationless" population, deprived of reaping the benefits of citizenship, such as access to Nigeria's commonwealth (natural resources), health, education, employment, and security, which are significant to enhancing their standard of living and life chances. In addition, the Nigerian government has failed in its duties and responsibilities of providing social amenities, ensuring human rights and privileges, and

safeguarding of lives and properties of its citizens. The dynamics and multiplication of loopholes in state governance are also a trigger, as irregular migration has gone beyond the state regulations and control. The purpose of this study is to examine available data from official statistics, existing literature, and emerging governance policy to better understand the trends, triggers, issues of governance of irregular migration, and its implications for Nigeria. The study findings proffer solutions with policy recommendations on how the country can achieve the significant potential of international migration through effective governance.

2. Theoretical Framework

Several theories have been developed by scholars in the field of social sciences (international relations and Diplomacy). Although a comprehensive theory is not attainable, it remains a crucial task of demographers to explain why people migrate. Theories relating to migration are essential as they help understand population movements within their broader political and economic contexts. For instance, if someone migrates from a third-world country due to economic challenges caused by the global economy, then such migration could be managed with better international economic agreements between the country of origin instead of restrictive immigration laws on the migrant. The Ravenstein "Laws of Migration" argue that migration is governed by a "push-pull" process, which may be unfavourable conditions in one place such as: oppressive laws, deprivation, heavy taxation, and insecurity constituting the "push" factors, for example, whereas favourable conditions in an external location would refer to "pull" factors (Sinn, 2019). In this study, the security theory is examined as the most suitable and adopted to investigate the concept of irregular migration and governance with implications for Nigeria.

Securitization theory argues that national security policy is not a natural given but carefully designated by politicians and decision-makers. It states that issues in politics constitute an extreme security challenge with the urgent attention to the label and deal as dangerous, menacing, threatening, and alarming by a 'securitizing actor.' It has the social and institutional power to move the issue 'beyond politics (Eroukhmanoff, 2018). Irregular migration is a security issue, challenging countries of the world. The security actors are the states (Government), who have the mandate to provide, secure and protect the lives and properties of their citizens. Thus, irregular migration is a security issue that is not just out there but requires its handling as a major crisis by security actors (Government). Calling immigration or irregular migration a 'threat to national security, for instance, shifts immigration/irregular migration

from a low priority political concern to a high priority issue that requires proactive actions, such as securing borders (Eroukhmanoff, 2018). However, the security theory challenges international relations' traditional approaches to security. It maintains that issues are not essentially threatening in themselves; rather, it is by referring to them as 'security' issues that they become security problems (Wæver, 2011, Eroukhmanoff, 2018, McGlinchey, Walters & Scheinpflug, 2017).

In this study, we shall simultaneously combine and examine the human security theory with security theory since security focuses on human life and existence. The human security approach allows for a comprehensive methodology and a broad perspective on the issues the citizens and governments face in the 21st century. Human Security is the absence of threat to various core human values, including human values and individual physical safety.

According to Bor Muhub (1994), human security is like a disease that does not spread, a child that does not die, a job that is without elimination, ethnic tension that does not explode into violence, and a disaster that is without silence. He added. Human security does not involve concern about guns but concerned about human life and dignity.

The main goal of human security is to safeguard the vital core of all human lives from critical and pervasive threats (Alkire, 2002, United Nations, 2016). The concept emerged immediately after the end of the cold war, focusing mainly on what insecurity is and its implication for the citizens and the community, e.g., transnational crimes (human trafficking), irregular migration, and climate change. In this study, human security could also mean the sudden loss of job/unemployment, lack of health care facilities, lack of education, violation of human rights, domestic violence, lack of shelter, and internal displacement.

In 2003, the Commission on human security viewed human security as protecting the vital core of all human fulfilments and freedom from severe and widespread threats. Through processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations and create socio-economic, political, environmental, military, and cultural systems that collectively give people the pillar of survival (Commission on human security,2003). Although, human security is subjective as once experience determines what it means. According to the late Dr. Kofi Annan, the former United Nations secretary general, peace means much more than the absence of war. Thus, the understanding of human security is no longer in purely military terms, and it goes beyond the state, which includes economic development, social justice, environmental protection,

democratization, disarmament, the rule of law, and respect for human rights (Annan, 2001, United Nations, 2001, UNESCO, 2001, GDRC, 2001)

For Kofi Anan, human security is freedom from wants, fear, and the freedom to live in dignity (protection, provision, empowerment). Human security is related to the development of human lives. Nevertheless, Nigeria and the African states cannot live up to this expectation by providing protection for their citizens, granting them dignity in labour (empowerment policies to aid the adequate supply of food, shelter, education, and security. Many of the population live in abject poverty. There is also a high rate of insurgency, kidnapping, Banditry, human trafficking, and herders/ farmers clashes. Irregular migration is security mayhem displacing many people in their own countries without jobs, food/water, shelter, health care access, or education. It is a national security threat. Hence, many Nigerian youths are willing and ready to leave the country through whatever means possible to search for better living standards, regardless of the risks involved.

3. Conceptual Discourse

There are many scholarly works on irregular migration and governance. However, it is worth noting that the difference between this research and other works is the triggers, challenges, and comparative study of irregular migration and governance in Nigeria, which could lead to unraveling the implications and underlying factors surrounding irregular migration and governance in Nigeria. Migration is one of the most significant humanitarian challenges in the twenty-first century. As old as humankind, migration has several significant forces that have shaped the history of man. Defining migration (wildly irregular migration) is a controversial process. In the end, *migration* is the movement of people over some distance from one "usual place of residence" to another. On the other end, the definition discards the requirements that migration must involve a change of residence and a move across some distance. In this study, Kok suggests a compromise between these two positions. He describes migration as crossing boundaries of a predefined spatial unit by one or more persons involved in a change of residence (KOK, 1997).

Migration is the mobility of people from an area of a country (or from one country) to another area of the same country (or to another country) to establish a new residence (IOM, 2011; ACP Observatory on Migration, 2011). Although the description of migration varies from different perspectives, there is, however, consensus that it involves the movement of people across a

recognized political boundary to establish permanent or semi-permanent residence elsewhere. The period of residence also varies, but most experts believe that six months of residence in a new location is enough to categorize one as a migrant. While internal migration involves a change of residence within a country, international migration involves a change of residence between two countries (IOM,2016). Internal migration includes an internally displaced person, a trader relocating his or her business to another part of the country. Also, a civil servant transferred to resume duty, or a Nigerian university graduate deployed by the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) to serve the nation in another location or state of the federation (Oyeniyi, 2013).

In contrast, the United Nations describes an international migrant as any person who changes his or her country of usual residence. Hence, international migration includes movement of many kinds, such as people leaving their countries of origin for economic reasons, to join their families abroad, or as refugees. *Migration* is a complex and multidimensional process that involves different motivations, with far-reaching impacts or consequences on the individual and the places of origin and destination (IOM, 2016). International migration is the mobility of people across boundaries to live permanently or temporarily in another country other than theirs (Inter-Parliamentary Union-IPU, International Labour Organisation-ILO, United Nations-UN,2015).

In a 2013 report by Zenbird, the United Nations estimated that about 232 million people lived outside their birth country for more than one year. The figure represents just over three percent of the world's population and would rank such migrants as the world's fifth largest country living within the same territory. The number of international migrants has steadily risen, and about three percent proportion of the world population remained stable over the past 40 years (United Nations,2015). While international migration is within the armpit of the legal framework of the sending, transit, and receiving countries, on the contrary, Irregular Migration is the mobility of people to a new place of residence or transit outside the regulatory norms (legal framework) of the sending, transit, and receiving countries. There is no globally accepted definition of irregular migration as it involves much clandestine movement across the borders. For destination countries, it is the entry, stay, or work in a country without the necessary authorization or documents required under immigration regulations. From the perspective of the country of origin, the irregularity is perceived and seen in scenarios where people cross the

international boundary without valid travel documents or passports or fail to meet the administrative demands for exiting the country.

Governance on the other hand, came into use in the fourteenth century. Firstly, it was in France during the era that implied the seat of government. It ranged from the act or behavior of its power or office, which made its equivalent with the government wise or virtuous in one's general act or conduct. The study has examined governance from the viewpoint of several authors to aid an understanding of the term. Governance is the structures and processes that ensure the rule of law, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equity, stability and inclusiveness, empowerment, and broad-based participation (www.ibe.unesco.org, 2020). It also represents the values, norms, and rules of engagement on which public affairs are being run in a participatory, inclusive, responsive, and transparent behavior. Therefore, governance can be subtle and may not be readily observable. Profoundly, the interaction and participation among citizens and stakeholders in public affairs is governance. (www.ibe.unesco.org, 2020). Some agencies overseas, such as the World Bank, UNDP, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), and others, explicate governance as the exercise of power or authority to manage a country's political, economic, and administrative affairs. The Global Monitoring Report in 2009 views governance as the 'relationships of power' informal and formal procedures of drawing up policies and allotting resources, decision-making processes, and methods for ensuring government accountability. Governance has a set of organs and parameters under which administrative organs operates. It is mainly about how power is shared and distributed, how policies are designed and prioritized, and how stakeholders and officials are accountable to the citizens.

4. Review of Related Studies

Literature review is a central inquiry that brings to fore quantum of studies and intellectual ideas of scholars. The main essence is to set the scene for the work described in the paper, explaining what has been done previously by other researchers.

4.1 Irregular Migration Defined/ Dangers

S/No	Persons considered to be irregular migrants are:	Dangers Associated with irregular migration are:
1.	Those that enter the country through illegal means	Death at the Mediterranean Sea or in the Desert
2.	Those that enter the country and stay there without legal papers	Slavery or imprisonment
3.	Those that enter the country legally but exceeded the legal terms	Deportation
4.	Those who are employed without a work permit	Organ Harvesting
5.		Forced labour
6.		Loss of money
7.		Trafficking
8.		Improper working & living conditions
9.		Disappointment
10.		Health risks
11.		Low salaries

Table 1: Source: Author's own Elaboration, 2022

4.2 Trends of Migration In Nigeria

The migration history of Nigeria is intertwined with Africa's four simultaneous slave trades that occurred between 1400 and 1900. The early slave trades, the trans-Saharan, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean transported an estimated 6 million people from African soil. The most significant slave trade (transatlantic) ushered in colonial administration in Nigeria, which led to the exportation of over 12 million enslaved people from entire Africa to Europe and America in the 15th century" (Arhin-Sam, 2019, Cited Mberu & Pongou, 2010). Nigeria lost many people during the 500 years of the slave trade. During this era, the region of west Africa experienced massive mobility of migrants across the borders, where about 30000 Tuaregs moved from Niger to Nigeria. The period between 1914 and 1922 visibly stands out as one of the early waves of immigration to Nigeria (Abba, 1993 & Mberu, 2010). Furthermore, the Kano-Agadez pathway, a trans-Sahara trade route, is currently active in Nigeria. Trade and migration are still seen as beneficial to socio-economic development by border communities.

From 1960, Nigeria gained independence and circular migration continued, as Ghana in 1969 mass deported over 200, 000 Africans including Nigerians who saw Ghana as their only destination at that time (Aremu & Ajayi, 2014). Through to the early millennium is known as

the postcolonial migration period in Nigeria. This era witnessed the highest labor migration from different parts of the country to the main urban economic centers (rural to urban). Similarly, the number of international and internal migration destinations was more significant than during the precolonial and colonial eras. The postcolonial era is known as the most eventful of the three epochs (i.e., before, during, and after colonialism) in that several significant forces shaped the history of migration, not only in Nigeria but across Africa and the globe. Since its independence, Nigeria's migration is a characterization of emigration and substantial internal migration (mainly rural to urban).

For instance, during the 1970s to early 1980s oil boom period, Nigeria rose to a critical status of the destination country for immigrants from other West African countries. Nigeria's global perception as the giant of Africa due to its national power began to rise. As the British colonial administration brought many people from neighboring African countries to Nigeria to work in the mines, public administration, plantations, and the newly discovered petroleum industry in the Niger Delta region (Udo, 1975, Adepoju, 1996). Also, many Nigerians were sent to Gold Coast (present day Ghana) as labour force for the British colony. But the oil crisis in 1973 translated into an economic boom for Nigeria, and the country attracted many labor migrants from the region. Emigration, however, reduced drastically. In 1980, Nigeria ratified the ECOWAS protocol on the Free Movement of Goods, Capital, and People. Between 1983 and 1985, the Nigerian economy faced a sharp decline in global oil prices. The 1986 implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) led to untold hardships and a fall in oil prices. The difficulties in the country blamed labor migrants leading to the expulsion of many ECOWAS citizens whose 90-day residence permits had expired, in addition to the grace period under the ECOWAS protocol. Thus, many Nigerians began to emigrate because of acute economic austerity in the country at the time. The immigrant population accounted for almost 2% (Shaw, 2007). However, the unit for accurate measurement of immigration was unclear during this era. The primary index of immigration was unskilled workers from neighboring countries, such as Cameroon, Ghana, and Togo. The consensus of the migration literature reveals that, in the 1970s and 1980s, very few Nigerians emigrated because domestic working conditions were favorable, attractive, and internationally competitive (Black et al., 2004). The elation of the oil boom was short-lived. Under the guise of "National Security," many foreigners were expelled by the government in 1983. Reports state that the Nigerian government's excuse was that most foreigners, especially Ghanaians, were engaged in illicit activities like street begging and prostitution (Afolayan, 1988).

Other significant events of the postcolonial era that affected the course of migration in Nigeria include establishing more administrative centers, creating new states, and Abuja as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Most notably, the civil war lasted three years (1967 to 1970). Another critical factor determining migration flows in Nigeria was the uneven development in creating more socio-economic opportunities and infrastructures in urban centers at the expense of the rural areas (Ikuteyijo, 2013).

Uneven development in the country is perhaps one of the most significant impacts of Nigeria's postcolonial migration history, as the effects are still visible. Furthermore, youth migration took on another dimension during this era as many young people sought advanced educational opportunities outside the shores of Nigeria. The mass exodus of Nigerian students explains the twin factors of declining standards of education in the country (Jumare, 1997) as well as increasing trends of "escaping" overseas to avoid the impact of structural adjustment austerity measures and attendant political instability (Military regimes). Most young Nigerians who went abroad to further their education after the 1970s did not return to the country. It sharply contrasted with what was obtainable in the colonial era (Adepoju, 1991). In fact, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, there were more Nigerian academics in the United States than in Nigeria, with many not assuming jobs in relevant fields and working instead as taxi drivers, factory workers, or in other unskilled or low-skilled occupations (Reynolds, 2002). However, the migration of Nigerian youth to other countries in the postcolonial era was not limited to the educated class alone but was rather highly diverse. The facilitation of cheap air tickets, a visa lottery, and the possibility of legal entry without visas was the reason for the mass exodus. As the government began to relax on legislation, many Nigerians saw an opportunity to migrate and grabbed it. The weak link birthed irregular migration, especially in Nigeria's South-Eastern (Benin) part.

Thus, Nigeria began to witness several challenges because of the new trends which had a unique appeal for better living standards. Nigeria is an important origin, transit, and destination country for migrants with variant objectives, expectations, and diverse backgrounds. Conflicts such as the increasing insurgency of Boko Haram militants in the northeastern part of the country and farmer-herder clashes in the north-central are critical. Similarly, Militias in the Niger Delta and post-electoral violence have led to a massive number of internally displacement people (IDPs), which has forced many Nigerians to become refugees in neighboring countries. Additionally, unemployment, urban growth, population rise, poor

governance, deteriorating socio-economic conditions, and deepening poverty are some factors of emigration in Nigeria.

One of the most devastating issues emanating from irregular migration is human trafficking. It is the third most profitable criminal enterprise globally, after drug trafficking and illegal arms transactions (International Labour Organization -ILO, 2003; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime -UNODC, 2011). Human trafficking is someone controlling another person for exploitation (UNODC, 2011). It has also known as the modern form of slavery, which, like older forms, involves trading human beings as commodities and the rise of black markets. The United Nations estimates that 2.5 million people are in forced labor (including sexual exploitation) at any time because of trafficking.

4.3. Triggers of Irregular Migration In Nigeria

Irregular migration tends to grow in the face of economic adversity. Nigeria's economy is terrible, facing multiple shocks such as the insurgency (Boko Haram), a fall in crude oil prices, and the covid-19 pandemic. The causes of irregular migration may differ from one person to another and from one community to another community. Analyses from Sociologists regard migration as the "push-pull" model. These "Push factors" refers to conditions in origin countries that repel; Examples include political instability, insecurity, unemployment, poverty, and demographic pressures. While the "pull factor" refers to those circumstances found abroad that stimulate migrants. The Puerto Vallarta Tenth Summit of the Global Forum on Migration and Development beamed its spotlight on irregular international migration as a critical point for development. It highlighted that irregular migration reduces the potential within migration to contribute to developing countries of origin due to the lack of friendly developmental policies. The failure of countries to create adequate migration governance policies to meet economic demand is the leading cause of irregular migration.

Additionally, there is a sharp contrast between labor demand, immigration rules, complexities of bureaucracy, and delays in transportation and communication technologies that facilitate cross-border labor flows and take little account of the changing social dynamics of migration (GFMD, 2020). This increase in unfavorable conditions is the reason that gave rise to an apocalyptic image of a "wave" or "exodus" of "desperate" Africans (and in this case, Nigerians), fleeing poverty and insecurity in search of the European "El Dorado" (de Haas, cited Pastore et al. 2006). In other words, to find security, work, and new ways of life in foreign

lands. Many Nigerians are victims of this apocalyptic image. The argument corroborates the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) report on irregular migration, documenting the experiences of Nigerians who migrated to Europe using irregular means. It identifies a lack of opportunity to influence their governments as the reason for migration. These causes include the following:

4.3.1. Unemployment

In 2018, the youth unemployment rate in Nigeria was as high as 36.50%. It further increases to 52.7%, which could be one of the visible push factors for irregular international migration among this vulnerable group. The poverty levels have continued to worsen. In 2019, the number of poor Nigerians estimated to be living in extreme poverty was about 91.6 million, nearly half of the country's total population. Also, 2020 came with unprecedented mixed trends immersing Nigeria in the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), which has thrown nations into great turmoil. Since the Nigerian political economy is more than 70% monolithic and highly dependent on crude oil, it was already vulnerable and ill-prepared for any crisis (Albert-Makyur et al.,2020). The rapid and drastic decline in crude oil prices in the global market made the Nigerian economy even more vulnerable. COVID-19 pandemic's sudden emergence and impact on the already weakened Nigerian economy is already devastatingly affecting the nation to extents and dimensions (Albert-Makyur et al.,2020). With the series of lockdown and restrictions on gatherings, several facets of the economy have halted, leaving many Nigerians without jobs, thereby increasing the number of unemployed Nigerians to 33.3 percent in the fourth quarter of 2020. By 2021, Nigeria's unemployment rate will be 32.5 percent. The figure projects a further increase in 2022 (National Bureau of Statistics,2021).

4.3.2. Poverty

Nigeria is the most populous black nation, the sixth largest global producer of petroleum, the eighth biggest exporter, and the 10th with considerable proven reserves. Despite the country's vast oil wealth, Nigeria has about 87 million people living in poverty. Many Nigerians are poor, with 71% of the population living on less than one dollar daily. The National Bureau of Statistics in the 2019 report on Poverty and Inequality in Nigeria highlights that over 40 percent of the country's population, or almost 83 million people, live below the poverty line of 137,430 naira (\$381.75) per year (World Bank,2020). With the inflation rate, prices of food/commodities have skyrocketed as most Nigerians cannot afford two square meals a day.

It has given rise to food insecurity as the government is at a crossroads of initiatives that can alleviate the suffering of its people.

Although economic scholars have used models that look at the relative income and wealth between origin and destination countries, they do not necessarily mean that the standards of the origin country permanently impoverish illegal migrants. Thus, the poorest groups in a developing country may lack the resources to illegally attempt to sail across the Mediterranean Sea or trek the Sahara Desert to connect with family or friends or job opportunities in the destination country. Below is the historical data for Nigeria's Poverty Rate.

4.3.3. Insecurity/ Asylum

Insecurity is the condition of exposure to danger or threat and lack of protection (Oxford Dictionary,2021). Irregular migration is triggered by the desire to escape repression, civil war, genocide, and ethnic/religious conflicts, among others, in the origin country. For instance, the 1994 Rwanda genocide, the Arab springs in 2010, the Syrian civil war in 2011, the Rohingya-Myanmar crisis in 2015, Sudan civil war from 1983-2005, and the insurgency in Nigeria from 2009 to date. According to the Voice of America, Nigeria's rising insecurity is dangerous to the economy (VOA,2021). In Nigeria, the insurgency and herders-farmers clashes have taken a new dimension as most Nigerians can no longer sleep with their eyes close. No region is spared from the North to the South and East to the West. The increasing banditry and kidnapping of school children(youths) who are the future of Nigeria. have left scores of deaths and pain for their loved ones, and the entire country is in a state of anger, fear, and confusion.

Some experts refer to Nigeria as a pressure cooker of internal conflicts and generalized violence. After a 12-day Mission, Agnes Callamard, a United Nations Special Rapporteur, highlighted some growing concerns, such as arms proliferation, the Boko Haram conflict in the north-east; violence and insecurity in the north-west; the Herders-Farmers clashes in the farming communities of the Middle Belt and some parts of the south. Arguing that, if ignored, the ripple effects of unaccountability on such a large scale have the potential to destabilize the sub-region, if not the whole continent (www.news.un.org,2019).

Many refugees have fled their origin countries. While migration is an integral part of life for people all over the world, more than two-thirds of the world's refugees come from just five warring countries with ethnic persecution and the collapse of government institutions: These countries are Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, and Somalia (The New

Humanitarian,2021). Migration and displacement reflect the changing nature of humanitarian crises. It is not just about numbers. Wars are becoming more complex and internationalized and thus harder to end. Countries with fragile governments, economies, and geographies ricochet from one crisis to the next, displacing more people for extended periods and inadequate budgets to keep up with aid (The New Humanitarian,2021). Nigeria's growing insecurity threatens the future of the country. Hence the desire for many Nigerians, particularly vulnerable youths, to migrate to seek protection (Asylum) and a better living standard as political refugees in destination countries. Other causes include illiteracy, lack of social safety nets, poor governance, corruption, and lack of social justice, fairness, and equity.

4.4. Migration Routes and Methods

The sheer complexity and flux of migration routes and mechanisms used by migrants, smugglers, and traffickers make this a challenging area of analysis. In the Mediterranean region, smuggling and trafficking by air routes is a relatively expensive and challenging mechanism (GCIM,2005 cites ICMPD, 2004) and is little used: stepwise land travel and sea routes are the most common mechanisms. The reports from Libya, Turkey, and the US-Mexico borders reveal how stricter policies and visible closed borders impact migration routes, sometimes with grave consequences. What makes Nigerian youths take such extreme risks? According to a British-Somalia poet- Warsan Shire, no one puts their children in a speed boat except the sea is safer than the land, and no one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark. Thus, in some cases, people are turned away at the border and required to apply for asylum where they already are; while returning others home.

In places like the Balkans and Mexico, many people are stranded by closed borders along their planned routes, straining asylum systems and emergency aid. It pushes some migrants to seek even more dangerous routes to evade control. Some fall vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers, while others turn to increasingly exorbitant smugglers (www.newhumanitarian.org, 2021). Death tolls have soared in recent years. The UN recorded almost 8,000 migrant deaths in 2016, the deadliest year; most drowned in the Mediterranean Sea. These are a small fraction of deaths possibly known by the officials. Many more deaths in the world's treacherous borderlands, like the Sahara Desert, the Sonoran Desert on the US-Mexico border, and the Darién Gap, go uncounted. The United Nations estimates the journey across the Sahara could be twice as deadly as the Mediterranean (www.newhumanitarian.org, 2021)

4.5. Migration Governance: An Overview

Migration governance is a system of institutions, legal frameworks, mechanisms, and practices aimed at regulating migration and protecting migrants across the globe. Migration is not one of the top priorities for the Nigerian government compared to issues like economic recovery, fighting corruption, and infrastructure development. However, recent migration-related issues explain the government's increasing political interest in migration. Firstly, there is growing international pressure from development partners, especially from the EU and EU member states. Like other policy thrusts in Nigeria, migration governance is linked to aid, which requires the Nigerian government to react to migration issues (Arhin-Sam, 2019). Secondly, the government sees the high financial remittance from the Nigerian diaspora as essential for development if well harnessed. Thirdly, the high number of IDPs and Nigerian refugees in Chad and Niger is a major political challenge for the government, which has campaigned to defeat Boko Haram (Arhin-Sam, 2019).

It is theoretically comprehensive in Nigeria, but the implementation of migration-related policies is deficient. However, the existing governance framework for implementing the National Migration, Labour Migration, and Diaspora policies are up-and-coming in terms of coordinating all forms of migration in Nigeria in a holistic approach. Nevertheless, lack of funding and conflict over mandate is among the challenges facing migration governance in Nigeria (Arhin-Sam, 2019).

In 2015, the international office for Migration (IOM) developed a framework for Migration Governance to help define and manage sound migration policy nationally. The Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF) was, however, accepted by all members of the IOM in that year. Also, to help assess the national frameworks and operationalize the MiGOF, the Migration Governance Indicators were developed. The MGI is a policy-based tool that offers insights on inputs and policy levers that member states can use to develop their migration governance. The MGI aims to enhance migration governance conversations with clarity on well-governed migration contextualized with the SDG Target 10.7. The MGI is not for ranking member states on the design or execution of migration policies but rather a framework to aid member states in assessing the inclusiveness of their migration policies by identifying and strengthening the areas and gaps. The IOM 2015 report lists six categories of migration governance in the MiGOF and MGI, including migrants' rights, comprehensive government

approach, partnerships, the well-being of migrants, mobility dimensions to the crisis, and an orderly, dignified, and safe migration.

4.6. Implications of Irregular Migration and Governance in Nigeria

One of the dramatic changes, and challenges, in migration configurations in Nigeria, is the increasing irregular migration within and outside the region. Since irregular immigrants tend to avoid registration, any estimates of the total number are essential guesses (National Migration Policy, 2015). The implications for irregular migration in Nigeria present its impact in enormous ways and as seen under the following subheadings.

4.6.1. Brain drains, brain waste, and brain gain

The emigration of skilled workers and brain drain occurs when many highly skilled citizens leave their country of origin searching for employment, better living standards, or setting up enterprises overseas. The impact on developing countries economies is huge and disturbing as the remaining skilled citizens are not sufficient or capable of growing the industries, academia, and other sectors of the economy. Similarly, "Brain waste" occurs when skilled citizens who migrate take part in low-status jobs overseas, generating de-skilling results. Contrarily, "Brain gain" is achieved through the return of citizens who gained skills overseas through temporary migration. The hurdle facing the Nigerian government, and many African governments, is to overturn the brain drain or mitigate its impact on economic, cultural, political, social, and development while minimizing brain waste of citizens and optimizing brain gain overseas.

4.6.2. Human Trafficking

Trafficking in persons has remained the most popular topic of concern on the global stage. Nigeria is not exempted from this mayhem as it is the most hit as the country-of-origin, transit, and destination for both women and children. Human trafficking is one of the most tragic modern-day slavery and human rights issues of our time. It splinters families, distorts global markets, undermines the rule of law, and spurs other transnational criminal activity. It threatens public safety and national security.

Nevertheless, worst of all, the crime robs human beings of their freedom and dignity. That is why we must pursue an end to the scourge of human trafficking (Rex Tillerson, 2017). Nigeria is the fourth most significant source of human trafficking in the UK. The International

Organization for Migration estimates that approximately 80% of girls arriving in Europe from Nigeria through irregular migration are potential victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking (DFID,2017). To address this challenge, in 2000, the United Nations signed into law the Protocols that will Prevent, Suppress and Punish human traffickers worldwide, especially children and women. The protocol was enforced in 2003 to supplement the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (United Nations, 2003).

Trafficking, like migrant smuggling, is proscribed by the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its Trafficking Protocol. Nigeria has ratified the Convention and is a signatory to the two protocols. The identification of victims of trafficking must be improved so that they can be treated as victims of crime rather than as criminals and given protection and assistance, among many other forms of remediation (National Migration Policy, 2015). There is a widespread phenomenon of trafficking children for domestic service, prostitution, and other exploitative labor in Nigeria. Women and children are recruited with promises of well-paid jobs in urban centers within the country or abroad, realizing too late that they have fallen into a debt bond. Violence, coercion, and deception take victims away from their families. Regretfully, Nigeria is a source, transit, and destination country for trafficked women and children. Prostitution and domestic and exploitative labor continue to fuel this modern form of slavery (UNICEF, 2017).

Over time and in various international covenants and national constitutions, human rights are fundamental rights that all humans should be guaranteed. Human rights are, therefore, rights guaranteed to a person for the simple fact that he is a human being. These rights should be enjoyed by everybody regardless of the circumstance of their birth, race, religion, or political affiliations. In furtherance of this, most societies have put in place legal frameworks and structures to protect the human rights of their citizens. At the forefront of protecting, the human rights of individuals worldwide, particularly Nigeria, have been Non-Governmental Organisations instead of the government (Sokomba, 2018).

4.6.3. Organs Trafficking

One of the significant risks in the 21st century facing irregular migrants is exposure to organ trafficking. Organ trafficking, a lucrative global illicit trade, is often a lesser discussed form of human trafficking among anti-human trafficking stakeholders due to its intricate and often stealthy nature. Trafficking sex or labor is commonly a form of human trafficking among public

policy leaders and general awareness campaigns. The 2003 United Nations Protocol is to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, and to guard against this crime. However, organ trafficking is critical with transnational organized crime groups due to high demand and relatively low rates of law enforcement (ACAMS, 2018 & UNODC,2015). The increasing demand worldwide for human organs through the black market, particularly in Asia, Europe, America, and some parts of Africa, is a growing concern. Studies reveal that the demand outweighs the supply. The legitimate route to get human organs takes time and is highly subjected only to availability and much paperwork. Thus, for those who can afford it and are desperately sick, there is a thriving black market for human organs where vulnerable immigrants, specifically Nigerians, fall victims to forceful organ harvesting and trafficking in the black market.

Furthermore, research purports that the profit from illegal human organ sales rivals that of illegal weapons in the international arena. Here, the focus is on human organ trafficking for transplant surgeries. It is a situation where irregular migrants fall victims to smugglers or human organ traffickers during their Trans-Sahara journey. Many migrants never make it alive, as traffickers kill and harvest their organs for the black market.

4.6.4. Xenophobia

The fear and hatred for foreigners or anything strange are known as xenophobia (Merriam-webster,1828). xenophobia is an attitude of rejection and stigmatism of foreigners. It is the excessive fear, dislike, and even hostility toward anything "foreign" or to anything and anybody from outside one's social group, nation, or country (SpringerLink, 2014 cites Hjerm, 1998, 2009, McEvoy, 1995 & Orenstein, 1985). It typically involves the belief that conflicts exist between individuals and outgroups. Xenophobia has a distinction between racism and homophobia, which overlaps with various forms of prejudice. Where racism, homophobia, and some forms of discrimination have specific characteristics, xenophobia has its roots in the perception that the outgroup is foreign to the ingroup community and has come to covert or feast on their merger/ scarce social and economic resources. Xenophobia is also associated with large-scale acts of destruction and violence against groups of people (Fritscher, 2021).

One of the most visible and advanced socio-economic causes of xenophobia are poverty, unemployment, and lack of or inadequate services, which are often politicized instead of delivered by the government as dividends. The Working Group on Migration and Xenophobia

report for the World Conference reveals that severe economic inequalities foster tensions and manifestations of racism and xenophobia. It also involves marginalizing persons from access to primary economic and social conditions. Prime targets are those perceived to be foreigners: migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, displaced persons, and non-nationals. The influx of migrants is also sometimes cited as a cause of xenophobia amongst the host community (IOM, ILO & OHCHR, 2001). For example, some European studies conclude that a link exists between racism or xenophobia and immigration or the presence of minorities: "It would be a serious error to say that immigrants or minority members 'generate' racism. They are the main victims, though not the only ones (IOM, ILO & OHCHR, 2001). Nor can it be said that the number of immigrants is proportional to the number of racist acts. In recent years, from 2009 to 2019, many Nigerians have experienced xenophobic attacks. The increased and escalated xenophobic attacks on Africans, particularly Nigerians in the diaspora, are worrisome. It has become a significant concern for the growing number of migrants to Europe, South Africa, and the international community. It can very quickly and easily cross the line that divides it from racism" (IOM, ILO & OHCHR, 2001).

4.6.5. Human Rights Abuse

Although migration can be a safe and empowering experience for several migrants by generating socio-economic and cultural gains for countries of origin, transit, and destination, the data on unsafe migration and its implications for human rights is worrisome. Several migrants currently face severe human rights abuses in transit, and destination countries, particularly on irregular routes. Due to the lack of human rights-based migration governance systems at the local, national, regional, and global levels, many lose their lives, especially in countries experiencing crises (www.refugeesmigrants.un.org). Many irregular migrants work in isolated and largely unregulated sectors such as agriculture, hospitality, and domestic work, characterized by poor working conditions and jobs that are deserted mainly by national workers in many countries. All these are exacerbating factors for societal exclusion. Also, migrant children in irregular situations are particularly vulnerable to child labor and other forms of exploitation (www.refugeesmigrants.un.org).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 generally provided the foundation of international human rights law. International human rights have obligations to respect and protect individuals and groups against abuses. The obligatory rights require nations to fulfill responsibility through positive action and facilitating the enjoyment of fundamental human

rights (OHCHR). Regarding human rights, India-born Hansa Mehta rephrases the statement from "All men are born free and equal" to "All human beings are born free and equal"(United Nations,2022).

Further, human rights abuses against irregular migrants are often deep-seated attitudes linked to prejudice and xenophobia. What has accelerated negativity towards irregular migrants is the perception of an increasing influx of migrants and the lack of state capacity and trust to deal with such influxes. Despite the option of effective regularization to ensure migrants' inclusion and address their vulnerability in society, this pathway is less taken.

4.6.6. Porous Border/ Security

Effective border management is essential to an excellent national migration system. Developments worldwide, especially the advent of globalization, have resulted in increased movement across international boundaries, thus exerting increased pressure on existing border control mechanisms. The problems of the irregular flow of persons across national borders have raised new challenges that require strengthening the capacity of border employee management to analyze the evolving trends and dynamics of international migration and to distinguish between migrants who have legal versus illegal reasons for entry and stay. The security challenges of migrant smuggling, trafficking, and the increasing profile of international terrorism caused by porous borders have continued to concern the Nigerian Government and the international community. The Free Movement of Persons Protocol by ECOWAS has equally challenged the ability of border personnel to effectively manage the mixed flows of persons across borders. At subregional and regional levels, attempts to coordinate cross-border movements between neighboring countries and harmonize immigration processes through cross-border treaties and programs cannot match the capacity-building of officials to manage these borders effectively. Border management is the need to strengthen technology, infrastructure, and inspection processes relating to travelers. It also requires staff training while still giving the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) and other relevant agencies the ability to meet their humanitarian obligations to refugees and genuine claimants of asylum. The ability of the NIS to detect false travel documents and the general usefulness of these documents would be enhanced through well-structured registration, properly documented issuance, and effective border management systems. The persistent falsification of travel documents requires the installation of improved technologies to detect

forged travel documents and introduce more sophisticated travel documents such as machine-readable passports.

5. Findings

- 1.** Most vulnerable youths are migrating due to poor governance, unemployment, and insecurity.
- 2.** Many youths exhibit a positive view and disposition toward irregular migration, claiming they will also use any means to migrate.
- 3.** They believe that migrants do far better and have access to quality living within a short time than those staying back in Nigeria.
- 4.** Nigerians are not only migrating irregularly in droves to Europe or America. Figures and responses indicate significant crowds migrating to Asia, the Middle East, and other African countries.
- 5.** Many victims who have either been deported or returned to Nigeria due to harsh and unpleasant experiences from their initial irregular migration attempts remain highly desirous and determined to embark on the irregular migration again, notwithstanding the attendant risks involved.
- 6.** Irregular migration is influenced and exacerbated by not just ineffective governance but by other factors.
- 7.** The study reveals the significant impact of ignorance and lack of awareness, in that the respondents' perception of the causes of their problems in Nigeria and assessment of governance effectiveness is either incorrect or based on a fallacy.
- 8.** Youths irregular migration and their expectations of immigration destinations and the means of getting there are mostly ill-advised fantasies.
- 9.** Irregular migration has spawned a thriving and growing industry of its own, with numerous players (Non- State Actors) and stakeholders.

6. Conclusion

The fight against irregular migration is not a tea party, so it must not be considered inconsequential. To sustain the solutions to irregular migration requires a patriotic response from all and sundry to reduce the number of victims and ensure the common interest to uphold human dignity and societal sanity. This malady has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigeria and is threatening the productivity potential of Nigeria's human capital base. Therefore, even though other nations face this challenge, all hands must be on deck to arrest this undesirous trend in Nigeria. The fundamental basis for a crisis-free society is a good quality of life for every citizen and easy access to basic amenities, these being products of good governance. This paper concludes that more informative campaigns/awareness drives at the local and national levels would effectively de-escalate the trend of perilous journeys to Europe, America, Asia, and others. An anti-irregular migration culture can be further promoted by enlisting or leveraging rescued victims and youth influencers for a sustained crusade. However, the implementation must be conscious of location, culture, religion, and levels of exposure/enlightenment while tailoring content and dissemination strategies. The solutions must be specific and intentional.

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