

Japa Syndrome: Environmental and Socio-Economic Factors as Drivers of Mass Emigration of Nigerian Youths

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Abstract

The issue of mass emigration is a complex one that is currently affecting young people worldwide. To address this issue, this study was conducted to investigate the factors that influence the mass emigration of youths in Osun State. The study utilized a descriptive survey research method and targeted the youth population in Osun State. A total of 200 respondents were randomly selected from four higher institutions in Osun State. Factors that Influence Mass Emigration (FIME) questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. The findings of the study revealed that conflicts over natural resources and insecurity, climate change, and socio-economic factors were responsible for mass emigration among youths in Osun state. A significant difference ($p=0.001$) was observed between male and female youths' perceptions of the factors that influence mass emigration. The study concluded that environmental and socio-economic factors were responsible for the mass emigration of youths in Osun State. To address these issues, youths should be trained to acquire the necessary 21st-century employability skills. The government should invest in sustainable development programs and address the issues of conflict over natural resources and insecurity to prevent further displacement and ensure that everyone can thrive in their own communities.

Keywords: mass emigration, youth, environment, socio-economic, 'Japa', poverty.

1. Introduction

Large-scale migration is a complex issue that is currently affecting young people worldwide. Throughout history, humans have always moved from one place to another, seeking better opportunities and a better life. However, in today's world, environmental issues, poverty, and emigration have become critical development issues that are closely intertwined. Although many people may not realize it, environmental change is a significant factor that drives individuals to emigrate in search of a better life and means of survival (Hunter et al., 2015). The environmental issues that the world is currently facing that influence emigration include things like climate change and insecurity-kidnapping and the constant threat of violence, herdsman-farmers conflicts- which are all making it more difficult for people to live and work in Nigeria (Ukamaka et al., 2017). It is also noteworthy that Nigerians represent one of the most mobile populations in Africa and are found virtually on every continent (Aliyu, 2018). In light of the current situation, this study delved into the factors that contribute to the mass emigration of young individuals from Osun State. Therefore, this study was set to:

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1. identify various factors responsible for the mass emigration of youths.
2. examine perceptions of both male and female youths on the factors that influence the mass emigration of youths.
3. determine appropriate steps or measures needed to combat migration syndrome among youths.

The hypotheses for the study:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between male and female youths' perception of factors influencing mass emigration among youths in Osun state.

H₀₂: Environmental and socio-economic factors do not have significant effects on the mass emigration of youths in Osun state.

2. Literature Review

Climate change has had a significant impact on the livelihoods of people living in developing countries (Connolly-Boutin & Smit, 2015). Increased temperatures, droughts, and floods have made it difficult for people to grow crops, and as a result, many are left with no choice but to leave their homes and migrate to developed countries or a more sustainable environment. It has become a serious threat to many people's lives, forcing them to leave their homes in search of safer and more sustainable environments (Connolly-Boutin & Smit, 2015). The effects of global warming are increasingly noticeable, with rising sea levels, extreme weather conditions, and droughts occurring more frequently. As a result, many people are moving to countries with more favorable climates, where they can find adequate food, water, and shelter. This trend is likely to continue as the impact of climate change becomes more severe, and we need to take action to mitigate its effects and protect our planet.

The insecurity in Nigeria is another environmental factor that has led to mass emigration. Many people are leaving the country due to the constant threat of violence, kidnapping, and other forms of insecurity. This has led to a brain drain, as many of the country's brightest and most talented individuals have left in search of a safer and more stable environment (Kanu et al., 2019; Yamin, 2016).

Another important factor that influences Nigerian youth to emigrate is the socio-economic factors including things like unemployment, poverty, and lack of access to education and healthcare. These factors are driving young Nigerians to seek better opportunities abroad (Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016). While there are many challenges facing Nigerian youth who emigrate to the UK, there are also many opportunities for them to build better lives for themselves and their families. With the right support and resources, these young people can thrive and make important contributions to their new communities. The economic factors can be divided into two groups: push factors and pull factors (Su et al., 2018). Push factors refer to the difficult conditions in source countries that force youths to emigrate and seek employment in other countries. Pull factors, on the other hand, are the attractive socio-economic conditions in receiving countries that draw professionals (Kanayo, et al., 2019). It is worth noting that most of these push factors are related to the economic sphere. Low salaries, in particular, have been identified as the main drivers of youth migration, and these are often closely linked to the conditions of service (Castelli, 2018). Young people want to progress in their careers, and any obstacles to their advancement can be extremely frustrating.

The rise in irregular emigration has greatly affected the development of Nigeria. It is alarming to know that the majority of irregular emigration in Nigeria occurs among youth aged 18-35, which is the most productive age of human life (Nganwuchu & Afunugo, 2023). This is largely driven by economic incentives, including a high youth unemployment rate of 61.1% and the rising cost of living. It is sad to see that despite the abundance of natural resources in Nigeria, unemployment and poverty are the major factors for a high level of emigration in the country. For instance, it is concerning to learn that 70.8% of the Nigerian population lived on less than \$1 per day. This has led to a massive number of people emigrating from Sub-Saharan African countries, with Nigeria being one of the top ten countries that produced such massive numbers.

3. Methodology

3.1 Methods

The study investigated the factors that influence the mass emigration of youths in Osun State. A descriptive research design was used for the study.

3.2. Background Information

The study was conducted in Osun State, Nigeria. Osun State is in the southwestern region of Nigeria. It is bordered by Kwara State to the north, Ekiti State to the east, Ogun State to the south, and Oyo State to the west. The state covers an area of 9,251 square kilometers and has a population of over 4 million people. The state is known for its lush green vegetation, rolling hills, and numerous rivers and streams.

3.3. Participants and Procedure

The targeted population of the study comprised the Osun State youths. A total of two hundred youths were selected using a stratified random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was 'The Factors Influencing Mass Emigration (FIME)' Questionnaire. The survey questions had two sections in the instrument. Section A was on demographic characteristics of the respondents while Section B consisted of 20 items on factors influencing mass emigration expressed by the youths in Osun State. Test-retest over a period of two weeks was used to establish the internal consistency of the instrument.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to establish the reliability coefficient of the instrument. Descriptive statistics, t-test was used to analyze if there is a significant difference in the perception of male and female youths of the factors influencing mass emigration of youth in Osun State while Chi-square was used to analyze if environmental and socio-economic factors significantly influence mass emigration of youths.

3.4 Results and Analysis

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1 below. 57% of the respondents were below 20 years of age while 43% of the respondents were between 20 -35 years of age. Both males and females were represented in the study. A total of 90 (45%) of the respondents were male while 110 (55%) of the respondents were female (Table 1). Respondents were from both rural and urban areas of the state, 36.5% of the respondents were from urban areas while 63.5 % of the respondents were from rural areas of the state (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
Below 20 years	114	57.0
20 - 35 years	86	43.0
Gender		
Male	90	45.0
Female	110	55.0
Location		
Urban	73	36.5
Rural	127	63.5

Data represented in Tables 2 and 3 reveal the results of the environmental and socio-economic factors influencing mass emigration as expressed by the youths in Osun state. 89% of the respondents agreed that environmental factors such as violence and insurgents were the major factors responsible for the mass emigration of youth in Osun State. Also, 67% of the respondents agreed that insecurity was responsible for the mass emigration of youths. 78.5% (157) of the respondents agreed that lack of a conducive environment for small-scale businesses was a factor responsible for mass emigration among youths. 81% (162) supported poor environmental conditions for workers as a major environmental condition responsible for the mass emigration of youths. Table 3 shows that 65.5% (131) of the youths responded that the bad economic situation in the country was responsible for mass emigration among youths in Osun state. 90.5% (181) opined the unemployment situation in the country, while 70.5% (141) of them believed that high level of poverty was responsible. It can equally be seen from Table 3 that 86% (172) of the youths responded that high numbers of graduates competing for the limited jobs available were responsible for youth mass emigration in Osun state. Out of the total 200 respondents, 149 (74.5%) chose poor health facilities as a factor responsible for the mass emigration of youth. Examining the mean values, environmental factors (violence and insurgents in some parts of the state) in some parts of the country with the mean value of 3.35 ± 0.08 was the leading factor responsible for the mass emigration of youths in Osun State. This factor was closely followed by the economic factor (seeking relief from the poor economic situation of the country) with a mean value of $\bar{x} = 3.23$, then high numbers of graduates competing for the limited jobs available ($\bar{x} = 3.22$) as well as the unemployment situation in the country ($\bar{x} = 3.18$). Other factors influencing youth mass exodus included poor infrastructural facilities ($\bar{x} = 3.12$), high networking for human trafficking ($\bar{x} = 3.10$), discouragement due to bad governance ($\bar{x} = 3.09$) and poor conditions for workers in the country ($\bar{x} = 3.05$) (Table 2 and 3).

Table 2. Environmental factors influencing mass emigration as expressed by the youths

S/N	ITEMS	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%	Mean/SD
1	Major environmental factors influencing mass emigration among youths include:									
1	Violence over natural resources and insurgents in a major part of the country	98	49	81	0.5	14	7	7	3.5	3.35±0.08
2	Insecurity in the country	50	25	84	42	57	8.5	9	4.5	2.88±0.84
3	Lack of a conducive environment for small-scale business	57	28.5	100	50	23	1.5	20	10	2.97±0.90
4	Poor environmental conditions for workers	57	28.5	105	52.5	28	14	10	5	3.05±0.79
5	Poor infrastructural facilities	68	34	97	49.5	26	13	9	4.5	3.12±0.80

Table 3. Socio-economic factors influencing mass emigration

S/N	ITEMS	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%	Mean/SD
1	The bad economic situation in the country	90	45	41	20.5	13	6.5	56	28	2.83±1.25
2	Unemployment situation in the country	59	29	122	61	15	7.5	4	2	3.18±0.65
3	High networking for human trafficking	58	29	114	57	18	9	10	5	3.10±0.76
4	Poor power supply in the country	62	31	79	39.5	43	21.5	16	8	2.94±0.92

5	Poor educational system	58	29	97	48.5	19	9.5	26	13	2.94±0.95
6	Poor standard of living for people	52	26	96	48	29	14.5	23	11.5	2.89±0.93
7	Government insensitive to youth needs	80	40	60	60	27	13.5	33	16.5	2.94±1.09
8	High level of poverty	64	32	77	38.5	38	19	21	10.5	2.92±0.96
9	Discouragement due to bad governance	64	32	100	50	25	12.5	11	5.5	3.09±0.81
10	Seeking relief from poor economic situation	84	42	87	43.5	20	10	9	4.5	3.23±0.81
11	High numbers of graduates competing for the limited job available	77	38.5	95	47.5	22	11	6	3	3.22±0.76
12	Inadequate of social amenities in the country	52	26	98	49	29	14.5	21	10.5	2.91±0.91
13	Poor health facilities	60	30	89	44.5	26	13	25	12.5	2.92±0.96
14	Losing hopes in the leaders of the country	62	31	89	44.5	28	14	21	10.5	2.96±0.93
15	Seeking for more skills and knowledge	61	30.5	92	46	30	15	17	8.5	2.99±0.90

3.5. Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between male and female youths' perception of factors influencing mass emigration among youths in Osun state.

Table 4 reveals the result of the difference between male and female youths' perception on factors influencing mass emigration among youths in Osun state. The result shows that there is a significant difference between male and female youths' perception on factors influencing mass emigration among youths in Osun state ($t=3.453$, $df=198$, $p<0.05$). This implied that the perception of male youths on factors influencing mass emigration among youths in Osun state is significantly different from their female counterparts. This means that the factors that male youths considered as the reason for mass emigration from Nigeria is not the same as the ones the female youths considered as their reasons. Therefore, the null hypothesis 1 is rejected.

Table 4. Summary of t-test Analysis on the difference between male and female youths' perception on factors influencing mass emigration among youths in Osun State

Variable	N	\bar{x}	SD	DF	t	Sig.	Remark
Male Youths	90	57.578	10.742	198	3.453*	0.001	Significant
Female Youths	110	62.664	10.043				

*Denote significance at $P<0.05$

Hypothesis 2: Environmental and socio-economic factors do not have significant effects on mass emigration among youths in Osun state.

Table 5 presents the result of the significant influence of socio-economic factors on mass emigration among youths in Osun state. The result shows that there is a significant influence of socio-economic factors on mass emigration among youths in Osun state ($\chi^2=83.114$, $df=57$, $p<0.05$). This implied that the socio-economic factors were significantly related to mass emigration among youths in Osun state. This means that if the socio-economic variables such as occupation, education, income, security, standard

of living, etc are looking good, there will be less emigration of youths from the country and vice versa. Hence, the null hypothesis 2 is rejected.

Table 5. Summary of chi-square analysis on the influence of socio-economic factors on mass emigration among youths in Osun State

N	\bar{x}	S.D.	D.F.	χ^2 Cal.	Sig.	Remark
200	60.375	12.019	57	83.114*	0.004	Significant

*Denote significance at $P < 0.05$

3.6. Discussion

According to the findings of this study, environmental factors such as violence and insurgents in major parts of the country coupled with bad economic situations and high unemployment rates were found to be the major factors influencing youth mass emigration in Osun State. This result agreed with the findings of Nganwuchu and Afunugo (2023) and Yamauchi and Tanabe (2017). Other factors contributing to mass emigration include poor health facilities, the lack of a conducive environment for small-scale businesses, poor environmental conditions for workers, poor infrastructural facilities, high networking for human trafficking, discouragement due to bad governance, and a high crime rate. This result agreed with the findings of Connolly-Boutin and Smit (2015) who stated that poor environmental conditions could be responsible for the mass emigration of people. The study also found that there was a significant difference between male and female youths' perceptions of factors influencing mass emigration among youths in Osun state.

The factors that male youths considered as the reason for mass emigration from Nigeria were not the same as the ones the female youths considered. This implied that the perception of male youths on factors influencing mass emigration among youths in Osun state is significantly different from their female counterparts. This means that the factors that male youths considered as the reason for mass emigration from Nigeria are not the same as the ones the female youths considered as their reasons. This result agrees with the findings of Onyeneke et al (2019) who reported that male and female migrants have different reasons for migrating and Buckley and Mantilla (2013) who stated that both men and women are agents of change, although the effect of female migrants is significantly higher.

Environmental and socio-economic factors were found to have a significant influence on mass emigration among youths in Osun State. This implied that the socio-economic factors were significantly related to mass emigration among youths in Osun state. This means that if the environmental and socioeconomic variables such as insecurity, poor environmental conditions, violence, insurgents, occupation, education, income, and standard of living are looking good, there will be less emigration of youths from the country. This result agreed with the findings of Nwosu et al (2022) who stated that youths were pushed to emigrate when they were poverty-stricken, particularly when their income level fell below the average obtained in their immediate community. Mabawonku (2019) stated that the need for education and the acquisition of skills in various vocations made some people migrate.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The mass emigration of youths in Osun State, Nigeria is influenced by various environmental and socio-economic factors such as violence, insurgency, insecurity, poor environmental conditions, seeking greener pastures, high unemployment rate, infrastructural deficit, human trafficking, bad governance, and poor condition for workers. It is interesting to note that male and female youths have different perceptions of the factors that influence mass emigration among youths in Osun state, Nigeria. Furthermore, Environmental and socio-economic factors have a significant influence on the mass emigration of youths in Osun state. These factors must be addressed in order to provide a better future for the youths of Osun State, Nigeria.

In order to address the mass emigration of youths in Osun State, Nigeria, it is important to focus on various environmental and socio-economic factors that contribute to this issue. These factors include violence, insurgency, insecurity, poor environmental conditions, seeking greener pastures, high unemployment rate, infrastructural deficit, human trafficking, bad governance, and poor conditions for workers. To combat these issues, it is important for:

1. youths to acquire the necessary 21st century employability skills that will allow them to secure well-paying jobs or start their own businesses in tech, agriculture, and agro-allied industries;
2. Curriculum developers should modify the school curriculum to focus on the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of Bloom's Taxonomy to help students acquire the skills they need to become self-reliant job creators;
3. Non-governmental organizations should provide programs, seminars, and training on employability and employment for youths, and wealthy individuals should be encouraged to build factories and industries to reduce youth unemployment rates;
4. Ministries of Education and Curriculum Developers should focus on integrating formal education with Vocational and Entrepreneurial Education into the school curriculum, while the National Planning Commission should ensure that adequate and credible data from all sectors of the economy are collected and analyzed to enhance better overall management of the Nigerian economy;
5. Governments should create job opportunities for youths and provide an enabling environment for small and medium-scale enterprises to thrive, as well as manage the economy properly and put up policies that can help eliminate poverty;
6. Finally, Nigerian armed forces, police, and other security outfits should ensure that adequate security of the lives and properties of all Nigerians is guaranteed, with the necessary personnel and equipment provided by the government.

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