



Dangers of Irregular Migration and Perception of Various Means of International Migration

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Abstract

The recent upsurge in the number of young Nigerians trying to 'flee' the country in search of greener pastures, especially through irregular migration has been a source of grave concern for scholars as well as policymakers and has received a plethora of scholarly interventions. A good number of these interventions focused on Southeast Nigeria because of the propensity of the people of that zone to travelling. Specifically, there are scholars who have looked at the contributions of the galloping inflation, high rate of unemployment, insecurity and the economic hardship in the country. Others include, the high social status accorded individuals who have been outside the country, and other personal and societal benefits that accrue from migration including remittance and knowledge transfer. However, very few studies have investigated why many young Nigerians still embark on irregular migration in spite of the high risks involved. Moreover, limited works exist on the nexus between awareness of these risks and the readiness of migrants to still embark on the journey through the irregular routes. This work explores how the awareness of the dangers of irregular migration impacts on the willingness to migrate among Anambra state indigenes. Two research questions were formulated, while the survey research method was adopted for the study. A questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Cross-sectional descriptive statistics, which uses frequencies and bar charts were used to answer the research questions. Among other things, the study discovered firstly, that there was low level of awareness among Anambra state residents on the dangers of irregular migration. Secondly, a significant percentage of the respondents condemned migration through sea, desert and land routes, which is encouraging giving the importance of social interaction and the roles of others in influencing human behavior. Nevertheless, it was discovered that the percentage (12.88%) of respondents that reported indifference "maybe" showed that urgent awareness is needed to correct the impression. Based on these findings, the study recommended intensive orientation on the dangers of irregular migration not just in Anambra state but to Nigerian youths in general because with adequate orientation, the ambivalent respondents may understand the consequences irregular migration and desist from embarking on the perilous journeys.

Keywords: Irregular migration; international migration, brain drain; brain gain; knowledge transfer.

Introduction

Human beings have inherent tendency to move from one place to another. Following this common tendency, United Nations has since declared under the convention that establishes human right that individuals have the right to move (migrate) when they deem it necessary (United Nations Human Right Commission, UNHC, 1948). Across different countries, movement of people within the nation is unrestricted and legally guaranteed. However, cross border/international migration requires some documents and documentation that can guarantee entry (Nwafor & Okoye, 2023). Given the rigorous processes of obtaining the necessary documents, some intending migrants may not be patient enough to undergo the process, hence may migrate irregularly. Migration index showed that emigration is higher from low-income countries to high income countries, which may be a result of poverty, insecurity, diseases, poor longevity and poor infrastructures among others in low-income countries (Lee, 1966). Also, memorandum of understanding that can enable easy access into countries is often rare between low-income countries and high-income countries. These may be contributing factors to the increasing rate of irregular migration amongst residents of low-income countries like Nigeria.

Migration has been reported to drive development (personal and nationally). At personal level; factors like brain gain, marriage, improved quality of life and longevity, sense of security, self-satisfaction, and economic stability among others are benefits of migration (Ebekue & Utoh-Ezeajugh, 2023). At the national level, inward remittances, technology transfer, intercultural interaction, foreign direct investment among others are benefits of migration. The benefits have multi-lateral impacts on economic, social, educational, welfare, health, infrastructural, and human capital development index. It is noteworthy that migration routes directly influence these benefits of migration.

As noted earlier, there are enormous benefits that accrue from international or cross border migration. When one travels regularly to another country, there is tendency to interact with others and improve oneself. While some may enrol in schooling, skill

acquisition training, or trade others may engage in working, which may directly impact the immigrant and the country of origin. Some transfer all or part of the knowledge acquired to the home country to improve the developmental growth of the nation (Flahaux & Haas, 2016). One of the common practices among Nigerians is the expectation of emigrants to facilitate migration of another relatives or friends to their country of residence. Through this means, their contribution and responsibilities are distributed accordingly (Osei-Gyebi, et al., 2023). Social awareness level of emigrants seems to increase when they return to their country of origin. This may allude to the assertion “travelling is part of education”.

From economic development perspectives, international migration leads to inward remittances and foreign direct investment (Osei-Gyebi, et al., 2023). For instance, Nigeria is one of the highest inward remittances receiving country in Africa. It is the consequences of large numbers of Nigerians in the Diaspora. Nigeria is the third host economy for foreign direct investment in Africa, behind Egypt and Ethiopia. Given the increasing “push” factors in Nigeria, the mass exodus is expected to yield gigantic economic benefits to the nation. On one hand, emigrants are likely to convince foreigners to channel their investment to Nigeria because of her population and market size. Ultimately, inward remittances have proven to activate and strengthen macro and micro levels of the economy (Akhimien & Osifo, 2019). Remittances are used for multiple factors, such as family upkeep, school sponsorship, establishment of business enterprises, building of houses, and many others (Akhimien & Osifo, 2019; Osei-Gyebi, et al., 2023). A family receiving remittances may not be at par with others that are not receiving in term of quality of life, socio-economic wellbeing and life satisfaction.

The disparity in standard of living among remittance receiving and non-receiving families may be one of the factors responsible for the upsurge in the quest to migrate via any route among Nigerians (Anyanwu, & Erhijakpor, 2010). There are two different routes of migration, namely, regular and irregular. Irregular migration entails the movement of people across border without the necessary documents such as: international passport, visa, health insurance, among others. On the other hand, regular migration is the adherence to travel requirements, which include obtaining necessary documents and proper

documentation at the entry border point. Regular migration is the safest for migrants and the host countries because it makes available migrants' information for safety, economic and national planning (Adeniyi, Ajide, & Raheem, 2019). The documentation processes at the entry point is important for migrants because it enables the government agencies of the host nations to be held responsible in the course of any eventuality. But to some migrants, the documentation at border post is rather unnecessary because it may be used to checkmate their activities within the country.

Regrettably, there is a large chunk of migrants that are not documented. Such migrants often follow through land borders and crossing of high sea to illegally enter another country. One of the factors that may account for such illegal entry is the lack of necessary documents for migrations hence the migrants will be evading occasions that will require presentation of such documents (Ebekue, & Utoh-Ezeajugh, 2023). For example, Africans have been reported to trek through the Sahara Desert and being ferried across the sea in their quests to get to Europe. Also, United State of America some time ago accused Mexicans of irregular entry to the states. The cases of irregular migration are widespread and constitute dangers to the migrants, their families, country of residence, and country of origin among others. The engagement in irregular migration route may be related to desperation and lack of awareness of dangers involved in the journey. Also, people who engage in irregular migration seem not to deeply process the consequences of the risk.

The tendency of some people, especially the young ones to toe irregular migration routes may be desperation to be respected, as there seems to be some level of respect accorded the youths who have travelled to other countries. Thus, it is reasonable to postulate that people will aspire to travel in order to be accorded respect like other travelers. This is in tandem with social learning theory of Bandura (1999). For instance, some young Nigerians that returned from other countries sometimes pierce their ears, plait their hairs and drive cars around town to display their wealth. The observation of this behavior may likely induce desperation and quest to be like the person. Some youths who may not have the requisite knowledge of migration may set out to travel through any route available. The desperate quest to migrate by the youths may be aggravated due to the lack of adequate

migration orientation in the country. There is no designated office where people can obtain information about migration.

Also, push factors in Nigeria may be contributors to irregular migration of citizens. There seems to be many troubles in the country that may be pushing people to migrate through irregular routes, namely, quest to follow trend, lack of knowledge of the dangers of irregular migration, poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and many others (Lee, 1966). The enumerated factors may individually or collectively influence people to opt to migrate via irregular routes irrespective of awareness on ground. The Bulletin of the Central Bank of Nigeria (2023) reported an increasing rate of poverty at the rate 15 % in the first quarter of 2023 and 42 % in the second quarter of 2023. On the other hand, unemployment rate in Nigeria has continued to increase. Regrettably, intending migrants planning to engage in irregular routes may not consider the enormous dangers involved.

The resultant effects of irregular migration are multifaceted. Migrants in irregular routes have been reported to be the prime and easy target for human trafficking, organ harvesting, slavery, ritual killing, death, impeding economic development of the host country among others (IOM, 2006). The number of irregular migrants that died from 2015-2024 is quite huge considering the people involved are youths that still have much to contribute to the society. An investigative journalist (SaharaReporters.com, 2017) reported that irregular migrants were sold to slavery in Libya at the price of two thousand dollar (\$ 2000). Worrisomely, family members and friends of such migrants sold into slavery would still be hoping for their return. This, may create emotional turmoil and mental health crises after waiting without their return.

Despite the dangers of irregular migration people seems not to be interested in the processes but in the end-result. Given the level of push factors, some may interpret migration through irregular route as a risky action that is rational and targeted at improving their standard of living. Psychologically, the meaning people attach to information, action or behavior will determine the repetitive tendency of such behavior. Specifically, the understanding of various routes of international migration is likely to determine the route an intending migrant will utilize. Thus any effort or policy aimed at

stopping irregular migration must extensively study the perception of people about the various routes of international migration and expose the dangers of irregular migration to them.

To understand the related factors of irregular migration, two objectives were explored, namely:

- (1) To determine the awareness of intending migrants in Anambra State of the dangers of irregular migration.
- (2) To assess the residents' perception about the various means of international migration

Theoretical Review

Two theories were adopted for this study, namely: Push and Pull theory of migration (Lee, 1966) and Possible Selves Theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The push theory postulated that people tend to leave a place that is perceived to lack necessities of life such as security, opportunities, job, and stable economy, among others. The lack of those things that would make an individual to leave for other places is referred to as push factors. The things that are obtainable in another clime/nation that would make an individual to abandon their home country are referred to as pull factors (Lee, 1966). Thus, the primary need for migration is pull factor. For instance, the current economic situation, terrible insecurity, high unemployment rate, collapsing health facilities amongst others in Nigeria may serve as enough push factors for mass exodus of Nigerian youths to other countries of the world. Unfortunately, the exodus is being engaged through regular and irregular route. The migration through irregular route is likely to exacerbate the precarious situations of the intending migrants.

The push and pull theory are very apt for this study because it captured all the factors that would propel an individual to migrate and reason for choosing a particular destination. However, the theory could not offer explanation why people engage in irregular migration.

Though, the theme of the theory centers on reasons for migration not routes of migration, hence may serve as the observed weakness of the theory.

On the other hand, Possible Selves theory asserts that every human being has a plan of what they want to become in the future. The brain houses what people want to become (expected self) and what they are afraid of becoming in the future (feared self), which may be classified as hope and fear of the future (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Both hope and fear of future serve as motivation for behavioural engagement including migration. To realize expected self, people may do whatever they think would make them to realize the dream or projected self. It is also noteworthy that an individual's attempt to escape poverty, insecurity, and secure job opportunities amongst others, may be the driving forces that will make the individual to engage in irregular migration. It is plausible to assert that an individual who want to escape an unwanted self would embark on irregular migration despite the awareness of the dangers involved. From this theoretical standpoint, engagement in irregular migration may not be lack of awareness but expected self and feared self.

Methodology

Method of Data Collection

The survey method of data collection was used for this study. Participants for the survey consisted of one thousand five hundred and seventy-six (N=1576: male = 874 (55.5%), female = 702 (44.5%). These participants completed the Anambra State awareness and perception of migration dynamics (Tetfund survey project in October 2022). The participants were selected using multi-stage sampling techniques from five local government areas in each of the seven local governments that made up the three senatorial districts of Anambra state. At least 500 participants were expected to be selected from each senatorial district (see Table 1). The ages of the participants range from 14 to 78 years and the mean age of the participants was $m = 35.80$, $SD = 14.21$. The marital status of these participants was: single = 682, married =798, divorced =37, widowed =43, undisclosed =16. The educational status of the participants was as follows: below primary school =7(4%),

Primary =58 (3.7%), JSS/JSCE = 119(7.6), vocational = 44(2.8%), SSCE/GCE =625(39.7), National certificate/diploma 137(8.71), first degree/ higher diploma = 476(30.2%), masters = 93 (5.9%), PhD = 14 (9%) and others =3(2%). Table 1 contains the distribution of the participants by local government area and total for each senatorial district.

Table 1 The LGAs in the three senatorial zones and the number of interviews conducted during the study.

LGA	n	Total N
Aguata	103	
Nnewi North	102	
Ekwusigo	202	
Orumba North	111	
Anambra South senatorial district		518
Awka north	208	
Awka south	132	
Idemili North	44	
Anaocha	154	
Anambra central senatorial district		538
Anambra east	108	
Onitsha south	130	
Onitsha north	112	
Oyi	104	
Ogbaru	66	
Anambra North senatorial district		520

The Household questionnaire of NBS (2020) was adopted for this study. The questionnaire utilizes Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI). It contains many sections including questions about intention to travel, routes of migration (regular or irregular), awareness

and perception of dangers of irregular migration, destination choices of intending migrants, and the primary motives of Migration. It also contains questions about the demographic characteristics (e.g., age, marital status, education qualification, gender & occupation) of the participants and utilizes both open ended semi-structured responses and structured responses to ask questions about intention to travel and intending country.

This report is the survey on awareness and perception of Anambra state residents on regular and irregular migration dynamics approved by Tetfund and the Nnamdi Azikiwe University Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HaSSREC). Therefore, the participant signed informed consent form which assured them of confidentiality of their identity and data being only used for research purposes. The participants were selected utilizing a four step multi-stage sampling technique. In the first step we identified the population of the three senatorial zones of Anambra state and the seven local government areas (LGAs) in each of them. According to the 2022 projected population the four LGAs selected from Anambra south was 1,220,500; Anambra central = 1,449,400 and Anambra north = 1,149,600. In the second step, 4 to 5 LGAs were purposively selected based on safety and security watch. In the stage three, the safest town preferably the LGA headquarters were selected as the primary study area. In the Step four we used an on-line sample size calculator ([QualtricsSM](#), 2020) which utilizes 95% confidence level and 5% marginal error probability to determine the minimum sample size that can be use to collect data for the study. The results showed that a minimum sample size of 385 for each senatorial zone was adequate for the survey. We recruited and trained 15 field assistants to collect the data and 5 field assistants were assigned to each senatorial zone. The administration of the one-to-one interview lasted an average of 40 minutes per participants. The questionnaire form was enabled by Google form. An average of 100 interviews was conducted by each of the 15 field assistants and a total of 1576 valid completed responses were recorded (see Table 1).

Method of Data Analysis

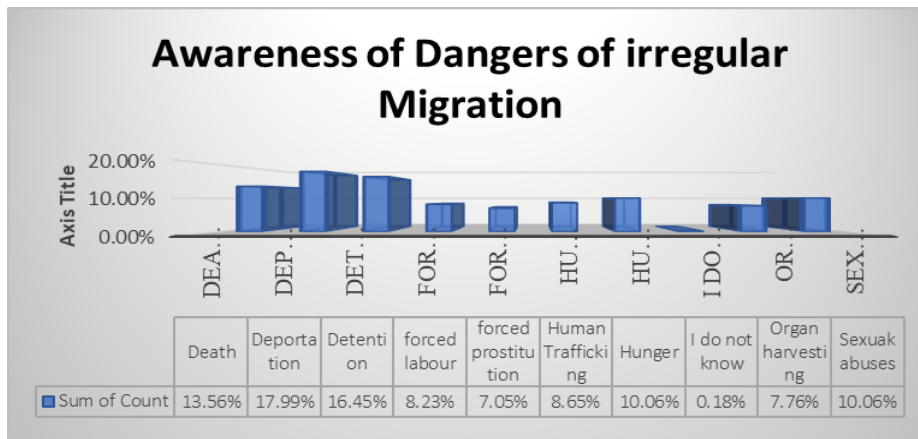
The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive statistic which allowed it to use frequencies and bar chart to analyze the extent to which the participants reported

intention to migrate, awareness of dangers of irregular migration, countries of destination and motives of migration. It also facilitated the use of cross-tabulation to analyze the relation between some demographic factors (e.g., age, marital status, occupation and gender) and intention to migrate. All the data analyses were computed in SPSS version 23.

Results

Research objective one: To ascertain if the intending migrants in Anambra State are aware of the dangers of irregular migration.

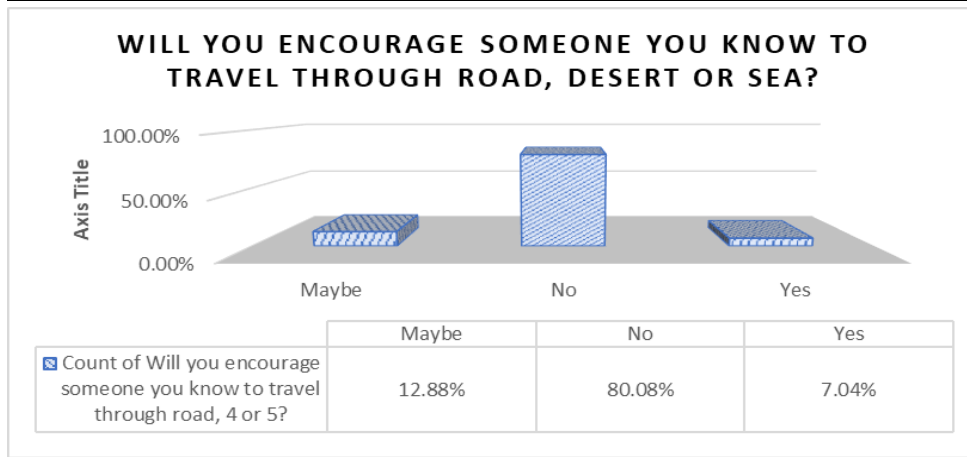
Figure 1: Awareness of dangers of irregular migration



The result for research question one showed that among the respondents, there was minimal knowledge about the various dangers of irregular migration defined to them as traveling without visa or permission to enter the countries of transit or destination. 17.99% were aware of possible deportation, 16.45% were aware of possible detention, 13.56% were aware of death, 10.06% were aware of hunger, another 10.06% were aware of sexual abuses, 8.65% were aware of human trafficking, 8.23 were aware of force labor, 7.76% were aware of organ harvesting, 7.05% were aware of forced prostitution and .18% reported they have no idea of the dangers of irregular migration (figure 1).

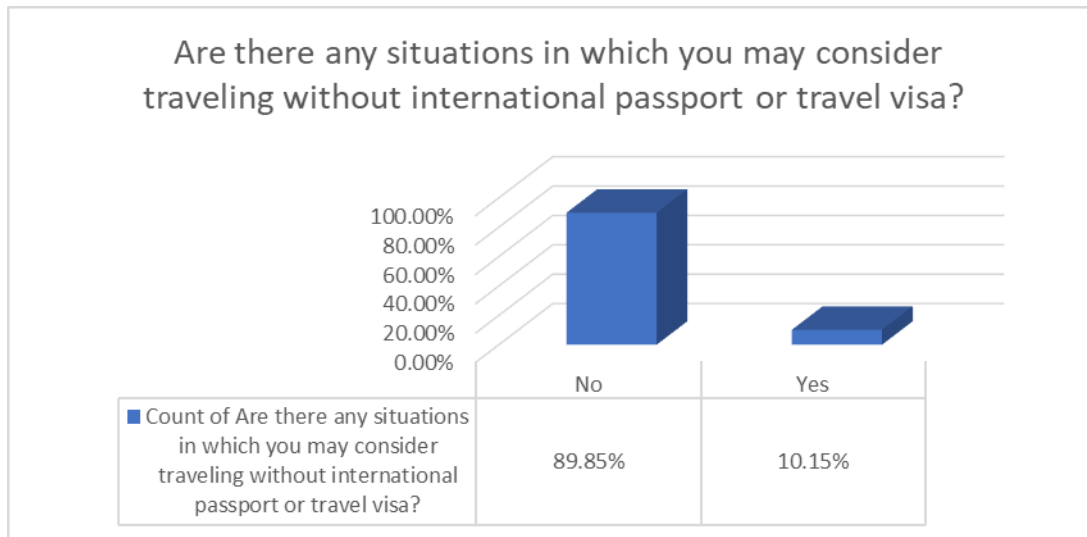
Research Objective Two: To assess the residents’ perception about the various means of international migration

Figure 2: perception of the various means of international migration



Research question two explored whether the participants will encourage anyone to travel the irregular route usually possible through the road, desert or sea. 80.8% Anambra residents reported that they will not support or encourage someone they know to travel through irregular route such as by sea, road or desert (figure 2)

Figure 3: Plans to travel without passport and visa



We probed to find out whether the participants may plan to migrate without the necessary travel documents. Only a few 10.15% responded in affirmation. Majority 89.85% said no (Figure 3).

Figure 4: People should travel outside through any means available



Figure 4 shows that majority of the participants 81.41% believed that traveling through any means should be discouraged.

Discussion of Findings

The results for research objective one, which assessed the awareness of dangers of irregular migration among Anambra state residents, showed that their awareness level is low. The percentages of factors of dangers of irregular migration showed that there is urgent need for comprehensive orientation of all the dangers of irregular migration for the masses. This is because the three most reported dangers of irregular migration were death, deportation and detention. Though other factors were mentioned, their percentages were quite minimal. Importantly, the number of Nigerians who are willing to migrate may be in the increase due to the prevailing economic crises and this calls for urgent need to educate them to follow the laid down procedure for international migration (regular migration). The awareness of dangers of irregular migration should be all encompassing.

However, the results for the second research objective, which assessed the residents’ perception of various means of international migration, showed that a significant percentage of respondents condemned migration through sea, desert and land routes. The outcome is encouraging giving the importance of social interaction and the roles of

significant others in human behavior. It is noteworthy that widespread condemnation will further lead to decrease in behavior of people who may be planning to utilize any of the unconventional means. On the other hand, it is not yet uhuru because the percentage (12.88) of respondents that reported indifference “maybe” showed that urgent awareness is needed to correct the impression. This is because with adequate orientation, the ambivalent respondents may understand the consequences of using any of the means/routes (land, desert and sea) for international migration.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were offered:

1. There is urgent need for comprehensive orientation of the youths on all the dangers of irregular migration. This is because from the results, the three major dangers were death, detention and deportation playing down other consequences such as organ harvesting and slavery amongst others.
2. Given the impact of peers and significant others in the decision-making outcome of youths, orientation exercises must be all encompassing and carried out in different settings such as: schools, church, market place, road show, radio, television station, social media.
3. Given the effects of irregular migration, there is urgent need to include it in the secondary school curriculum.
4. Nigerian government should sign more memorandum of understanding with many countries (especially high-income countries) to enable Nigerian citizens' unfettered access to their countries with visa on arrival.
5. Nigeria government should prevail on agencies responsible for the acquisition of necessary document for regular migration to ease the process and make it seamless.

Conclusion

The ultimate responsibility of every country is the protection of the citizens. Given the dangers posed by irregular migration and poor level of awareness of the dangers by Anambra residents, there is urgent need for massive orientation of dangers of irregular migration. Given the enormity of the responsibility of educating residents about the consequences of irregular migration, non-governmental organizations, community leaders, religious leaders, market leaders, government at all levels, school authorities must come together to fight the menace. Low-income countries have lost huge numbers of their citizens to irregular migration in their attempt to move to high income countries.

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