



Effects of Japa Syndrome on the Economic Development of the Nigerian State

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ABSTRACT

International Emigration (JAPA WAVE) is one of the key aspects of international relations that has both direct and indirect effects on national economic. This study thereby focuses on the impact of Japa syndrome on the economic development of the Nigerian state with the sole aim of ascertaining whether international emigration otherwise known as Japa in Nigerian local slogan has an impact on the economic development of the Nigerian state. This study anchored on structural functionalism theory propounded by Gabriel Almond and Bingham Powell in the 1970s. It adopted documentary method of data collection, qualitative descriptive method of data analysis and ex post facto research design. It discovered that international emigration has a significant positive impact on economic development of Nigerian state and it therefore concludes that the international emigration is also a source of income in Nigeria that has positively enhanced economic development, hence Nigerian government should ensure security and economic stability in order to encourage Nigerian citizens abroad to always return with high skilled knowledge of investments in various fields and also build industries that will serve as asset to economic development in the Nigerian state.

KEYWORDS: *International Emigration, Migration, Economic Development, Japa, Nigeria.*

INTRODUCTION

International emigration otherwise known in Nigerian slang as "JAPA SYNDROME" has remained a germane issue in the Nigerian system because migration within and across the Nigerian state directly affects some of the defining elements of economic development of the Nigerian state (International organization for Migration, 2016).

It is vital to note that migration which is now been perceived as a recent phenomenon has however been a feature of human existence since the beginning of time even traceable to the bible book of exodus with the movement of Abraham and that of the Israelites. However the concept of migration has brought up the question, why do people move? People move for many reasons such as rising unemployment rate, opportunities, more job, hardship, Inflation, food shortage, lingering security issues and worse economic recession which is the reason for most of Nigerian skilled emigrants in the recent time.

Migration in the world and especially in Nigeria as our focus point has been very dynamic. It could be internal migration or international emigration. Internal migration can be best described as movement of individuals within a state, notably within its geographical territories while international

emigration had to do with surge of individuals across the borders of a state. More so, International emigration can be of great benefits to the Nigerian state because most of these young Nigerian professionals leaving the country for greener pastures will come back into business, health, education, Agriculture, and other areas while some will pay to their family broadly(Bill Gate) and to the above Peter Obi(2023) noted that international emigration of our youth is good, he further assert that our BRAIN DRAIN TODAY, that the emigration waves is at its peak will be our BRAIN GAIN TOMORROW. Nigerians leaving the country may look like a loss today, but when we start doing the right things and taking the governance of our nation more seriously, the knowledge and resources from them will be critical in the building and developing of our national economy. Our Diasporas Nigerian around the world will return home with their global training, skills and resources to immeasurably contribute to building of better economy as happened in China, India, Ireland and other developing countries.

It is quite an established fact that international emigration of Nigerian youth and families cannot be fully stopped because of its bad economy that keeps declining. According to available statistics, the japa syndrome among Nigerians in the recent time can be seen as follows: In 2018, a total of 88,587 visa



applications were received by Schengen Countries of which 49.8% was rejected and United States saw an approximate of 376,000 Nigerian immigrants live in the states. In 2019 about 39 percent of our skilled workers travelled out of Nigeria, with about 71% to UK in 2021. Furthermore, UK government released 486,869 study Visas by June 2022 and in 2023, Nigeria migration rate rose to 0.237 per 1000 population, which indicates that more people are emigrating from the country.

More so, while it is factual that massive international migration of our young skilled worked has positive significant economic development of Nigeria as more receiving country via its citizens in diaspora, there is also rather a lack of a comprehensive understanding amongst Nigerian citizens and government on the beneficial and consequential impact of international migration on economic development of the nation Nigeria.

LITERATURE PERCEPTIVES

International migration is inherently complex since people relocate and move from one state to another for a variety of reasons that differ from person to person. This can be seen in Jennissen (2004) analysis of his various kinds of international migration which he actually grouped according to reasons.

Fayomi (2013) claims that economic factors such as employment, trade, high rate of economic decline, insecurity, low income and other factors best known to them from an economic perspective, are what most heavily impact international migration. Evans (2016) noted that only 91% of Nigeria's allegedly 1080 border crossing points are officially recognized, guarded and monitored. While numerous scholars claim that it is difficult for the Nigerian government to determine the precise number of migrants who cross its borders.

Therefore, although Makinwa focuses only on immigration across the Nigerian borders, it is actually important to also add this to the aspect of emigration across the Nigerian borders as rightly posited by Anofi (2009) that efficient and highly skilled Nigerian professionals in various fields also now engage themselves in unchecked and unregulated emigration across the Nigerian borders and this is due to their dissatisfaction in the Nigerian state caused by lack of opportunities in Nigeria. Hannah Cross (2014) agrees with this and claims that individuals from Nigeria and West Africa are entering Europe's exploitative labor marketed by travelling across unauthorized borders, taking dangerous risks and giving up their citizenship rights.

In spite of the above, the mass emigration of Nigerians to other foreign countries has continued to our national economic development. Migrant's remittances which has surpassed both Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Net Official Development Assistance inflows and is one of the major inflows of foreign earnings to Nigeria, help reducing poverty of households and have a positive impact on the

economy. Remittance inflows from Nigerians abroad are a potential economic development tool. In sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria is the largest recipient of remittances, receiving nearly 65% of officially recorded remittance flows to the region and 2% of global inflows.

In 2014- 2023 net remittances transferred by Nigerian migrants to the country exceeded significantly foreign direct investment, foreign portfolio investment inflows to Nigeria and accounted for 3, 68 - 9, 95% of GDP for respective years. World Bank ranked Nigeria one of the highest remittance-receiving countries in the world. Yet official data on remittance do not include monetary inflows through informal and unregulated channels, especially through friends returning to Nigeria and through goods sent to Nigeria which are readily converted into cash. (AdedokunKarzanova, 2019).

Peter Obi (2023) noted that international emigration of our youth is good, he further assert that our BRAIN DRAIN TODAY, that the emigration waves is at its peak will be our BRAIN GAIN TOMORROW. Nigerians leaving the country may look like a loss today, but when we start doing the right things and taking the governance of our nation more seriously, the knowledge and resources from them will be critical in the building and developing of our national economy. Our Diasporas Nigerian around the world will return home with their global training, skills and resources to immeasurably contribute to building of better economy as happened in China, India, Ireland and other developing countries.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study anchored on structural functionalism as propounded by Gabriel Almond and Bingham Powell in the 1970s. The theory explains the interrelatedness of institutions and their contributions to the stability, functioning and development of the society. The central premise of structural functionalism is based on the belief that political system is composed of a number of important components, consisting of political institutions. A political institution refers to an established organization within a context that has specific functions and authority to make and implement decisions, shape public policies and exercise political power. Again, political institutions serve specific functions and play a role in maintaining and contributing to the larger structural whole of society.

MAJOR TENETS OF STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM THEORY

1. It assumes that there is interdependence of various institutions within a society. Political institutions are seen as interdependent with other social institutions, such as the economy, education, and family and so they form a cohesive system that ensures effective functioning of society.
2. The theory presents society as a complex system made up of interrelated parts, much like the human body. These parts include political institutions such as the

government, political parties, and bureaucracies, who work together to maintain the overall functioning and stability of society. It further assumes that these institutions have specific functions and through their jurisdiction contribute not only to the smooth operation of society but to the development of the society as well. It states that these functions can be manifest or latent.

3. Structural functionalism also assumes that political systems can adapt to changes and challenges. This is to say that when something shifts or when there is a change, the political institutions evolve or adjust in response and these adaptations help maintain stability and address new demands or pressures faced by the system to compensate and restore the equilibrium which is societal stability and development.

APPLICATION OF STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM THEORY IN THIS STUDY

Based on the major assumptions of the theory of Structural Functionalism, it is undeniable that the theory fits into the framework of this study. Structural functionalism examines political institutions, their functions and contribution to the stability and development of the state. The institution in this context is the government and Nigerian immigration services, its functions and then its role in contributing to the economic development of the Nigerian state in relation to international immigration.

More so, according to the theory of structural functionalism in the political field, political institutions have specific functions within the society of which it should through its jurisdiction contribute to the stability and development of the society. Hence in the application of this theory and its key assumptions as the framework of this study, this study establishes that the Nigerian government and immigration agency of Nigeria is charged with the specific function of international migration/ emigration management as such should use or through its jurisdiction contribute to the economic development in the Nigerian state.

More so, the efficient use of the theory of structural functionalism approach in this study ensures a fully understanding that these political institutions are adaptive which is to say that change as seen in the increase in international migration/emigration activities needs a positive shift from the government institution in compensation of the equilibrium of stability and development.

ANALYSIS

BETH (1994) asserted that international emigration of Nigerians to United States and Europe is beneficial to the economic development of the state as it decreases the labor pool thereby alleviating poverty of families whose loved ones abroad send money to them and also increasing the income of the remaining workers. But the major benefit of the Nigerians international emigration to the economic

development of our state remains remittances which have proven to attend to financial crisis, economic recession and economic inflation/downturns.

Remittances, as the main benefit of emigration to the economic development of the Nigerian state refer more broadly, to the money expatriates send to loved ones and family back home while working and residing overseas. Again, the final beneficiaries of the above mentioned remittances are not only the immediate families of the emigrants, especially if the business owners of the consumables bought by the recipient's families expand the business. More so, income transfer from abroad is usually done via banks in most cases, if the receiving family decides to deposit the money, the bank has more funds in return to lend to potential investors, who increase the turnover from such fund. Remittances from emigration are very much beneficial to Nigerian economic development as it has been found to have an income stabilization effect on both macroeconomic and household level of Nigerian state (World Bank 2006). In addition, the real level of unrecorded remittances from emigration to the Nigerian state is higher than 8 billion dollars. To this Adam (2013) rightly noted that with evidence from Nigerian state, remittances promote self-employment and increase small scale businesses investment in Nigeria as receiving country and this makes emigration beneficial to the economic development of the Nigerian state.

Despite the above, actual return of emigrants with new skills and technological ideas that can lead to an improvement in our Industries, Agriculture, banking, farming, management, economic sectors and institutions in the Nigerian state. As such, Fayomi (2013) supported the above statement by stating that emigration is advantageous to the economic development of the Nigerian state because it is of an economic character, it expands the economy as some of the high skilled citizens who reside abroad come home to established and build factories which serves as an assets to develop the economy of the Nigerian state.

Take for instance, a citizen of Nigeria that left about 10 years ago to the States, emerged as the president of a foundation named "RAISE UP THE ROOF FOUNDATION" (RUTRF) came home and established a skill acquisition center and a school for the people with disabilities. This singular act did not only create job opportunities but also contributes to economic development via payment of taxations.

Positive effects:

1. Remittances: Emigrants send money back to their families in Nigeria, which can contribute significantly to the economy through increased household income, consumption, and investment in businesses and education.
2. Knowledge and skills transfer: Emigrants often acquire new skills, knowledge, and experiences abroad, which they can bring back to Nigeria to contribute to the local workforce and economy.

3. Investment and entrepreneurship: Some emigrants return to Nigeria with capital, ideas, and networks acquired abroad, leading to the creation of new businesses and job opportunities.

Negative effects:

1. Brain drain: Emigration of skilled professionals like doctors, engineers, and academics can lead to a shortage of talent in critical sectors, hindering economic growth and development.

2. Dependency: Over-reliance on remittances from emigrants can create a culture of dependency and reduce incentives for domestic economic development and reforms.

3. Social impacts: Emigration can lead to family separation, social challenges, and a loss of cultural and social cohesion within communities.

SUMMARY

International emigration of Nigerian citizens in the last decade has contributed to the development of the nation's economy, even during this trying period in the history of Nigeria, when one dollar is equivalent to #1800. Nigerian government knowing the importance of receiving this hard currency to Nigerian economy, decided to encourage the citizens abroad to send more by giving incentive to the receivers of such currency. More so, most of these citizens work hard in their host countries and return their proceed for investments in their home countries thereby enhancing our economic development via establishment of Factories, quality healthcare centers, industries and finally creating of job opportunities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, while international emigration can bring benefits such as remittances, knowledge transfer, and investment, it is essential for Nigeria to manage the potential negative impacts like brain drain and dependency to ensure sustainable economic development. Policymakers can implement strategies to encourage the return of skilled professionals, promote investment in education and skills development, and create opportunities for emigrants to contribute to the country's development.

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