Poverty and Youth Migration Out of Nigeria: Enthronement of Modern Slavery

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Abstract
International migration, which is the movement of people across national borders, is a regular occurrence. Many reasons have been adduced for youth migration abroad. These youths are sometimes confronted by severe problems. However, those factors that force youths to risk their lives are persistent. The study therefore sought to determine factors that propel youths to engage in migration in spite of the dangers, as well as the relationship between bad governance, illegal migration and modern slavery. Therefore, the study adopted qualitative research design using in-depth interviews to elicit information from participants. Twenty-five youths from Umuozu community, Isiala-Mbano Imo State, Nigeria were selected through stratified sampling technique. Descriptive statistics was used for data analysis. Findings revealed that youths are aware of the dangers inherent in illegal migration yet, majority of them were willing to risk migrating to foreign countries. This is because of the strength of the push-pull factors. Therefore, youths are likely to make themselves available for voluntary slavery due to increasing rate of poverty. Hence, there is urgent need for governments in Nigeria to institute measures to reduce poverty and educate the youths in order to discourage illegal migration—the foundation for modern-day slavery.

Keywords
development management, international migration, management, modern-day slavery, poverty, social sciences, social sciences, sociology, sociology of population, youth migration

Introduction
Migration is a major aspect of the nature of humans. There is also a significant correlation between poverty and migration as was noted in section 4.8.1 of Nigerian National Migration Policy (Adepoju, 2015). Nigeria has abundant and varied resources which portrays it as a rich nation. Most times these resources are mismanaged, pushing the inhabitants to extreme poverty. As the poverty is biting hard and the population is increasing, the people seek for various strategies to survive. One of such strategies is migration, an age-old strategy for human survival. Migration and its processes are usually heterogeneous and should be addressed holistically (Bell et al., 2010).

There are many reasons why people decide to move from their place of abode (origin) to another environment (point of destination). Individuals usually move away from places of lack to places that are presumed to have opportunities. As such, human beings are pushed by several factors to migrate. Therefore, the migration of human beings does involve movement of people covering long distances from their place of residence to another place where they intend to live. This could be semi-permanent or permanent. Furthermore, people can also migrate from one part of a country to another. In other words, migration means the geographical movement of persons across specific territory with the aim of creating a fresh permanent or semi-permanent place of residence. It could also mean the movement of individuals from a particular place in order to reside in another distant place. The most common form of migration found in the entire world is migration within a nation (Nanzip, 2020).

There are different types of migration in human history. Migration can be categorized first as emigration (moving out) and immigration (coming in). Similarly, migration could be seen as voluntary or involuntary depending on the situation under which the migrant left. Under involuntary migration, the person has no intention to migrate but was forced to do so (Bell et al., 2010). There is sometimes an overlap between voluntary and involuntary migration (Caves, 2005).
However, there are some kinds of migration that are voluntary such as international retirement migration in which the push factor is just retirement while the pull factor is pleasant climate/environment. Seasonal migration and illegal migration are also voluntary. Under involuntary migration, forced migration stands out. Labor migration, which could be voluntary or involuntary, comes in two ways—labor for highly skilled workers and labor for low income workers. Most often highly skilled labor is usually demanded by the host nations. Unskilled labor is usually high in number and this is where illegal migrant anchor (Bell et al., 2010; Davis, 2021; World Atlas, 2018).

Similarly, there are two major aspects of human migration—actual (the real occurring patterns and styles of illegal migration) and the construal of migration (in which people sit back to imagine the lots of benefits to they will get when they migrate abroad). These imaginaries possess causal strength to determine the practices as well as processes of migration (Mayblin, 2019). It should be pointed out that people moving across national borders (i.e., international migration) is a common occurrence in the world today. In recent times, the persons who migrate out of Africa mostly are the youth. In 2010, the estimated number of international migrants was 214 million persons, mostly the youths (Olajide, 2018).

Similarly, about 800,000 Nigerians are resident abroad. However, the actual figure may be higher because most of the Nigerian migrants do not have official records (International Migration Institute, 2021). In their own view, Adhikari et al. (2021) pointed out that the number of Nigerian migrants abroad has jumped from about 450,000 in 1990 to 1.4 million in 2019. The issue is that the population of youths in Nigeria is greatly increasing. However, in spite of the high educational levels and job skills, a lot of these youths are unemployed in Nigeria. At the same moment, the working-age population of Europeans is decreasing. This has resulted in shortage of labor forces in mid-skill professions in some European countries. The Nigerian situation of unemployed youths and European’s case of insufficient mid-skilled labor make international migration of Nigerian youths to Europe inevitable (Adhikari et al., 2021). This is why Clemens (2020) had earlier pointed out the existence of what he called “migration hump” in which people in poor countries will increasingly migrate in large number to rich countries.

Similarly, International Migration Institute (2021) revealed that yearly remittances from migrant Nigerians abroad are estimated to be about US$ 5 billion. Adhikari et al. (2021) also added that the remittances from Nigerians abroad has increased in 2019 to US$ 25 billion, which is 5% of the country’s gross domestic product and four times Nigerian foreign direct investment earnings.

It is as a result of the fact that migration of Nigerian youth abroad is likely to continue and the increasing rate of remittances coming into Nigeria from Nigerian migrants abroad that Adhikari et al. (2021) calls for partnership on migration between Nigeria and other Westerner nations so that Nigeria can benefit and increase its economic growth at home. This is related to the earlier view of Penninx (2004) when he called for integration policy for immigrants and he asserted that it is the failure of the integration process that leads to negative perception of migration/immigrants and its attendant consequences.

Furthermore, World Bank’s document on migration and remittance in 2011 listed that the estimates in 2010 were as follows: total population of migrant was 215.8 million, which is 3.2% of the global population. The number of international migrants all over the world increased in 2013 by 33%. Out of this number, 59% of migrants targeted to enter developed nations. A significant change in the migration pattern was witnessed in the last half of the century because women constitute about 50% of these migrants (United Nations Population Fund, 2013). This has earlier been noted by Thapan (2008) when he said that women constitute half of the migrants the world over. In spite of this, women migrants are still seen as accompanying partners instead of independent migrants. Facts emanating from Nigeria has shown that young ladies do migrate to different countries unaccompanied (Adopeju, 2015).

Migration movements into Western Nations have a variety of historical facts and take different patterns. Firstly, uneven development, unstable political systems, availability and affordability of modern communication media and transportation system have raised the pressure on migration and supply-driven migration movements. Secondly, demographic and economic developments within European nations themselves have produced new demand-driven movements into some European nations. As a result, the facts of immigration are to some extent the same but the perception is not the same everywhere (Penninx, 2004).

Generally, migration has economic, demographic, and social effects both for nation of origin and nation of destination (Divisha, 2017; Reips & Buffardi, 2012). Migrations occur due to a combination of factors—push factors cum pull factors. In actual fact, it was Lee (1966) who grouped factors causing migration into two segments, and called them push and pull factors. The push factors are usually those conditions/situations which are discomforting to a person within the environment in which he/she resides while the pull factors are conditions/situations which lure an individual to other environments. The push factors include insufficient job opportunities, unsafe environment, poor crop harvest, insufficient rainfall, desertification, flooding, persecution, slavery, natural disaster, death threats, poverty and war. On the other hand, the pull factors include better job opportunities, higher wages, more wealth, better services, attractive climate, safer/less crime, political stability, security, better crop yields and less rate of natural disasters (Nanzip, 2020; Lee, 1966). The next part of this article discusses some relevant theories explaining the phenomenon of migration.
**Theoretical Framework**

Some theories have been postulated to explain the reasons for human migration. One of these theories is the Neo-Classical economic theory of migration which posits that migration takes place because of differences in labor wages paid in different places across the world. These differences in wage payments are normally connected to supply and demand of labor in different geographical areas. In actual fact, migration has remained the core research issue in classical anthropological discourses. In spite of their criticism, these studies provided extremely rich and complex picture of the relationship between migration and changes in traditional societies (Bakewell, 2007).

Looking at the Neo-Classical theories and the Structural theories, Bakewell (2007) maintained that the for Neo-Classical theorists the prime agent in migration is the migrant who takes decision to migrate on utility grounds, whereas the structural theorists believe that the migrant is responding to the social structure in which he/she finds himself/herself. Bakewell (2007) concluded that the previous notion that migration is not profitable is changing and currently, there is the hunt to achieve a win-win-win situation in which the nations of origin, nations of destination and the person migrating benefit from the migration process. Therefore, the goal of any migration study should be geared toward helping to achieve this win-win-win scenario. As such, there is need to rethink, reshape, reassess and remodel policies on migration to ensure the safety and growth of the migrants, their place origin, their destination countries and the entire human society. Piore (1986) had earlier concluded that with the recent changes in the rate, dimensions and patterns of migration, that there is need to adjust earlier view about migration which was believed to have negative impact on the nations of origin. These changing patterns were also recognized by Massey et al. (1993) as they noted that there is a changing pattern in migration. According to them, in Europe, many countries that were initially sending out migrants suddenly became immigrant-receiving nations.

Additionally, the dual labor market theory which is centered on the same push and pull factors provide another explanation about migration from one location to another. In this case, the high rate of poverty and growing youth population in Nigeria is on one side while the decrease in mid-skill labor in Europe is on the other side. This means that migration supply-demand dynamics will definitely favor the persistence of increase in movements from Nigeria into Europe.

Another important migration theory relevant to this study is the relative deprivation theory. The theory posits that when people are aware of the differences between their income when compared with those of their neighbors or other families within the migrant’s community of origin; it becomes a major issue for migrating and migration. As a result, Stark (2019) pointed out that, people would rather have high income than low income because high income actually confers high rank. Therefore, the motivation to migrate is greater in places with greater level of social/economic inequality. In other words, migration of people involves two stages. Firstly, migrants invest in human development and then, attempt to make profit from their investments. Secondly, successful migrants apply their income in providing good education for their kids and better houses and comfort for their families. Similarly, when emigrants are highly skilled and successful, they do serve as motivation for peers, friends, relatives and potential migrants, who wish to attain the same successful level if given the opportunity. Another migration theory relevant to the study is the functionalism theory which looks into the ways migration helps in fulfilling basic aims of the individuals, their families and society especially in the areas of eliminating poverty, despair, and aimlessness (Djelti, 2017).

From the foregoing, poverty and deprivation are the major driving forces for Nigerian youth’s migration to Europe, America, Asia, and Southern/Northern Africa. Most of them move out of the country with high expectations. In some cases, their parents sell their lands or other valuable properties to assist them in this process of migration (Olajide, 2018). In order to elevate themselves above poverty, these families sometimes gather all their assets/resources together to assist their siblings and/or children travel abroad. Chikanda (2019) noted the same situation among the Zimbabweans where reduction in the economic condition of the people actually led to large scale migration.

Therefore, poverty is the major driving force for migration of Nigerians to Westerner nations; because 70% of Nigerians live below the poverty line. Actually, documented history has it that emigration from Nigeria has four phases—slave trade era, colonial era, post independence era, and post military era. It is on record from 1952 to 1953 that an estimated 257,000 Nigerians traveled from Northwestern Nigeria to West African countries of Ghana, Benin and Togo and substantial number also left Northwestern Nigeria to other West African countries—Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Benin, Gold Coast, and Mali (Mberu & Pongou, 2010).

However, in recent time Nigerian emigration diverted to different parts of the world particular Europe. The current trend is usually clandestine, involving high level of risk trying to pass through different transit routes like passing through Libya to get to Italy through Sahara desert and the Mediterranean Sea. Most Nigerian emigrants are usually stranded in places like Algeria, Libya, Senegal, and Morocco sometimes for many months or even years. Some are jailed in those places. Others die on their way through the perilous desert or the sea (Mberu & Pongou, 2010).

**Gender and International Migration**

It is pertinent to point out that a person’s gender and sexual orientation is a crucial determinant of the person’s migration pattern and experience. It is a fact that gender determines a
person’s reason(s) for migrating, who actually migrates, where he/she migrates to, how the individual migrates, the network he/she uses, opportunities and resources available at the point of destination and the person’s relationship with the country of origin. In the same vein, gender determines the level of risks/vulnerability as it relates process of migration and needs of migrants. In other words, the roles of the migrant, his/her expectations, what others expect from him/her and power dynamics which associated with the person’s gender greatly reflect in the different processes in which migration takes place. They are affected in fresh ways by migration itself (IOM, 2021b).

According to United Nations Population Division, about 49% of all international migrants as at 2000 were women or girls. However, the percentage of women involved in international migration had reached 51% in more developed nations. Usually, most women officially migrate abroad depending on other family members, who had earlier migrated. Presently, the number of women who are migrating as migrant workers or moving on their own as principal wage earners has increased. Most woman migrants migrate voluntarily but there are still cases of female folks who are pushed to leave their nations so as to escape from conflicts, being persecuted, ecological problems, natural mishaps and/or some other circumstances, which impinge on their survival (Division for the Advancement of Women, 2021).

If human migration must be understood and organized properly, any discussion concerning causes and consequences of international migration must involve gender from the point of decision-making about migration to the processes leading to the migration. Previous studies most often failed to pay necessary attention to women. Most analyses on international migration do ignore the participation of women and their contributions. Some others assumed that the causes and consequences of international migration are the same for migrant men and women. Therefore, they usually avoid investigating and determining the outcome by sex. However, when women become migrant workers, they tend to contribute to the economic development of their destination countries as well as their countries of origin through remittances. Sometimes, they help other members of their families to migrate (Division for the Advancement of Women, 2021).

On another note, in spite of the fact that the number of independently migrating women has increased, women migrants are still discriminated against and are likely to fall prey to different kinds maltreatments. In actual fact, they face discrimination in two ways—as women and as migrant within their host countries when compared with the situation of men who are migrants (Reliefweb, 2019). It can be stated that little progress has been made in the study women and migration but many studies still reduce their analysis to the inclusion of a female indicator as a control in regression. Therefore, it is necessary to include women in studies that concerns international migration because they are critical stakeholders (Antman, 2018).

**Dimensions of the Consequences Migrants Suffer**

As African youths migrate to different continents of the world, they are usually confronted with a lot of challenges. According to Olajide (2018), discrimination has remained one of the biggest problems which youth migrants face in the hands of their “hosts.” This discrimination is usually centered on racism, religious bias, gender, language bias or mainly because the migrants are from other climes. In some cases, the indigenes may exhibit xenophobic characters as is witnessed in European nations and even in Southern African countries. In actual fact, young people from African nations are the vulnerable set who is constantly subjected to a magnitude of the side effects of underdevelopment, which include poverty, exploitation, trafficking and even blackmailing.

Other consequences of migration are brain drain and brain waste. Brain drain is witnessed when a lot of highly skilled professionals leave their home countries to seek for greener pasture in other countries or they set up businesses in their new countries of residence. On the other hand, brain waste is seen when highly skilled professionals perform menial jobs in the new countries they have migrated to, which do result in what is referred to as deskilling (Pires, 2015).

In recent times, a new dimension has been added to the plight of young migrants. They are arrested, held hostage and then sold at the slave markets. It was CNN that first exposed the heart-wrenching abominable slavery and slave trade practice in Libya (Appiagyei-Atua, 2018). This is why Mohamed (2017) posited that if one wonders at the mental state of the man holding a gun and a whip and leading children, women and men from Africa into slave market, one will then be astonished at the shocking truth that this same scenario is being repeated in the 21st century; this time, on Africa soil by Africans. Under this situation, young migrants are sold and forced to engage in mandatory labor and forced prostitution. This is achieved by fraudulently recruiting the youths and seizing their identification and travel documents, by not paying them their due. They are also placed on debt bondage which they must offset in order to regain their independence.

According to David et al. (2019), the world has about 258 million international migrants; out of this number about 40 million of the migrants are in modern slavery. Most migrants are usually easy prey to issues of human trafficking, mandatory labor and modern slavery especially when they are escaping from violent situations, dislocating from villages and familial structure without being linked to legitimate form of livelihood, moving through irregular routes, working in sectors that are excluded from existing systems of labor protections. In all, the most vulnerable are usually children and adolescents, followed by women and then men. Women are usually faced with high level of modern slavery, when they are engaged in domestic work, commercial sex work and forced marriage. Men on the other hand, usually found themselves trapped in forced labor either in
construction companies or manufacturing industries. Another vulnerable group is the undocumented migrants. They are caged by the captors on the threat that they will be deported if they refused to carry out whatever duties that are assigned to them (David et al., 2019).

Various instances abound about enslaved migrants. In one case, some migrants from Ethiopia and Eritrea numbering about 200 were detained in the town of Zawiya, Western part of Tripoli in Libya. These were migrants, who wanted to cross to Europe in a truck in June, 2014. They created conducive atmosphere for their detention by taking unsafe methods to migrate. There is the case of Haryatin (former migrant worker) who became blind as a result of abuses from her employers in Saudi Arabia in 2013 (David et al., 2019).

This is why National Migration Policy of Nigeria in 2015 pointed out that there is usually an ugly side to migration dynamics. When the youths are faced with strict immigration control measures, they usually adopt highly sophisticated, risky and evasive strategies to enter Europe or America in a clandestine manner. In the process, they face various levels of risk include detention, torture, and even death (Adepoju, 2015; IOM, 2021a).

Similarly, there is report about Nigerian migrants who were held in detention centers by Libyan authorities. These returnees explained that they encountered horrifying abuses; they were sometimes leased out or sold as slaves (BBC Media Action, 2018). Reports also have it that there were auctioneers who were advertising a set of migrants from West Africa as “big strong boys for farm work.” They migrants were also referred to as “merchandise” and this reveals how low human capacity and reasoning has descended, which is very hard to understand in this modern era. This is actually against different international laws which include The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This statue actually prohibits any form of slavery or forced servitude. There is also a recent UN Palermo Protocol which states that abolition of modern day slavery should be an aspect of international law. Even with the horrifying situation in Libya, migration to other parts of the world has also constituted a means through which a lot of youths have continued to live and/or experience this new form of slavery. This has been heightened through the increase in human trafficking. In the past, slaves were kept in iron fetters but today, young migrants are not in physical chains, but they live in penury and pushed to migrate with the belief and hope of having opportunity to live better lives and give financial support to their family members. This is actually desperation with disastrous consequences in the form of modern day slavery (Mohamed, 2017).

As a result of this horror, Antonio Guterres (UN Secretary General) pointed out that, “Slavery has no place in our world and these actions are among the most egregious abuses of human rights and may amount to crimes against humanity.” Jacob Zuma (former South African President) also expressed his displeasure over the abuse of African migrants’ rights, who are detained unlawfully and auctioned-off as laborers in Libya. This is an act that constitutes modern-day slavery. According to Zuma, “We are shocked and outraged by the reports of the auctioning of African migrants in Libya and the unlawful detention of thousands of them including pregnant women and children. We condemn this gross violation of human rights in the strongest possible terms and we all agree that the two regions should work together with authorities in Libya to urgently curb this appalling situation in Libya” (ANA Reporter, 2017).

A lot of blaming games have been going on since this revelation was made. Danziger (2017) blames the situation on the absence of level playing field in African countries that prompted youths in the continent to “vote through their feet instead of the ballot box.” It is as a result of all these that Mohamed (2017) posited that African leaders should commence the tackling of those situations that push a lot of their people into risking their lives by attempting to survive abroad though illegal process of migration. In spite of this call, there is no sufficient effort made to understand the level of awareness that Nigerian youths have about these dangers and also to understand why youths throw away caution in order to migrate abroad in spite of the heinous consequences. Similarly, the amount of data on migration from and into Nigeria is still scanty and there is lack of current information concerning the stock as well as flow of migrants in and outside the country (Afolayan et al., 2008). Again, according to King (2020), in most discussions about the development of migration studies, Sociology, Demography, and Economics have been seen as foundation disciplines. Anthropology is relegated as being a marginal discipline. Consequently this study, which used anthropological instrument of in-depth interviews, is aimed at determining the following:

(a) The level of youth awareness about the association between modern-day slavery and the migration abroad.
(b) The consequences of youth migration abroad in Southeast Nigeria.
(c) The major factors that force youths to migrate abroad in spite of the dangers.
(d) Ways of checking youth migration in order to discourage the growth of modern-day slavery.

Method
Research Design
To achieve these objectives, the study adopted qualitative research method; and it focused on Umuozu Community in Isiala-Mbano, Southeast Nigeria. Umuozu was selected because information from key informants during interviews revealed that the community has many youths who have once migrated abroad and returned. The study was carried out in all the seven villages that make up the autonomous
community. All the seven villages were selected because there was presence of potential participants within each of the village. Again, since the number of villages was small, census sampling technique became necessary.

**Participants**

The research focused on youths in the community who had traveled or made attempt to migrate outside the shores of Nigeria. The criteria for selection of participants were: a young person (18–40 years old) who has migrated or attempted to migrate out of Nigeria. A person who has migrated means any youth who had successfully left Nigeria to any other country in Africa, Europe, Asia, or America. Attempted migrant means any youth who actually left Nigeria to other countries but could not get there or was deported immediately he/she got there. This category of youths was chosen because they possess some vital experiences to contribute to the study. The participants were first selected based on the information provided by key informants within each village. They were approached and the essence and procedure of investigation were explained to them. Then, they were given consent forms to fill. Out of the 32 participants selected, two did not return the forms. The remaining 30 actually returned the consent forms but five of them indicated that they were unwilling to participate in the exercise. In other words, seven participants failed to fulfill the final inclusion criterion, leaving us with only 27 participants.

**Ethics**

The research proposal was submitted to Research and Ethics Committee of Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike, Nigeria. After careful scrutiny, the committee gave approval for the research to be carried out since it does not pose any harm to the participants or the society. The participants (32) were also contacted and briefed about the essence and procedure of the research. Out of the 32 subjects that fell into the sample, having fulfilled the initial inclusion criteria, only 25 persons agreed to take part in the research. As part of the ethics regulation, the participants were assured that their participation and their views during the research must be treated with utmost confidentiality. It was also agreed that their real names or anything that will link them to research, will not be used in the report of the research.

**Instrument/Data Collection**

Data were generated through in-depth interviews with these youths. Thirty-two youths fell into this category in the study area but only 25 (75.1%) consented to participate in the study. Out of the 25 participants, four (16%) were female while 21 (84%) were male. The involvement of both male and female as participants was to recognize utmost importance of gender in a research of this nature and, to ensure a balance in the expected results. Again, since the number of participants was small, the researchers included all the participants who consented to participate in the research. It should be noted that to ensure anonymity and adhere to the ethics of scientific research, the names ascribed to the participants are fictitious.

The in-depth interviews took place between August and October, 2019. The interviews were conducted in Igbo language (one of Nigeria’s local languages) at the interviewees’ homes. The interviews were also recorded and each episode of the interview lasted between 50 and 70 minutes. The interview questions were made to elicit facts/information concerning the level of awareness about modern-day slavery associated with international migration, the factors that propel youths into engaging in international migration, the effects of migration in their lives and that of their families, the consequences of youth migration and ways of checking youth migration to discourage the growth of modern-day slavery.

The resultant data were transcribed and translated from Igbo to English language. In order to make complete sense of what the data portray, the transcribed documents were read, forming the beginning of data analysis. This assisted to determine the various themes therein as well as the relationships involved in the themes. Expectedly, there was thorough inspection of the data in order to obtain a fuller understanding of the mind and experience of the participants. This is important to be able to have a better picture of each case. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in narrative style. Quotes from the participants are used in the presentation of results but names attached to the quotes are fictitious. This is to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

**Results**

**Level of Awareness of the Association Between Migration and Modern-Day Slavery**

It was found that majority (80%) of the participants said that they were aware that some migrants face a lot of challenges including slavery. They pointed out that forced labor and slavery is just one aspect of the problems that confront young migrants abroad. According to Eugene (one of the participants who was deported from Libya in 2001).

I saw hell. On our journey to Libya, we were happy initially because at least we were leaving Nigeria for good. But immediately we passed Agadez, the whole story changed. At a point in the desert our water was exhausted, and we began to drink our urine. At last, we managed to get to Libya. We shouted for joy. Two days later, my friend and I were arrested and questioned. When the authorities discovered that we did not possess genuine travel documents, we were detained. While in
detention, we were taken out to work in people’s houses three times every week. Sometimes we would work for ten hours and we would be taken back to cell. I suffered this for two years before I was finally sent back to Nigeria in 2001.

The participants (72%) pointed out that they were aware that migrants do face some challenges even before they made their trip abroad. According to them, staying in Nigeria was equally risky, so they chose to take the bull by the horn. Uzoma (a participant, who attempted to enter Europe through Algeria) revealed that:

The truth is that before I left Nigeria in 1998, I had heard a lot of stories about people who traveled by road to abroad and died along the road or get drowned in the sea while crossing to Spain. I heard also about some who exhausted their resources and got stranded on the way. But as you know life is a risk. Therefore, I took the risk and traveled. . . . . . . . . . . . On my way to Algeria, I did not encounter any problem. When we got to Algeria, the person who brought us collected our money to enable him prepare the documents that we will use to enter Spain. Then, he disappeared into thin air. That is how we became stranded. We started doing some menial jobs at least to get food to eat, hoping that one day we will get into Europe.

On the issue of the slave market in Libya, only few of the participants (20%) were aware of the story. Others said that they were aware that migrants in Libya are used for forced labor and face a lot of humiliation but not that there is a market where persons are sold for money. Eugene elaborated that,

In Libya, nothing is impossible. The people of Libya do not believe that black Africans are human beings. My friends over there told me that the place had gone worse than the hell I saw. According to them, when illegal migrants are arrested, they are detained and given good food that can refresh them for the market. Majority of them are not sold in the slave market; the transactions are usually concluded quietly and the buyers come to the cell to pick their goods (detained migrants). Once they are handed over to their buyers, the migrants are turned into slaves. Their freedom is restricted and they are meant to do all sorts of jobs without pay.

The participants generally showed high level of awareness about the hardship, torture and forced labor that young migrants faced in the course of traveling abroad. Although, not all of them witnessed such situations, they are fully aware that such things happen to young migrants.

Factors that Propel Youths to Engage in International Migration

The study revealed that the major factor that propel youths to engage in international migration is poverty. Many of the youths have dropped out of school because of poverty. It is still poverty that makes many youths not to get enough capital to start the various trades they have learnt. Some of them stayed in the cities but when life became unbearable they seek for greener pasture abroad. Uchenna (one of the participants who had traveled to Belgium and returned) puts it this way:

The major reason why I left Nigeria in 2010 was because my parents could not provide the necessary fund for my education. When I was in secondary school, sometimes I do skip class for a week or two to work in people’s farms to get money to pay my school fees. I collected firewood and sold. That’s how I struggled to complete my secondary school. Then, I left for Onitsha where I trained in the sale of cosmetics. When I finished my training, there was still no money to pay for a shop. I was running around helping other people to sell their products for a meagre commission. When I got the opportunity to travel to Belgium, I saw it as God’s blessing. I did something I regretted. I sold some of my friends’ goods and used the proceeds to travel. That’s why when I was deported few weeks after, I could not go back to Onitsha because I could not face my friends. This is the extent to which poverty can push someone.

It can be seen that apart from pushing youths to migrate abroad, poverty sometimes makes them steal or cheat in order to raise money for traveling. For instance, it was also revealed during the interview that there was a young man (aged 28 years) who lived in Lagos, whose uncle in the US usually sends money to him to help him complete his (uncle’s) house in the village. The young man had been using the money judiciously on the building project. However, the period that the uncle sent him 300,000 naira in 1990 for the building coincided with when the young man got a link to travel to Germany. Without reflecting on it, he used his uncle’s money and zoomed off to Germany. Before he left, he told his friends that he did not want to be roaming the street of Lagos a pauper while helping his rich uncle to achieve his own dream. He opted to move toward his own dream by misappropriating his uncle’s money.

Data showed that all the participants in the study were forced to travel abroad because of the poor state of their families. One of them, Ndidi (28 year old lady) pointed out that she took the risk of traveling to Italy without informing her parents because the economic situation of her family was sympathetic. She narrated her story thus:

I am the first child in a family of seven children. I could not finish secondary school because of money. Then, I went to Aba to learn fashion designing job. After my training, my parents could not afford to buy a sewing machine for me. At this time, two of my siblings had dropped out of school for the same reason. Feeding in my family was a herculean task. When I got the opportunity to travel, I left from Aba without informing my parents. If they had known about it, they would have discouraged me.

This gives credence to the idea of relative deprivation theory which states that awareness of income differences between
neighbors in the migrants-sending community is an important factor in migration. In other words, deprivation which is created by poverty has been a strong factor that pushes youths to migrate (Djelti, 2017).

In his own case, Chima (a 32 year old man) brought in an emotional angle into the narrative. Tears filled his eyes as he said,

I am an orphan. My father died when I was two years. My mother died two years later. They left my sister and me. I managed to get to primary three with hard labor. I learnt bicycle repairing. It was through that, that I fed my sister and myself. I was caught twice stealing yam from another person’s farm as a result of hunger. The situation forced my sister to marry at the age of fourteen years. She also married into poverty. At a point, I relocated to Okigwe to continue my bicycle repairing. It was there I met Nicholas who promised to take me to Libya. As a result, I sold one portion of my land in the village and used the money to travel. The journey was more terrible than the situation I faced at home. It took us twenty seven days to get to Libya. The bottom-line is that the extreme poverty that pushed my sister into a useless marriage also forced me to travel to Libya.

This also aligns with the position of Olajide (2018) that there is a high rate of poverty in Nigeria and young people use the process of international migration as a means of eliminating poverty within their families.

Data also revealed that apart from poverty, youths also migrate abroad because of scarcity of land in the rural community of Isiala-Mbano. The entire Isiala-Mbano according to the Nigerian Population Census of 2006 has over 300 persons per square kilometer. In other words, the area has many people occupying a small area of land. In most cases, the land is also not equitably distributed. Few persons may own large areas of land while others own a few plots of land that can hardly sustain them. Sometimes, when people are poor, they can sell their lands to raise money to start a business. But when poverty combines with landlessness, the situation becomes worse. This is because such people can hardly farm to provide food for themselves. In such a situation, when migration offers come, youths in such families always jump at it.

Invariably, one of the main problems confronting large size households in rural areas were reported to be that there is small plots of land available for the use of each member of the family to support individual families. This means that it is difficult for the rural people to buy or sell lands. In other words, it is difficult for the rural people to raise fund for other purposes through their lands. Robert (a 33 year old participant) recounts the difficulties he went through to acquire land. According to him,

The truth is that a family’s poverty status begins with lack of arable land. In my own case, my father is the last son in a family of seven men. So, when they shared their father’s land, what my father got was less than two plots. Now he has four sons who will definitely share this. You can imagine what my own share will be. It will definitely not be enough for even pepper garden. I begged my uncles if I could get land from them for farming. They all declined. I was annoyed because of that. This pushed me to migrate first to Lagos, from where I traveled to the Philippines.

The situation in the study area is like this because alternative means of livelihood is minimal. It is purely a rural community. In other words, the area has no industry or factory. Since there is nothing else to retain every member of the community within the area, the only option left for the youths in the area is to migrate, mostly to the cities or to foreign countries.

**Consequences of Youth Migration Abroad**

Migration has a range of social, cultural, political and economic consequences. Therefore, migration can be said to have some consequences for the migrant, his family, the area of origin and the area of destination. One of the major problems encountered by migrating youths is discrimination exhibited by their “hosts.” In fact, most international migrants are confronted with one type of discrimination or the other. The picture is made clearer through Obiaju (28 year old participant).

When I arrived London, I thanked God because it was a dream come true. My host (my classmate in primary school) came to the airport to receive me. After spending one week in his house, he suggested that it was time I looked for a job. The search began. One day, I went to a grocery store to know if I could be their sales person. I was surprised when the manager looked at me scornfully and replied that black people do not work in his store. He dismissed me with a wave of hand. A week later, I saw an advert in front of an eatery seeking to employ a clerical officer. I went in with my documents. The receptionist was surprised to see me (a black boy) applying for clerical job. She informed me that they only employ blacks as waiters or in the kitchen to tidy up things. My ego became deflated immediately. Finally, I got a job as an attendant in a store. The job did not last beyond two months. I was sacked because I had an argument with a white girl who was ordering me about at the store. In fact, once you are black, you are less than human.

During the interviews, all the participants agreed that most of the young migrants are highly discriminated against. According to John (one of the participants who once traveled to Cameroon), “if anything is missing where you work, everyone will quickly agree it is the young migrant that stole it.”

This was corroborated by Ndudiri (a participant) who narrated his ordeal thus:

When I was in South Africa, I had a rough experience. On a particular day, as I was about to go home after work, one of my
co-workers reported that two tins of canned-beef were missing. Immediately, I was called back. No one asked if I took the canned-beef or not. They just ordered me to return the canned-beef that I have stolen. I was amazed. I told them that I did not steal any canned-beef. Nobody believed me. I was told that if I do not produce the missing canned-beef, I should consider myself sacked. No other person working there was asked about the missing object except me. As the argument was going on, a customer who picked the canned-beef and moved to the other section of the shop came to the cashier close to where we stood to pay for the items. I quickly asked if that was the canned-beef they were looking for. Everyone kept quiet and walked away. None of them cared enough to apologize for embarrassing me.

Another major consequence of international migration is forced labor. Most of the time, the young migrants are meant to do certain jobs against their will. There are times when they are forced to peddle drugs. Uzoma, (a 29 year old youth deported from South Africa) explained:

When I got to South Africa, I was stranded. As I was searching around if I could find a Nigerian who I could confide in, I met one black man. He seemed to know that I had a problem and asked if he could be of help. Because he is black, I trusted him and told him my problem. He promised to provide me with shelter. I followed him to his house. He gave me a room and provided me with a lot of comfort. I felt I have arrived. After four days, he invited me to his sitting room and told me that he has a job for me. I was excited. He promised to pay me well. Then, he told me that my job would be to supply heroine to his customers. I told him that I don’t need such a job. He replied that he was just informing me and not seeking for my consent. He threatened to hand me over to the police and that I must refund all the expenses he had made on me. That’s how I became a drug peddler. One day, I was caught and jailed before I was finally deported.

Again, young migrants are also treated like machines that can never break down. Sometimes the employers of young migrants are not usually concerned or worried about poor health of their employees. This poor health conditions do result from harmful working conditions, very long period of strenuous work and abuse. Most times, these employers perceived the health challenges of their migrant workers as trick by the young migrants to dodge work, except when the health problem constitutes a risk to such employers. This was revealed by Agatha (a female participant).

Any time you fall ill, they usually misunderstand it. Employers take your complain of illness as pretense. They believe that one wants to avoid work. I was a domestic servant to a couple. One day, I felt feverish and pains all over my body. When I told my madam, she warned me to stop the pretense and continue with my work. I struggled to begin the scrubbing of the rooms. At a point, my legs could no longer sustain me and I passed out. I woke up in the hospital. When I recovered, they refused my working for them. They alleged that I was fragile and would not want anybody to die in their house. So, when you are sick, your employers do not usually understand your pain and illness. It is a pity . . . . . . . . .

Ways of Preventing Youth Illegal Migration Abroad

The youths are an invaluable segment of the population that is supposed to assist in reduction of extreme poverty and hunger in rural communities of Nigeria. They are expected to be the pivot for rural development. As such, the problems they encounter through migration abroad are inimical to the rural development agenda. Therefore, the study sought to find out ways of preventing youths’ illegal migration abroad. All the participants agreed that youths may not travel out of the country if poverty is eliminated. They believed that since poverty is the major pushing factor for youth migration abroad, its total eradication will definitely result in preventing youths from getting involved in illegal international migration. Thomas (a 26 year old who was deported from the US) pointed out that,

The only way to stop people from migrating abroad is to remove that condition that is chasing us away from home, and that is poverty. If you know you will die of hunger staying in Nigeria, then it is better to run away from Nigeria and live. Nigerian government should do everything possible to ensure that poverty is reduced if not totally eliminated. The rich people in Nigeria should also help by building industries, which can provide jobs for youths. Once youths are gainfully employed, they may not want to risk their lives by traveling illegally to other countries.

Similarly, majority of the participants (80%) believed that apart from elimination of poverty, it is necessary to organize seminars and workshops for youths in order to explain to them the dangers involved in illegal international migration. Most youths know only about the gains of traveling abroad, they may not be aware of the pains involved. One of the participants (Udechukwu) explained thus:

Before I traveled to Europe, I never knew about the kind of hardship that our people face over there. I thought that once you get abroad, you get a job and start making real money. The following year you return back to Nigeria to show off your wealth. When I got to Europe, I spent up to six months before getting the first job. At every moment I was hiding from the watchful eyes of security agents. Before I left Nigeria, I calculated the money I was likely to earn in dollars in a year. When I converted it to Naira, it was so much money. As I got to Europe, I realized that I had to pay house rent, light bills, water rates, and transport fares in dollars. My feeding was also paid for in dollars. What was left was nothing to write home about. I spent eight years without returning to Nigeria. Finally, I had an issue and was deported. If I had been educated about the problems I faced there, maybe I would not have traveled. There should be regular seminars for youths on this issue. Invite people like us who have had the experience to educate them. This is very vital. You can also educate them through the mass/social media.
On the other hand, Ndudiri added that,

Parents should also be involved in the seminars and workshops. Sometimes, it is the parents that sell the idea of traveling abroad to their children. Some parents cannot sell their property to train their children in schools. But when it comes to traveling abroad, they can sell everything they have to send their children out. Most times, they do not know what awaits their children over there. So, parents also need to be educated about the risk involved in illegal international migration.

Participants were also of the opinion that provision of employment could prevent youth migration abroad. The participants agreed that if youths have gainful employment, they may not wish to travel and suffer abroad. Buttressing this point, Nduke (a 36 year old participant) said that,

I never believed that I will travel out of Nigeria to work. I worked hard while at school and I graduated with Second Class Upper Division in Economics. After my youth service, I searched for a job for almost three years to no avail. And there was also serious pressure from family members. It was then I began thinking of traveling out of the country. At last, I traveled and was arrested for forged documents. I was detained for eight months before being deported. Today, I have a job in the bank. I think I will not like to work anywhere outside Nigeria again. I have learnt my lesson the hard way.

Discussion of Findings

Having set out to determine the level of awareness of youths about the relationship between international migration and modern-day slavery, the study found that majority of the participants are aware that young migrants do face a lot of challenges. This supports the views of Olajide (2018), Chaichian (2014), and Adepoju (2015) when they pointed out that youth migrants face a lot of problems including discrimination. However, only few of the youths are aware of the new form of slavery that youth migrants are subjected to in Libya. The youths are aware that there are challenges faced by people who migrate abroad, they, however, never knew that they could be sold into slavery as commodities, to be subjected to forced labor, prostitution and humiliation. These findings buttressed the position of Mohamed (2017) when he posits that youths usually believe that migration provides opportunity to change one’s life for better and that they are hardly aware that this desperation attracts great consequences in the form of modern slavery. Again, according to ANA Reporter (2017), the level of awareness of the relationship between youth migration and modern slavery is what forced Zuma (former President of South Africa) to exclaim, “we are shocked and outraged by the reports of the auctioning of African migrants in Libya . . . . . .”

The study also investigated the factors that propel youths to migrate abroad in spite of the fact that they are aware of various challenges they are likely to encounter. Data revealed that the major factor that pushes youths to travel out of the country is poverty. This finding is in tandem with the view of Nanzip (2020) and Mberu and Pongou (2010) when they noted that the major push factor for youth migration in Nigeria is poverty. Again, the findings provide support for the relative deprivation theory which states that the incentives to migrate are a lot higher in areas that have high level of economic inequality. It is also seen that the findings of the study are very much in line with the thinking of the functionalists who believe that youth migration is fulfilling certain functions for the individual and his/her family especially in eliminating poverty (Djelti, 2017). Data also revealed that sometimes poverty, apart from causing youths to migrate abroad, also forced them to commit crimes in order to raise money to travel abroad. Some of them dupe people; some steal while others misappropriate funds kept in their custody. All these are in the desperate move to travel out of the country to seek for greener pastures.

Another major force that propels youths, especially educated ones, to migrate to foreign countries is unemployment. A lot of young people after graduating from colleges and universities roam about for years without getting decent job. This problem coupled with the initial poverty in their families force them to migrate abroad for better opportunities without minding the consequences. The finding is in support of the view of Nanzip (2020) when he pointed out that one of the push factors for youth migration is unemployment. He believes that youths move away from their countries of origin with the hope of getting better employment overseas. In many cases, youths have been asked to go back to “land” when faced with unemployment. That is, they are encouraged to take up farming as a profession. Unfortunately, the study revealed that in the study area just like the entire Mbano area, there is scarcity of land. And the requirements for acquiring plots of land are very difficult for the average youth. Similarly, the few parcels of available land are not equitably distributed. Some people have more parcels of land than they need, while others have little or no land. Therefore, even when the youth wants to take up farming as an occupation, he may not get the land. The land is also not available for him to sell and raise the capital to set up a business venture. So, in the presence of poverty, unemployment and landlessness, youths may have no choice than to migrate abroad, most times illegally at the slightest opportunity. The findings are in line with the position of Nanzip (2020) and Bauder (2006) when they noted that one of the push factors of youth migration is lack of land or lack of fertile land.

Essentially, the study revealed that the major consequence of youth migration today is that they are likely to become victims of modern-day slavery. This slavery involves arrest, detention and sale of the youths at the slave markets. Through this process, the youths are subjected to forced labor, prostitution, unpaid work and their human
rights are truncated. This result gives credence to the earlier findings of Appiagyei-Atua (2018) and David et al. (2019) when they reported that young migrants are arrested, held hostage and then sold at slave markets in Libya and other places particularly when running away from dangerous situations at home. The finding also supports the view of Mohamed (2017) who posited that the 21st century is witnessing a situation where young migrants are sold into mandatory labor/prostitution. This is usually carried out through deceitful recruitment, seizing of the migrants identification and traveling particulars, and placing them on debt bond which they must offset.

In some cases, these young migrants are forced to donate their kidneys and other vital organs while the slave master is paid heavily for such donation. In other words, sometimes the youth migrant is arrested and taken to a hospital where his/her kidney or vital organs are harvested, while the person that brought him/her collects the money paid for the organ harvested. In some cases, the young migrants die during such operations and are discarded as waste products. This is why ANA Reporter (2017) reported Anthonio Guterres as saying that “slavery has no place in our world ----- and amount to crime against humanity.”

Another consequence of youth migration is discrimination by their “hosts” in destination countries. Most times, the young migrants are discriminated against either because of their color or because of their sex or religion. This finding supports the view of Olajide (2018) as he pointed out that discrimination is major problem confronting young migrants. According to him, such discrimination comes in form of racial discrimination, religious/gender/language biases and/or merely because they are outsiders.

On the other hand, the study revealed that brain drain is not a consequence of youth migration. Rather, what was discovered was the phenomenon of brain waste. This is because most graduate youth migrants on getting to their destination are meant to perform unskilled jobs such as cleaning of gutter, cutting of grasses, gatemen, mortuary attendants and so on. This according to Pires (2015) and Olajide (2018), results in deskilling. Such migrants are never allowed to use their training to achieve their desires.

It was also found that the nature of women was never considered by employers of these migrants. Most times, women are expected to work round the clock without showing any form of fatigue or illness. Any time they are weak or sick, in spite of their biological programming, they are tagged as pre-old fashioned or fragile. As such, they are disengaged most times without pay. This aligns with the view of IOM (2021a) that the level of risks, vulnerability and needs of migrants are actually determined by their gender; and that the act of being a woman determines the kind of dangers a migrant might face. This is also the reason why Division for the Advancement of Women (2021) posited that a person’s sex or gender actually shapes the individual’s migration experience.

**Conclusion/Policy Implications**

This study found that great numbers of youths are willing to migrate abroad even illegally in spite of the fact that they are aware of the various challenges that face them overseas. Again, lack of knowledge of the modern-day slave trade as evident in Libya has made them to migrate without much care. It can therefore be said that the greatest problem confronting young migrants today is the issue of being sold into slavery, being forced into unpaid labor/prostitution and being forced to donate their vital organs including kidney. These are dangerous trends that have surfaced in the modern times. The study also concludes that there is a significant correlation between poverty, youth migration and modern-day slavery. While poverty pushes youths to migrate, their migration prepares the ground for the modern-slave trade as witnessed in Libya.

As a result of all these, the study suggests that the Nigerian governments and their agencies should manage the economy properly and put up policies that can help to eliminate poverty which has been identified as the major force that pushes youths into migration and enslavement. In other words, the formulation of National Migration Policy in 2015 is not enough. There is need to develop an accompanying policy on poverty reduction to propel the migration policy to success.

Similarly, schools and community-based programs should be initiated to educate the youths on the dangers of illegal international migration. In other words, there should be regular seminars and workshops to bring to the knowledge of the youths and parents the possible dangers they may face in the process of international migration. Youth migrants who have returned may be invited to share their bitter experiences. This may discourage the youths from embarking on such suicide mission. On the other hand, the government and wealthy individuals should build factories and industries to reduce the level of youth unemployment.

Again, there should be an arrangement or policy in which farm lands can be made available to youths who are interested in farming. In other words, governments and community leaders should make farming attractive so that youths can take it up as a profession. This will definitely help to discourage youth illegal migration and its attendant consequences and at the same time boost food production.

Similarly, Nigerian governments should intensify efforts at ensuring an effective and systematic pattern for international labor movements which sufficiently respond to the supply-demand dynamics of the labor markets across continents. This can be achieved through bilateral, and multilateral or regional agreement. This is directed at answering the call of Penninx (2004) and Adhikari et al. (2021), when they requested that Nigeria should enter into partnership with Western nations in order to derive maximum benefits from migration. This form of collaboration ensures a win-win-win situation for the country of destination, the country of origin and the migrants.
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Ethics
The research proposal was submitted to Research and Ethics Committee of Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndofu Alike, Nigeria. After careful scrutiny, the committee gave approval for the research to be carried out since it does not pose any harm to the participants or the society. The participants (32) were also contacted and briefed about the essence and procedure of the research. Out of the 32 subjects that fell into the sample, having fulfilled the initial inclusion criteria, only 25 persons agreed to take part in the research. As part of the ethics regulation, the participants were assured that their participation and their views during the research must be treated with utmost confidentiality. It was also agreed that their real names or anything that will link them to research, will not be used in the report of the research.

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