Unintended Consequences of Remittance: Nigerian Migrants and Intra-Household Conflicts

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Abstract
Research on migrants’ remittance in Nigeria has largely focused on the contribution to national development and economic well-being of family members. In contrast, this article explores the way in which remittance serves as potential sources of conflict within migrant households. The article investigates intra-household conflicts related to migrant remittances, revealing the contradictory and unintended consequences of remittances destabilizing cordial relationships between migrants and family members. Within the family (mainly extended families), the sharing of remittance is often accompanied with envy, distrust, and accusation of witch hunt. While improper utilization and accountability of remittances strain relationships, migrants are forced to re-strategize on how remittances get to their relatives and sometimes cut off communication and remittances with family members. Based on the qualitative data collected in Benin City (Edo State) in Nigeria, the article investigates intra-household conflicts emanating from migrant remittances, from the perspectives of migrants on holidays.

Keywords
remittance, accountability, accusations, envy, conflict

Introduction
Economic remittances have become an important part of the debate around migration and development and are seen as a crucial component of socioeconomic well-being of individuals and of nations (House of Commons International Development Committee, 2004; International Organization for Migration, 2005; World Bank, 2013). But often neglected are the implications remittance has on intra-household conflicts in migrants’ households. Research on the use of remittances shows that they are often used first and foremost by family members for basics, including food, clothing, and housing (Balde, 2011). The common perspective of remittances as a transnational activity often focuses on the economic, political, and sociocultural activities (World Bank, 2006). At the macro-level, the analysis of remittances has been found to improve health and/or reduce diseases through better nutrition and housing, and this in turn has a longer-term positive impact on countries of origin (House of Commons International Development Committee, 2004). No doubt, migrants’ remittances to family members are a major transnational economic activity, often between migrants and their societies of origin (Guarnizo, 2003). Past research has only been able to document the destructive impact of migrant labor systems on family lives mainly in terms of the physical absence of migrants (Murray, 1980, 1981; Thomas, 1987). Thomas (1987), for example, attributes what she calls “a very extensive psychosocial pathology in the homelands” to migrant labor, enforced ruralization, and entrapping poverty. The migrant labor system separates families, usually the men from their wives and children, sometimes for a long period of time with little or no means of communication and financial commitments. Thus, many migrant laborers have been found entering into new and clandestine relationships, and subsequently to illegitimate births, divorces, and desertions (Thomas, 1987). Mothers who had been deserted often face the choice of starving in the homelands or becoming migrant laborers themselves, in addition to a heavy toll of child neglect, malnutrition, and infant mortality (Emmett, 2001).

These evidences, however, do not undermine the socioeconomic importance of remittances to nation building and poverty alleviation. According to the “New Economics of Labour Migration” (NELM), as conceived by Taylor (1999), migration has the capacity to diversify household income sources in response to local constraints. In this model, the

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household acts as if there is a preconceived notion of what to expect from migrants. Thus, remitting becomes an implicit contract between migrants and their family. For future concerns, migrants maintain their social standing not to be regarded as visitors whenever they return to their community of origin. According to Lucas and Stark (1988) and Martone, Muñoz, Lahey, Yoder, and Gurewitz (2011), with the increasing number of remittances sent home, family members take it as a point of duty to maintain migrants’ status while away. One way in which family members do this is through the way the remittances are used (Lucas & Stark, 1988).

Studies in Africa and Latin America on remittances specifically highlight family remittances as one of the most important forms of linkages among transnational families (Adepoju, 2004; Airola, 2007; Menjivar & Agadjanian, 2007; Orozco, 2006), and that they are an important source of family income. In developing countries, the impact of remittance extends beyond the nuclear family members. Orozco (2006) also explained, “This practice reflects a strong family tradition among migrants from developing countries to care not only for the immediate relatives but for anyone they deem to be family” (p. 6). Unequal power relations in remittance utilization were not considered in any of these studies. Quantitative studies on remittance motivation (Black, King, & Tiemoko, 2003; Funkhouser, 1995; Hoddinott, 1994) have also fallen short of overgeneralizing the positive impact of migrants’ remittances, with little or no attention on background information on divergent expectations from the senders (migrants) and receivers (family members). Most studies on remittance use revealed that remittances are consumed instead of invested. Rempel and Lobdell (1978), reporting on a survey of 50 remittance-use studies for the International Labor Office, concluded that “most of the money remitted is used for increased consumption, education and better housing” (p. 337). Lipton (1980) likewise concluded that everyday consumption needs absorb 90 per cent or more in the villages. In another study, Chandavarkar (1980) concluded that remittances are “frittered away in personal consumption, social ceremonies, real estate and price-escalating trading” (p. 39). While these literatures have focused on the socioeconomic importance and utilization of remittances, it centered on the dynamics and positive impact of remittances. The central issue of household conflict emanating from remittance distribution, utilization, and control has been overlooked in Nigeria. In many African countries, there are quite a number of unmet needs, such as the need for employment, schooling, housing, and ceremonies; the tendencies for family members to divert and misuse remittances are therefore not impossible.

This article is set out to investigate remittance-based household conflicts from Nigerian migrants’ perspectives. Through interviews with Nigerian migrants on holidays, five themes emanated from their narratives regarding remittances to family members: (a) unaccountability and inappropriate use of remittances, (b) unequal power play in remittance disbursement and utilization within the households, (c) demands and pressures on migrants, (d) conflict of expectations, and (e) rivalries between migrants and their family members. On these themes was the discussion of the findings of the research premised.

Research Methods
This article reports on a purely qualitative and exploratory study. It was conducted in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria between December 2013 and February 2014. A purposive sample with a convenience population was utilized. The sample was composed of 37 respondents (24 men and 13 women) all on holidays, visiting their family members from Belgium, South Africa, Germany, and Italy. The age of the respondents was between 28 and 56 years. Thirty of the respondents were married, while seven were not married but had children before leaving Nigeria. A semi-structured interview was conducted by the researcher in English and pidgin mixed with Bini local dialects; all issues were transcribed and translated by the researcher. The discussion was limited to issues related to migrant remittances and intra-household rivalry. The principle of anonymity and confidentiality of respondents were maintained. This informed the use of pseudo-names in the transcription, sorting, and analysis of responses.

Accountability and Inappropriate Use of Remittances
Some of the major reoccurring conflicts between family members and migrants were related to the ostentatious spending habits of relatives left behind. Specifically, every interviewee had one problem or the other regarding how remittances were shared and utilized prior to their return. Some of these problems were linked to excessive spending on luxuries such as expensive clothing, wrist watches or other electronic gadgets, the diversion of remittances meant for particular family members and for specific purposes, the slow pace of housing construction, and the building and/or renovation of personal houses other than that of migrants. According to Mr. Okoro, a South African–based migrant, who was visiting home for the first time in 5 years, the issue of inappropriate accountability of remittances started within the nuclear family and then extended to other related family members:

I discovered with shock that my younger ones have not only grown bigger than myself, but were also spending heavily on latest fashions, designers clothing and jewelries. From the look of things, I thought they were employed, not until my aged mother told me that it has become a habit for them to squander money on material things. On realizing this I asked for the statement of my account. There and then the cat was let loose. Fifty percent of my savings were gone. This has put me against some family members, especially my uncles and kid brothers. (Interview, 2013)
On further discussion with Mr. Okoro, he reported that his younger brothers never expected him to return so soon. So his return surprised all members of the family. They therefore had no time to balance his account. The insatiable nature of human comes to play in the dynamics of household conflict emanating from the accountability of migrants’ remittance. Thus, the possibility of remittance sharing generating intra-household conflict is embedded in the tension the visibility of remittance as a modern form of wealth carries. According to Sememe,

A lot of changes have occurred since I left. A once united family (even in poverty) is now divided with different camps doing their own thing as if they are neighbors. The genesis of the whole distrust and grievances was traced to my uncle. I got to know that it all started when my auntie was sick sometimes in 2010, when I sent the sum of N50,000 through a friend to assist her in her medication and business. My aunt only got half the amount. Meanwhile I have pre-informed her about the amount, she was to get through my uncle. It was barely 2 years in South Africa and my uncle was the only person living in the city where my friend did arrive. My aunt called me and informed me of what my uncle did. I was shocked, I asked her to forget about it and I made up the amount through another friend. Ever since, the trust and relationship between members of the family have not been cordial. (Interview, 2013)

Osaro narrated how his brother claimed to have invested US$ 5,000 in buying shares at the Nigerian stock exchange:

. . . I still cannot believe that I lost 5000 dollars, through the effort of my brother. About 500,000 thousand equivalent in Nigerian Naira. The money was meant to develop a plot of land I acquired from a friend living in Germany. My younger brother was the only one I could count upon to assist with the building. Behold, in 2007, he told me things were going on well as planned. Two years later, I informed him that I will be visiting Nigeria specifically for the Christmas holiday. On arrival on the 21st of December, my brother was nowhere to be found. Two days later I was told he invested my money in shares hoping to make double the amount, but unfortunately everything crashed and my money was gone. (Interview, 2014)

The feud between Osaro and his brother lasted for long, putting their relationship apart. Learning his lessons, he made it a point of duty to supervise the ongoing building whenever he visits home and never to send money to any relative except through trusted friends. For him, it was a case of once bitten twice shy. Certain influences such as family ties, age, education and occupation, resident/proximity to the city center play a major role in migrants’ and family decisions on who receives money on behalf of others (Airola, 2007; Orozco, 2006). Remittances through a male contact person dominated the responses. Reasons were mostly attributed to the mobility of men in cities such as Lagos, Enugu, and Abuja where major international airports are located.

One common controversy arising from migrant remittances through friends to family members was linked to the failure and difficulties of relatives locating migrants’ friends at a designated place for collection. Similarly, there were instances relating to remittances failure to reach the intended person at home or the intended person failing to meet the agent at a designated location. This gap creates a scenario whereby the person bringing in the money is forced to either drop the money with another family relative. Mr. Jimoh narrated how his friend Layi gave away money meant for his father to his brother:

. . . I have once sent US$1000 home through a friend, only for him to drop the money in the hands of my elder brother. Till date he has not paid that money and we have never been in good terms, when it comes to anything money. (Interview, 2014)

Also, Florence recalled a personal case of sending money to her mother only for the father to withhold half of the money:

I sent a close friend who promised taking the money home for me, but on his way to Lagos he changed his plan, sent someone else to my parents. The money was dropped with my father, only for him to remit half of it to my mother. This made me unhappy, we were not in talking terms for long because I have sent him some money earlier. Layi, a family influenced migrant from Spain, clearly stated that, the mistake of giving out money to the wrong person is no longer common because it has created a lot of animosity not only between family members but also among friends: “Friends no longer make the mistake of not giving the intended person the money.”

For Simi and Valentine, mobile phones have made it easier to avoid such mistakes, and if the intended person is not around, the money is kept until a safe and alternative arrangement is made.

**Male Role: Unequal Power in Remittance Disbursement and Utilization**

Gendered power relation within the family and household often does not go in favor of women with regard to finances and household decisions. All the female interviewees were of the view that men not only wield much authority over decisions regarding remittance utilization but also are the source of major conflicts within the family. In the discussion about adequate utilization of remittances and emanating intra-household disputes, Mrs. Esoghe explains her father’s autocratic posture when it comes to giving account of remittances. On the question, “How was the money spent?” he responded, “. . . there is no reason why I should explain how I spent my daughter’s money.” A wife or daughter will not reply to such a question in such a manner. This highlighted the disparity and unequal power relations in remittance utilization and accountability among family members.
Mrs. Esoghe:

... I am very careful when sending money to my father because he hardly ever gives account of remittances. He once told me “There is no reason why he should explain how he spent his daughter’s money.” In another instance, he said “If not for him I would not have been born.” There and then I switched to my sisters and aunt because my mother was not educated. Ever since, I have stopped sending money through any male relatives. (Interview, 2013)

Helen corroborated further the quarrels that often ensue between her and her father over her mothers’ monthly allowance:

... my father will always want to control the amount of money I sent for the upkeep of the entire family, especially for my mother. Initially I sent money through him for everyone in the family, only to be told that he hardly gives my mother anything. This became the line of conflict, as she had to diverse another means of sending money directly to her mother. She concluded that “My father did not like the idea; he felt I was empowering my mother!”

In another interview, Osaro narrated the case of his former brother in-law who wanted to control and oversee the remittance to his sister.

I have lived abroad and realized that women should live a good life, so I always make sure my only sister get the best from me. I was constantly sending her money to make her happy, but this did not go down well with her ex-husband. He was always nagging, telling me, my sister does not respect him any longer because she has money. I once warned him not to say that again because he was indirectly accusing me for his family problems. Later in 2010, my sister called me to inform me she was getting a divorce, that she and her children are being battered and that she cannot continue with the marriage. (Interview, 2013)

Mr. Osaro’s refusal to allow her sister’s husband to control remittances may in one way or the other have affected the strained relationship between his sister and her husband; nevertheless, this cannot be justified in relation to the battering of his wife and children. Behavioral outcomes as related to financial independence often do not always corroborate the economic gains most literature has assumed. This assumption in its short fall neglects the fact that loosing economic constraints may have other unforeseen consequences beyond the economic to the behavioral as in the case of Mrs. Lucinda whose children were not given proper care by her husband and other extended family members in her absence:

... for five years I was sending money directly to my husband for the upkeep of the family but only to return in 2008 for the first time, seeing my only daughter pregnant at fifteen. I was not informed. Her two brothers were also not doing well in school. They have all grown stubborn under the care of their father and other extended family members. This situation completely strained my relationship with their father and I had to seek for divorce in 2009. A lot had gone wrong in my absence. (Interview, 2013)

In detail, she highlighted the lost bond between herself and her children. She was of the opinion that her ex-husband neglected the children, placing them in low-quality schools and leaving them in the hands of aged family members with excessive and unguided freedom. Their father was also accused of siphoning the remittances over the years for his personal gains, infidelity, and seeking pleasures with women and alcohol. With all these allegations, the bond between Mrs. Lucinda and her family was affected. Situation like this is often not given a thought while migrating abroad. Much emphasis is placed on how best to ensure better welfare, education, and opportunities for children, building a house, and generally for self-improvement that probably could not have happened without foreign earnings.

According to the Human Rights Watch (2007), reported increase in cases of child neglect in developing countries has been attributed and blamed on the decision by women to migrate overseas. Similarly, the absence of motherly attention through migration exposes children and male companions (husbands and fathers) to a lot of vices capable of breaking down family values and bond. A situation which might hamper proper upbringing of children, left in the hands of single parents with too much responsibilities to enforce shared morally correct behaviors. Although a number of studies have revealed the effect of migration on the family and household (Emmett, 2001; Thomas, 1987), especially its impact on women, children, and the aged, this study through the narratives of female migrants in marital union prior to their journey abroad shows that husbands left behind are also affected, notwithstanding male figure at home controlling and disbursing remittances to other members of the family.

Demands and Pressure on Migrants: Linking Remittances With Polygamous Union

Though not always positive as revealed above, there are cases of left behind husbands indulging in extra-marital affairs and polygamous relationships and children out of wedlock. A partner, who can not put up with this, had to move out of their matrimonial home to other apartments. This was found to have put much pressure on migrants financially. There was also a case of migrants from polygamous homes becoming frustrated with the demands of family members. One such demand centered on building a house for the family, another was to expand the family house to accommodate more extended family members. The ultimatum given by the father of Miss Itohan was the first quarrel she encountered with her family:
I was terrified because I am not a male child neither was I the eldest. Again I have not even spent 18 months in Germany in 2007. I guess my father felt I was having too much money to play with since I have made it a tradition to send money and clothes at any slightest opportunity.

. . . I made it point blank that if at all I will build a house, it will only accommodate the siblings from my mother and not children from his mistresses. This made my father furious and cut communication with me. Later, he was diagnosed as being hypertensive, not only was I accused, my mother also was alleged to have influenced my decision, just because I stopped sending stuffs as usual. (Interview, 2014)

Two particularly important narratives from Lucy and Itohan revealed some of the unintended crisis remittances foster in polygamous union and extended family. Lucy was not comfortable with too many persons in her father’s house, while Itohan wanted to protect her mother from constant fights with other wives and their children.

I left Nigeria to Italy when I was 28 years, through the assistance of a friend. My mother did all she could without the knowledge of my father. Ever since, I have never relented in sending money. In 2005, I decided to build a two-bedroom apartment which was completed in 2007, simply because there were too many persons in my father’s house (siblings of other wives and grandchildren). Logically I asked my mother and my kid brother to move into the house permanently. It became an issue. I was accused of disuniting the family. Other members of the family went against me calling me all sorts of names, all because I wanted a better life for my aged mother. The truth was that they were all afraid I was going to cut-off remittance to them. I know the envy still persist; I do not give a damn! (Lucy, Interview, 2014)

In Itohan’s case, she had to relocate her mother and siblings to a rented apartment before building a house for them. This she said was to safeguard her mother from constant fights between the father’s mistresses and their children. The use of remittances in developing countries for housing projects (building of new houses or repairing of existing ones) is consistently reported in literatures (Adams, Cuecuecha, & Page, 2008; Balde, 2011; Kabki et al., 2003) but not the problem it generates within the household. Wilson narrates how his decision to bury his mother in his own newly built house became a source of hatred among members of the family:

On my first visit in 2005, I discovered that my mother was not getting the best as expected based on the money and items sent regularly, but she has never for once complained. She is the quiet type. In July 15th, 2007, I received a call that my mother was knocked down by a motorcycle while on her way to the farm. Thus my second visit was to bury my mother. Not knowing the implication, I took it upon myself to convince other family members that the corpse should be buried in my newly built house. (Wilson, Interview, 2013)

Customarily among the Bini, it is a taboo for a younger son to oversee the burial rights of a parent while the eldest son is still alive. In this case, Wilson felt that he had to do it, because his elder brother had no house of his own. He narrated further,

. . . I cannot imagine sending money for the upkeep of the family. There were two cars in the custody and private use of my brother, yet my mum was patronizing commercial motorcycle at the age of 73. She was completely neglected by my elder brother who was living with her in the same apartment, prior to her death. (Wilson, Interview, 2013)

This he said did not go down well with his elder brother and some family members who took side with tradition. Family members were of the opinion that he has made ridicule of his elder brother and the tradition, just because he is well off. As at the time of this interview, Wilson and his elder brother and some members of the extended family still do not see eye to eye.

Conflict of Expectations

Whose decision it was to go abroad for greener pastures was found relevant in the interviews conducted. About two thirds of the respondents revealed that they were told to go abroad by their parents (much emphasis was placed on fathers, mothers, aunties, and uncles). Thus, these family members were said to have much influence on the regularity of remittances sent home by the migrant. Joke highlighted her mother’s decision and pressure on her journey abroad:

. . . many a time we have had to fight over issues regarding money. In 1999, when I travelled first to Greece, barely six months in Greece, she has started pressurizing me to send her money. She even told me that those who left Benin after her have started sending money and goods home. The pressure was too much I was forced to change my phone numbers. I kept receiving mails and messages from my mother through friends saying “that my going abroad was her idea and decision.” I did not give a damn. Not until I became stable financially. (Joke, Interview, 2013)

A similar case was highlighted by Isoken, a Nigerian based in Italy. She was handed over by her parents to an agent, who took her abroad only to be told she was going to work on the streets of Milan, in Italy, as a prostitute:

The first five years of my arrival was hell with too much demands for money. This strained the relationship with some family members. For three reasons: There was no job, the agent wanted me to be prostituting for money, and I was trapped in a debt of over 40,000 Euros which the agent demanded for bringing me to Italy. He placed surveillance on me. I was just like a slave. One day I called my parents accusing them of knowing what the agent wanted me to do for a living. For long it was quarrel upon quarrel. (Isoken, Interview, 2013)
Mr. Azubuike was caught in the middle of those who assisted him financially on his way to South Africa:

After paying the N80,000 debts owed my relatives, they still have the feeling that I owe them. I am being accused of not remembering their contribution towards my journey abroad. Now my aunts and uncles do not even pick my calls, neither do they relate with my parents and siblings. The last text message I got from my uncle was that “I am an ingrate.” (Azubuike, Interview, 2013)

The above narratives show that those who have contributed in one way or the other through ideas, decision, or monetary assistance will always want to attach themselves to migrants financially. Ideas, decisions, and past assistance are thus taken as sources of investments that should yield returns. In other instances, agitation for remittances is taken as a right that should be continuous. Whenever it stops, a migrant is labeled as an ingrate, just like the case of Azubuike and Isoken. The findings corroborate Taylors’ (1999) developmentalist analysis of the link between migration and remittances as part of family strategies to raise income, obtain funds to invest in new activities, and remain financially stable in poor developing countries. Similarly, for many years, researchers and policy makers have analyzed the determinants of migration and remittances, most times independently with much emphasis on economic gains and constraints (Murray, 1980; Ratha, 2003). Whose decision it is to migrate is a question often not found in sociological research compared with factors that determine migration.

Remittance and Rivalries Among Family Members

Successful migrants are expected to contribute financially to the well-being of the extended family members and neighbors. Failure to do this may put the immediate family at loggerheads not only with the extended family but also with the migrants. Thus, migrants’ concentration of remittance within their nuclear family may jeopardize relationship and their lives, because the extended family serves as both spiritual and physical security in Africa. Economic success of migrants’ nuclear families is often linked to remittances. This is also expected to reflect in the extended family households. When this is not the case, respondents’ narratives revealed that ill feelings and discord are heightened as well as accusations and counter accusations of witch hunt and witchcraft within the extended family. Witch hunt was highlighted in Aina’s narrative as a common intra-household problem associated with the envy remittances can create. Long-time migration did not affect migrants’ belief in witchcraft. No matter how long migrants stayed abroad, they do not take for granted issues of witchcraft as mere insinuations. Suspicions often built through series of difficulties and minor conflicts as revealed in Mrs. Aina’s ordeal. Shedding tears, she recalled the first time she was attacked:

. . . It was in September 26th, 2007, a day I will never forget. That night, I was sleeping, in the visitors room, in my uncle’s house, only to wake up at the middle of the night, sweating profusely, feeling as if I have just escaped from being strangulated. In the morning I noticed there were scratches on my neck, arms and skin. I had to leave the apartment the next day to a friend’s place. Ever since, I have stopped going to my uncle’s place, my mum once warned me about some family members especially on issues and circumstances surrounding my father’s death. I learnt to believe her that particular night, that really there are witches and evil men and women within the family. Some of them are not happy with what I am doing for my mother and siblings. (Aina, Interview, 2013)

Migration often does not change the belief system about witchcraft and other cultural beliefs. Witchcraft was seen as something capable of causing misfortune and difficulties that are beyond rational explanations. Accusations of witchcraft reflect more than just a sour relationship: Aina’s story is just one of many incidences of migrants’ accusations and perceived threats to their lives. For Anuwa, she suspected her sister-in-law who she once accommodated in Alexandra, in South Africa for her recent misfortune and dwindling finances:

. . . I assisted Grace in getting to South Africa, she stayed with me for 3 years but she was just too lazy, not sending money home regularly. Her parents felt I was her undoing. On hearing this I was asked her to get a place for herself. This did not go down well with her family. However since she left my place, terrible things happened in my life. From one hospital to another, incurring expenses in South Africa and at home. I knew no one other than Grace would be the source of my problems. This was later confirmed by my mother. She told me on phone one morning in 2010, that I should be prayerful, that she saw some family members in her dream with machete after her. Who else if not Grace! (Anuwa, Interview, 2013)

As described above, financial misfortune was capable of creating unhealthy rivalry among migrants’ relatives. It is often not uncommon for family members in sub-Saharan Africa to accuse one another directly or indirectly for misfortune, ill health, and failures (Fisiy, 1998; Schnoebelen, 2009). Russel, a Nigerian migrant from Belgium, noted that there was much unity and love in his family prior to his leaving the country: “. . . We were much happier and united in poverty than it is now, with all the money from abroad”:

. . . In 2008, I made necessary arrangement for my nieces to join me abroad, so as to reduce the burden on me. I never knew this was going to disunite my siblings. Barely a year, the younger niece was sending money and other material things to his dad (my brother), unlike the other. This became a source of envy for my sister (a widow). She felt her own daughter was being witch
hunted, by my brother and other relatives. A time came I was informed she (my sister) had packed out of the family house to a rented apartment. They were accusing one another of witch-hunting themselves. To avoid being dragged into the quarrel I did not visit home for two years. In 2012, my sister became hypertensive and within six months she had stroke. Today she is still bed ridden. The family is tearing apart. I always tell people that we were much better, happier and united in poverty than it is now with the wealth and luxury. (Russel, Interview, 2013)

Witchcraft accusations and witch hunt in intra-household conflicts have been explained as a consequence of rapid cultural or social change, just like migration. Independent studies have also shown a high tendency of such allegations, respectively, in times of socioeconomic upheaval in sub-Saharan Africa (Adepoju, 2007; Fisiy, 1998). Though there are several interrelated explanations on possible circumstances that might lead to witchcraft accusations, narratives revolved around health, economic, cultural, and political misfortunes. The belief in witchcraft has a long history and is a widespread phenomenon throughout the world (Behringer, 2004; Bever, 2000). Although beliefs vary among time and place, the question of their validity or existence in certain cultures of the world is not contested. It however becomes a problem when the belief in witchcraft leads to intra-household rivalry and accusations that ignite acts of persecution (Schnoebelen, 2009). Hutton points out five commonly upheld features about beliefs in witchcraft: (a) Witches use non-physical means to cause misfortune or injury to others; (b) harm is usually caused to neighbors or kin rather than strangers; (c) strong social disapproval follows, in part because of the element of secrecy and in part because their motives are not wealth or prestige but malice and spite; (d) witches work within long-standing traditions, rather than in one-time only contexts; and (e) other humans can resist witches through persuasion, non-physical means (counter-magic), or deterrence, including thorough corporal punishment, exile, fines, or execution (Hutton, as cited by Alston, 2009). A common ground for the analysis of witch hunt and witchcraft is the feelings of envy, hatred, jealousy, and fear which frequently accompany witchcraft accusations, interpreted as a conscious or unconscious displacement of responsibility for a rupture in an interpersonal relationship (Bever, 2000).

**Conclusion**

This article interrogates remittance and its implication for conflicts in migrants’ household. Narratives from Nigerian migrants revealed that most remittance-based conflicts within their households were as a result of mismanagement and unaccountability of remittances, chauvinistic tendencies of household heads over remittance disbursements, and high expectations within the nuclear and extended family members. These were linked as major pointers of distrust and envy, which often serve as fertile grounds for remittance-related conflicts. The study observed the inequality in migrants’ remittance distribution channel emanating from the patriarchal dominance of women in migrants’ household. Through the literatures, the study argues that migration and remittances play a major role in alleviating poverty and national development, but also analyzed the actions and inactions of both migrants and family members as capable of affecting this process, through intra-household conflicts. I have highlighted issues of unaccountability and concentration of remittances within the nuclear family households as major sources of rivalry, envy, distrust, and accusations of witch hunt among family members. Similarly, the study identified the perception of migration and remittances as “a family investment,” which puts much pressure on migrants to continuously cater to the extended family needs. The pressure, therefore, to satisfy all through remittances often frustrates and makes migrants to temporarily cut off communication with family members until they are financially stable.

This study does not in any way undermine the fact that the sending of remittances is unarguably a moral and social obligation not limited to or with the potential to improve migrants’ family members, migrants’ social statuses, family standards of living, better health, education, and financial asset formation. It however throws the searchlight on salient conflicts revolving round migrants’ remittances and family relationships. Evidences from this study show that strains in relationship between migrants and their family members are vital factors capable of turning the tide of remittances negatively, especially in cases where previous remittances are not adequately utilized. Thus, this study suggests that migrants’ remittances not be treated as all positive monolithic entities in migration and development studies.

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