

THE MASS EXODUS OF NIGERIAN WORKFORCE FOR GREENER PASTURES: DOES THE “MIGRATION SYNDROME” CREATE VACANCIES FOR THE UNEMPLOYED NIGERIANS IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS?

BY:

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Abstract:

There is mass exodus of Nigerian workers both skilled and unskilled from Nigeria, they are exiting in droves and the trend seems unending. The exodus cuts across every stratum of the Nigeria workforce, and the emigration is nick named ‘Japa.’ Japa is a Yoruba word which means escape or to flee. The question one is tempted to ask is what are the Nigerian workers fleeing or escaping from? Well, the answers vary. Some argued that they are fleeing or escaping from deepening hardship in the country. To others, they are fleeing to other jurisdictions for better healthcare and social welfare; yet others say for better education and more robust and promising future, greener pastures, better working environment. The emigrant or the ‘japa’ Nigerians believe that other countries provide better security of lives, better property, better working environment, better pay package and the welfare of the citizens is taken seriously. All of these are elusive in Nigeria going by the myriad reports on Nigeria’s worsening insecurity and poverty level.

It is evident that the mass exodus of Nigerians from the country have and continues to affect the labor force of Nigeria adversely. The question the paper tries to answer and unpack is: does the japa syndrome create vacancies and employment for the unemployed Nigerians both at the public and private sectors of the economy?

Keywords: Japa, Nigeria, greener pasture, economy, exodus, employment, syndrome, emigration, youth, skilled workers, labor force

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1 Introduction

Nigerians are all over the world with talents, skills and professional abilities² which could have helped in Nigeria's development;³ the exodus and/or movement is massive,⁴ it is the movement of trained personnel, skilled labor migration from Nigeria⁵ to other countries seeking for better working environment and opportunities.⁶ It is called human capital flight⁷ or 'japa'.⁸

Another term for the human capital flight is brain drain. It is described or defined as:

“The mass emigration of technically skilled people or skilled labor from one country to another country, it is the loss of skilled intellectual and technical labor when they move to a geographic, economic or professional environment which is more favorable to them.”⁹

In addition, brain drain takes place when scientific, technical and leadership talent is lost through emigration to other jurisdictions.¹⁰ Flowing from this, some scholars have asserted that the continent of Africa have been victims of brain-drain to other nations of the world with Ethiopia losing over 75% of her skilled workers.¹¹

The mass exodus of trained personnel and skilled workers have had and continues to have detrimental effect on the development of Nigeria.¹² It is on record for instance that, Nigeria¹³ and Kenya¹⁴ are the worst hit in respect of 'japa' or the movement of their labor force.

²Martins Hile, 'Nigeria is undermining and losing its best talent' Financial Nigeria <<https://www.financialnigeria.com>> nigeria-is-underm... accessed on 11 December 2023.

³Tolu Lawal and Abe Oluwatoyin, 'National development in Nigeria: issues, challenges and prospects' [2017] (11) (4) African journal of political science 1.

⁴Victor Domshiwe Shehu, 'When home is no longer home: the massive exodus of Nigerian youths out of Nigeria' [2019] (4) (2) Aumen journal of moral education in Africa 1.

⁵Lanre Ikuteyijo, 'Nigerian migrants: Pursuing the dream at any cost' [2018] UNESCO courier 1.

⁶Tai Arowojolu-Alagwe, Anthony Ankeli, Adeleye Odewande and Olaniyi Apata, 'An Appraisal of Skilled Labour Migration in Nigerian Construction Industry' [2013] (4) (1) International journal of business administration 86.

⁷Ipole Peter Afi, 'Labour Migration among Skilled Workers: A Sociological Analysis of Existing Working Conditions in Nigeria' [2018] (23) (7) IOSR journal of humanities and social science 35.

⁸Damilola Adegoke, "'Japa": an exploratory study of the roles of social media in an out-migration trend in Nigeria' [2023] Social media and society 1.

⁹Answers.com. (2011) <<http://www.answers.com/topic/brain-drain>> accessed on 7 December 2023.

¹⁰Kana, 'From Brain Drain to Brain Circulation' [2014] (4) (2) Jos journal of medicine 8.

¹¹Samuel Ike, 'The health workforce crisis: the brain drain scourge' [2007] (16) (3) Nigerian journal of medicine 206.

¹²Ebenezer Adesoji Olubiye, 'Labor market effects of emigration in Nigeria: skill-level analysis' [2021] (25)(1) Iranian economic review 137.

There is global demand for professionals and skilled labor,¹⁵ as a result, professionals and workers in Nigeria across every aspect of her labor force have experienced shortage.¹⁶ Brain-drain in one country is brain-gain in another country,¹⁷ to this end, skilled labor migration have had adverse effect on employment and service delivery in Nigeria.¹⁸

It is trite that human resources constitute the foundation of production activities.¹⁹ It is the human resources that are active agents who accumulate, exploit, process and develop other passive natural resources.²⁰ The human resources build the social, economic and political institutions thereby ensuring societal development.²¹ Put differently, the human resources, also referred to as the manpower are a nation's most critical and valuable resources.²²

On top of this, the human resources or the work force are more important than physical and financial resources,²³ reason being that, without the requisite human capital in the form of skilled personnel, endowed with technical know-how, physical capital in the form of machines

¹³Larry Madowo, Bethlehem Fridah Okutoyi, Feleke, 'Many talented young Nigerians are leaving. halting the exodus will be a task for the next president' < <https://www.cnn.com> > 2023/02/24 > africa > nigeria-ja...>accessed on 11 December 2023.

¹⁴'Labour market profile Kenya – 2022/2023' [2023] Danish trade union development Agency ii.

¹⁵Fredrick, 'High demand for skilled manpower' [2022] <<https://www.linkedin.com>> pulse > high-demand-skilled..>accessed on 11 December 2023.

¹⁶UNDP '20 percent of the fulltime workforce in Nigeria lost employment during the COVID-19 pandemic' UNDP and National Bureau of Statistics report' [2021] United Nations Development Programme<<https://www.undp.org>> nigeria > press-releases > 20-p...>accessed on 11 December 2023.

¹⁷Sandra Berger, 'Brain drain, brain gain and its net effect' [2022] Global knowledge partnership on migration and development paper 46, 30.

¹⁸Adedokun karzanova, 'Impact of migration on the economy of Nigeria: recent trends' [2019] Vestnik Nsuem 204.

¹⁹ Emeghara Evaristus Elechi, 'Brain Drain as a clog in the wheel of Nigeria's development: The University education system in focus' [2013] (8) (1) International journal of development and management review 111.

²⁰Sean Ross, 'What is the human capital theory and how is it used?' [2023] <<https://www.investopedia.com>> ... > Macroeconomics>accessed on 11 December 2023.

²¹ Daron Acemoglu, Francisco Gallego and James Robinson, 'Institutions, human capital and development' [2014] (6) (1) SSRN electronic journal 10.

²²Abraham Musa Peter and Bosede Betty Julius, 'Impact assessment of manpower development on productivity in the Kogi state civil service commission 2011 – 2015' [2022] (3) (2) Zamfara journal of politics and development 17.

²³James Nwoye Obi, 'Effective human resources management practices as the key to organizational performance' [2015] (3) (1) International journal of educational research, innovations and methods 1.

and other technologies will not give rise to rapid economic growth and development,²⁴ unemployment will be rampant in such country.²⁵

The study is done due to the high rate of outflow of a significant number of Nigeria's most highly qualified and skilled personnel to other countries in search of greener pastures. The paper tries to find out if actually 'japa' creates vacancies or employment for the unemployed Nigerians both in the public and private sectors of the economy and the concludes by suggesting measures to remedy this ugly trajectory.

2 Mass exodus of the Nigerian workforce: the genesis and why?

Nigeria has one of most robust legislations on labor and employment matters or issues.²⁶ Before going to answer the above question on the genesis and the reason why Nigerians are exiting in droves to other countries, one needsto examine the enabling law in respect to the provisions of work in the country.

It is worthy of note that owing to bad governance,²⁷ unemployment,²⁸ unfavorable working conditions,²⁹ insecurity in Nigeria³⁰ to mention but a few, the youths, professionals and the skilled workers in Nigeria resort to searching for help in foreign lands.³¹ This trajectory has posed threats to the Nigeria's labor force as the country is left with fewprospectiveskilledworkersand

²⁴Zia Qureshi, 'Technology and the future of growth: Challenges of change' <<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/technology-an-...>> accessed on 11 December 2023.

²⁵'Unemployment threatens world cities; jobs are needed to check growth in urban poverty, says ILO' <https://www.ilo.org/WCMS_008055> lang--en> accessed on 11 December 2023.

²⁶The main sources of employment law in Nigeria are as follows: The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) (the "Constitution"); the Labour Act, Chapter L1, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004 ("Labour Act"); federal laws enacted by the National Assembly (Nigeria's national legislative houses) and the State laws enacted by the House of Assembly (the state legislative authority) of each state that relate to labour and employment.

²⁷Jamilu Ibrahim Mukhtar, Aminu Abdullahi, Muazu Abdullahi Ishaq and Suleiman Mohammed Isyaku, 'Bad Governance and Insecurity in Nigeria' [2021] (2) (1) International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development 349.

²⁸Benedict Oghenekpoje Ighoshemu and Ufuoma Benson Ogidiagba, 'Poor governance and massive unemployment in Nigeria: as causes of brain drain in the Buhari administration (2015-2020) [2022] (4) (2) Insights Into Regional Development 73.

²⁹Johnny Eluka and Nwonu Christopher Okafor, 'A Critical Review of The Effect of Working Conditions On Employee Performance: Evidence From Nigeria' [2015] <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/28418381...>> accessed on 12 December 2023.

³⁰Ndubuisi-Okolo Purity and Theresa Anigbuogu, 'Insecurity in Nigeria: the Implications for Industrialization and Sustainable Development' [2029] (6) (5) International journal of research in business studies and management volume 7.

³¹Kenechi Nnaemeka Afunugo 70.

professionals to fill the vacuum left in various public and private parastatals and other fields of endeavor.

The Nigerian constitution

The 1999 Nigerian Constitution is the principal law when it comes to work provision and the security thereof for the Nigerian workers,³² however, the same constitution did not place positive obligation on the Nigerian governments to provide work in favor of the Nigerian Worker.³³ Pursuant to the provisions of S.6(6)(c)³⁴ of the same constitution which excluded the courts from any question arising therefrom, the constitution lost its utility. To this end, the constitution failed and/or neglected to confer rights of action on the Nigerian workers on whose behalf the provisions of S. 17(3)(a)(b)(c) were made, hence, chapter II of the said law is non-justiciable.

It is submitted that pursuant to the construction of the second chapter of the 1999 constitution, it follows therefore, that there are no rights of the worker protected on the job, as a result, no job security.

It is trite law that S.17(3) is not justiciable and to that extent not accessible or unavailable to the Nigerian workers, but S. 40 of the constitution makes provision for the workers that is enforceable, i.e. right to form or join a trade union or other associations of their choice for the protection of their interest.³⁵

³² S. 17(3)(a)(b)(c) (3) The State shall direct its policy towards ensuring that- all citizens, without discrimination on any group whatsoever, have the opportunity for securing adequate means of livelihood as well as adequate opportunity to secure suitable employment; conditions of work are just and humane, and that there are adequate facilities for leisure and for social, religious and cultural life; the health, safety and welfare of all persons in employment are safeguarded and not endangered or abused.

³³Robinson Monday Olulu, Udeorah and Sylvester Alor 'Job Security in Nigeria: The Policies and Laws Vis-à-Vis ILO Standard' [2018] (II) (XII) International journal of research and innovation in social science 71.

³⁴ The judicial powers vested in accordance with the foregoing provisions of this section - (a) shall extend, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this constitution, to all inherent powers and sanctions of a court of law (b) shall extend, to all matters between persons, or between government or authority and to any persons in Nigeria, and to all actions and proceedings relating thereto, for the determination of any question as to the civil rights and obligations of that person.

³⁵ Every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons, and in particular he may form or belong to any political party, trade union or any other association for the protection of his interests.

The truth of the matter remains that the said S. 40 giving rights to form and join trade union is not open-ended. Put differently, it is not an absolute right but one restricted or limited by the provisions of S.45(1)³⁶ of the same 1999 constitution.

The section in question permits the State to deny anyone the right under S.40 for overriding public and/or national interest and for the protection of the rights of other people. It is arguable that S.40 of the 1999 CFRN does not with or without good intent provide for the job security of the Nigerian workers, but only sets or established the foundation where workers can seek protection from the clutches of the employer. For this purpose and intent, Nigerians are leaving the country.

3 The genesis of Nigerians migrating or leaving the country in droves and why

Migration is not a wasteful exercise,³⁷ it is not evil,³⁸ neither is it a purposeless venture.³⁹ In fact, migration is a gainful venture, it's prospects are high and favorable if legitimately embarked on and positively inclined.⁴⁰ As beautiful as migration may seem, there is a caveat however, the caveat is that, like every other life endeavor, once balance is not struck, and the venture tilts to any bad and unfortunate side of life, there are dire consequences as it backfires and the migrants suffer diminishing returns.⁴¹

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)⁴² (2014), argued that migration has many benefits, amongst which are that it accounts for over 47% of increase in the workforce of host countries e.g. in the United States and over 70% in Europe, the percentages in

³⁶ Nothing in sections 37, 38, 39, 40 and 41 of this Constitution shall invalidate any law that is reasonably justifiable in a democratic society.

³⁷ Team, 'What a waste: ensure migrants and refugees' qualifications and prior learning are recognized' [2018] Policy paper 37 2.

³⁸ Otuu Obasi, 'Rural urban migration & national development in Nigeria' [2013] (3)(1) African journal of behavioural science 1.

³⁹ Roger Rodriguez Rios, (ed) 'Migration perspectives Eastern Europe and Central Asia' [2006] 3.

⁴⁰ Tesky Timothy Agoben, 'Migration in Africa - Who Gains and Who Lose? The Prospects and Problems of Migration in Africa: For the Migrant and the African Continent' [2018] (4) (3) Journal of social sciences 344.

⁴¹ Zsoka Koczan, Giovanni Peri, Magali Pinat and Dmitriy Rozhkov, 'The impact of international migration on inclusive growth: a review' [2021] Institute for capacity development 2.

⁴² The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is a unique forum where the governments of 37 democracies with market-based economies collaborate to develop policy standards to promote sustainable economic growth.

both destinations increased the cultural diversity, it filled skills gaps, it boosted the local economy and brought increase in government tax revenues.⁴³

However, regardless of the benefits attached to migration,⁴⁴ the attendant risk connected to the high rate at which Africans in general and Nigeria's young professionals and skilled workers are migrating to other countries in search of better working opportunities⁴⁵ cannot be overemphasized. It is submitted that this life's option is not good and favorable to Nigeria as a country.⁴⁶ Flowing from the foregoing, some scholars have reasoned that the Japa syndrome in Nigeria is for good, and will serve the country favorably sooner rather than later.⁴⁷

Going by available statistics, the youth and young professionals in the country fall into the bracket of the highest numbers migrating to other foreign jurisdictions,⁴⁸ and some more are still intending to exodus.⁴⁹ The reasons for this mass exodus are not far-fetched: First, is the issue of bad governance; secondly, is the issue of mass unemployment; thirdly, is the issue of unfavorable working conditions; fourthly, is the wide gap between the haves and the have-nots;⁵⁰ fifthly, is the issue of bad economy; sixthly, is the issue of unavailability of social amenities⁵¹ and the last but not least is the issue of insecurity in the country. These and many more are the push factors fueling the propensity of the Nigerian working force to migrate.⁵² Is it surprising or wrong therefore to conclude that migration is viewed as 'japa syndrome' in Nigeria?

It is worthy to note that African and in particular Nigerian migration had risen steadily in the past two decades because records have it that:

⁴³OECD, 'Migration policy debates' <<https://www.oecd.org/migration/OECD>>. accessed on 7 December 2023.

⁴⁴Andreas Damelang and Anette Haas, 'The benefits of migration' [2012] *European societies* 19-20.

⁴⁵A M Williams and V Baláz 'Migration, risk and uncertainty: theoretical perspectives,' *population, space and place* [2012] (18) (2) 167.

⁴⁶Ojo Olusegun, 'Impact of Immigration on Nigerian Economy' [2015] *Social science research network* 1.

⁴⁷Olisah, 'Bill Gates explains how Japa syndrome is healthy for Nigeria' *Nairametrics*, <https://www.google.com/amp/s/nairametrics.com> accessed on 7 December 2023.

⁴⁸Odimegwu and Joe-Akunne, 'A cross sectional survey of intending migrants in Anambra state' [2023] *Journal of African migrations* 26-48.

⁴⁹Tunde Alabi and Bamidele Olajide, 'Who wants to go where? regional variations in emigration intention in Nigeria' [2023] (9) (1) *African human mobility review* 77.

⁵⁰Ekeagwu Innocent Chukwuemeka and Ewurum Ngozi, 'Global widening gap between the rich and the poor: lesson for Nigeria' [2015] (2) (4) *JSAR Journal of advanced management and social sciences* 128.

⁵¹Clement Ebizimor Deinne, 'Inequalities in access to infrastructural amenities and sustainable development in Delta State, Nigeria' [2021] (13) (2) *Ghana journal of geography* 209.

⁵²Oluwaseyi Popogbe and Oluyemi Theophilus Adeosun, 'Empirical analysis of the push factors of human capital flight in Nigeria' [2020] *Journal of humanities and applied social sciences* 3.

“The record level of over 40million African migrants represents a 30% increase from the year 2010 and that given the continuing strong push factor, that trend can be expected to continue in 2023.”⁵³

In addition,regarding to the worrisome rate at which Nigeria’s young professionals and skilled workers leave the country in droves,the Nigerian chapter of the international college of surgeons (ICS), did not hide their reservations at the uncontrollable dimension of the massive exodus ofNigerian medical practitioners to other countries of the world with particular reference to the UK⁵⁴ for favorable life. The ICS, the Nigerian section further alluded to the fact that over six thousand, two hundred and twenty-one (6,221) Nigerian physicians left Nigeria for the United Kingdom,⁵⁵ stressing that Nigeria at present has the ratio of a doctor toaboutfour thousand (4,000) patients,⁵⁶ in contradistinction to the recommendation of World Health Organization (WHO) of a doctor to six hundred (600) patients.⁵⁷ Quite over burdensome for the doctors.

The logical conclusion from the foregoing premises is that the ‘japa’phenomenon is militating against the stability, productivity, sustainability and improvement of the Nigerian labor force,⁵⁸ and the mass exodus of our skilled workers is indicative of one truth: the future of the Nigerian labor force is uncertain, bleak and fragile,⁵⁹ unless drastic steps are taken and

⁵³Africa center for strategicstudies, ‘African migration trendsto watch in 2023’<https://africacenter.org/spotlight/african-migration-trends-to-watch-in-2023/#~:test=> accessed on 7 December 2023.

⁵⁴Oluwasanjo, ‘Japa: Like Bill Gates, I support Nigerians fleeing abroad; brain drain will become “brain gain”, says Obi’ Peoples Gazatte.<https://www.gazettengr.com/>.. accessed on 7 December 2023.

⁵⁵Esther Onyegbula '6,221 Nigerian doctors lost to UK in 6 years' - Vanguard News
The International College of Surgeons, Nigerian Section, ICS-NS, has said the country lost no fewer than 6,221 doctors to the United Kingdom in the last six years <<https://www.vanguardngr.com> > News> accessed on 12 December 2023.

⁵⁶Ajoma Akor, ‘Brain Drain: Nigeria’s Doctor-Patient Ratio Now 1 To 5,000’<<https://dailytrust.com> > brain-drain-nigerias-doctor-pat> accessed on 12 December 2023.

⁵⁷Nan, Nigeria cannot afford one doctor per 600 patients’ ratio, says FG’ As a developing country, Nigeria was unlikely to meet the recommendation of the United Nations and the World Health Organization’s ratio of one doctor to 600 patients.

⁵⁸Chima Eneje ‘JAPA syndrome: a plague to development’<<https://www.linkedin.com> > pulse > mass-migration-niger.>accessed on 12 December 2023.

⁵⁹Misan Rewane Teetering on the Edge of a Cliff Safeguarding Nigeria's Future Workforce’ [2019] (3) (3) The republic 2.

something substantial is done by the Nigerian authorities,⁶⁰ there will be no hopes for the nation.⁶¹

The question however still remains: how will the most populous black nation in the continent of Africa avert the impending danger steering at its face like a keg of a gun powder searching for where to explode with a view to destabilizing the future prospects of the Nigerian labor force and thereby creating high rate of unemployment?

4 Do the Nigerian legal ‘diasporans’ fall under the ‘japa syndrome’?

As noted earlier, the human capital or the workforce are the most potent resources of a nation.⁶² Without the human capital resources, the nation will be left undeveloped and unemployment and lack of social amenities will be prevalent.⁶³ As a result, people will be forced to seek for alternative means of livelihood somewhere else.⁶⁴ This is the situation Nigeria and Nigerians found themselves.

At this juncture, the Nigerians mass leaving the country for greener pastures and those who left legitimately referred to as the ‘diasporans’ are they one and the same? The answer may be found in the following segment.

In a world where the issues of identity and ethnicity are keenly contested,⁶⁵ it may not be easy to define the word or term ‘diaspora;’ reason being that, all over the globe, many different ethnicities, nationalities, races, and religions claim diaspora identity for themselves.⁶⁶ Flowing from the foregoing, defining diaspora and who qualifies as a diasporan in the context of ‘japa’ will be problematic. To this end, anyone who attempts to pendown about the Nigerian diaspora will be caught in a definitional web.

⁶⁰Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning ‘National development plan (NDP) 2021-2025 Volume I’ [2021] (1) 3.

⁶¹Micheal Evbrohonren Owhoko, ‘The future of Nigeria’ [2021] A Ph.D. dissertation to the Selinus University 9.

⁶² Impact of human capital on economic growth’ <<https://byjus.com> > ... > List of Commerce Articles> accessed on 12 December 2023.

⁶³Collins Ayoo, ‘Poverty reduction strategies in developing countries’ [2021] Open access peer review chapter 1.

⁶⁴Karen Jacobsen, ‘Livelihoods and forced migration’ [2014] 1.

⁶⁵Zeynab Jibreel, ‘Cultural Identity and the Challenges International Students Encounter’ [2015] A Thesis Submitted to the graduate faculty of St. cloud state university in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree master of arts 2.

⁶⁶Wapmuk Sharkdam, Oluwatooni Akinkuotu and Vincent Ibonye, ‘The Nigerian Diaspora and national development: contributions, challenges, and lessons from other countries’ [2014] (23) Kritika kultura297.

However, for the avoidance of doubt and for the purpose of this article as it relates to diaspora, the paper toes the line of the African Union (AU) in this regard. The AU defined the African Diaspora as:

“The African Diaspora consists of peoples of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union.”⁶⁷

Following the AU definition, the article adopts the Nigerian diasporans to mean:

“Those Nigerians, irrespective of their ethnic, religious, geopolitical regions, living outside the country and who are desirous, ready to, or already contributing to the development of Nigeria.”⁶⁸

The issue of national development and the role of Nigerian diaspora in development should be addressed in the context of the article. National development within the meaning of this paper includes but not limited to economic development,⁶⁹ political development,⁷⁰ educational development,⁷¹ and social development⁷² among others, especially as it relates to the role of Nigerian diaspora, is understood as “bringing about valuable and positive changes that improves the living standards of Nigeria as a nation and the Nigerian people.”⁷³ Flowing from the mass exodus of Nigerians to other countries in search for greener pastures, the ‘diasporans’ do not fall under the former, because the former are not desirous to develop Nigeria within the context of ‘national development’ stated above. The seekers for greener pastures are concerned with their immediate economic needs in a land where they feel provide better services.⁷⁴

⁶⁷ African Union ‘Report of the technical experts meeting on the African diaspora (Tcem)’ [2011] Pretoria, South Africa, 21-22 February 3.

⁶⁸ Wapmuk Sharkdam, Oluwatooni Akinkuotu and Vincent Ibonye 298.

⁶⁹ Lant Pritchett, ‘National development delivers: and how! and how?’ [2022] (107) Economic modelling 1.

⁷⁰ Chibuike Madubuegwu, Groupson Paul Okechukwu and Onyejebu Emeka Dominic, ‘Nigerian political development: theoretical and empirical nexus’ [2021] (10) (1) Nigerian journal of social development 27.

⁷¹ Peter Mozelius, Sebastian Bader, Jimmy Jaldemark, Patrik Urbansson and Alexis Engström, ‘Educational Development - Challenges, Opportunities, Tools and Techniques’ [2022] Conference paper in European conference on e-learning 2.

⁷² Ndangwa Noyoo, ‘Introduction to the concepts of social development’ [2016] (VI) (VI) Social work of the South 7.

⁷³ Moses Adegababiri and Ugo Okolie, ‘Democracy and national development in Nigeria’s fourth republic: an empirical study’ [2019] (5) (1) International journal of legal study 123.

⁷⁴ In search of greener pastures: workers look for better jobs and for better lives in a post pandemic world’ [2021] <<https://www.wellable.co>> blog > in-search-of-greene...> accessed on 13 December 2023.

5 Implications of the massive exodus of Nigerians for Nigeria labor force/economy

The ‘japa’ syndrome or the mass exodus of Nigerians to other jurisdictions for better life has occasioned what can be referred to as a paradigm shift in the country’s labor market and its economy.⁷⁵ The paradigm shift has changed the Nigeria narrative from employer-of labor-centred to employee-focused-centred.⁷⁶ Scholars at several and different forum have argued that the brain drain from the current japa syndrome or mass exodus of Nigerian professionals across all facets of its labor and economy sector, has led to the loss of potential entrepreneurs and a shortage of skilled manpower.⁷⁷

The stories of Nigerian immigrants to other parts of the globe are indicative of the truth that the impact of outmigration is negative both for the country of origin and the host countries.⁷⁸ Nigeria is a respected country in the committees of nations⁷⁹ and it’s known for having a sizable human capital.⁸⁰ The Nigerian human capital is its soft power assets and power house both at home and in the international space.⁸¹

For example, rich and advanced countries in Europe and Asia hired professionals from Nigeria.⁸² Additionally, Nigeria deploy both financial and human capital aid to several other African nations and the Caribbeans through its Technical Aid Corps Scheme.⁸³ As result of the

⁷⁵Ugwu Emenike Christian and Ekemezie Ekene, ‘Brain drains and labor output in Nigeria: an econometric approach’ [2021] (3) (3) *Journal of economics and allied research* 104.

⁷⁶Anyadike Nkechi, Emeh Ikechukwu and Ukah Finian Okechukwu, ‘Entrepreneurship development and employment generation in Nigeria: Problems and prospects’ [2012] (4) (1) *Universal journal of education and general studies* 088.

⁷⁷Babatunde Aderemi Adedibu, ‘checking out for good! a critique of the Nigerian economic migrants turned missionaries in London’ [2018] (8) (1) *Ilorin journal of religious studies* 1.

⁷⁸Samuel Kehinde Okunade and Oladotun Awosusi, ‘The Japa syndrome and the migration of Nigerians to the United Kingdom: an empirical analysis’ [2023] (11) (27) *Comparative Migration Studies* 13.

⁷⁹Congressional Research Service, ‘Nigeria: overview and U.S. policy’ [2023] CSR report 2.

⁸⁰God’stime Osekhebhen Eigbiremolen and Uchechi Shirley Anaduaka, ‘Human Capital Development and Economic Growth: The Nigeria Experience’ [2014] (4) (4) *International journal of academic research in business and social sciences* 25.

⁸¹Imo Akanimo Eshiett and Ali Dayioğlu, ‘Rethinking Nigeria’s soft power capability as a regional leader in Africa’ [2023] (36) (1) *Masyarakat, kebudayaan dan politik* 18.

⁸²Samuel Kehinde Okunade and Oladotun Awosusi, ‘. The Japa syndrome and the migration of Nigerians to the United Kingdom: an empirical analysis’ [2023] (11) (27) *Comparative migration studies* 1.

⁸³Khalifa Salisu Auwal, ‘achievements and challenges of technical aid corps as a foreign policy tool, [2020] department of international relations and diplomacy faculty of management and social sciences Baze university, Abuja vii.

foregoing, Nigeria loses international influence when the majority of these professionals, who are its national assets, exodus to other parts of the world.⁸⁴

All sectors of the Nigerian labor force and the economy have been negatively impacted by the current mass migration at a monumental dimension.⁸⁵ It is on record that Nigerian university lecturers,⁸⁶ secondary school teachers,⁸⁷ medical doctors,⁸⁸ bankers⁸⁹ to mention but a few, have voluntarily resigned their appointments due to frustration to find their way to a sane economic system with a view to having a better life.⁹⁰ The reason for this movement or migration is not far-fetched: Nigeria is a fragile and failed state in every aspect of the word, economically, politically, employment wise, educationally and leadership inclusive. The mass movement comes with so much desperation and lack of trust between the leaders and the subject,⁹¹ given the current situation of the Nigerian state.

In addition, Nigeria's waning economic situation has worsened, given the colossal capital transfer from Nigeria to other economies in terms of money transfer from Nigeria to some other countries.⁹² For instance, statistics have revealed that an estimated amount of 1,931,821,923.75 (£1.9bn) pounds was generated by the British authorities from Nigerians and

⁸⁴Adebisi Adenipekun, 'The brain drains of healthcare professionals in Nigeria: The buck stops with government' <<https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/blog/brain-drain-healthc...>> accessed on 13 December 2023.

⁸⁵Olusegun Ojo, 'The impact of immigration on Nigerian Economy' <<https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/Delivery.cfm>> accessed on 13 December 2023.

⁸⁶Jerry Wright-Ukwu, 'Crisis looms in Nigerian Universities as 50% of lecturers 'japa' for better working conditions' <<https://politicsnigeria.com/crisis-looms-in-nigerian-...>> accessed on 13 December 2023.

⁸⁷Mary Abioye, 'Retention and efficiency of qualified teachers in rural Nigerian secondary schools' [2021] professional administrative study submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of doctor of public administration Walden university 4.

⁸⁸Cosmas Kenan Onah, 'Physician emigration from Nigeria and the associated factors: the implications to safeguarding the Nigeria health system' [2022] (20) (85) Human resources for health 1.

⁸⁹Bukola Idowu and Royal Ibeh, 'Mass resignation of software engineers disrupts banks digitization Move' <<https://leadership.ng/mass-resignation-of-software-e...>> accessed on 13 December 2023.

⁹⁰Doris Dokua Sasu, 'Nigerians intending to migrate for greener pasture 2020, by state and gender' <<https://www.statista.com/Society/Demographic>> accessed on 13 December 2023.

⁹¹Folorunsho Oladipupo, 'Understanding trust-based leadership: an enquiry into the Nigerian public sector' [2021] Doctoral thesis York St John University 1.

⁹²Paul Obidike, Kalu Ebi Uma, Joseph Chukwudi Odionye and Hycenth Ogwuru, 'The impact of capital flight on economic development: Nigeria in focus' [2015] (10) (3) British journal of economics, management & trade 2.

their dependents during the 2021/ 2022 financial year.⁹³ Pursuant to Nigeria's failing and/or failed economic situation, one becomes worried about how and where such funds were generated.⁹⁴

It is worthy of note that, many of those mass exiting Nigeria sold their own assets, obtained loans, and invested all of their long-time savings to embark on the migration project.⁹⁵ The conclusion from the foregoing is that this amounts to economic exploitation,⁹⁶ an experience most Nigerian migrants contend and grapple with, most of whom are temporary or casual employees in other countries.⁹⁷

6 Does 'japa' create vacancies and employments for the unemployed Nigerians?

As the mass exodus of Nigerians to foreign countries in droves and unabated, there has been a huge number of resignations across different job sectors of the economy in the nation.⁹⁸ As a result, many companies and organizations both public and private across the country have continued to process a number of resignations due to relocation.⁹⁹ As it currently stands, Nigeria's unemployment rate is as high as 41%,¹⁰⁰ because migration surge has led and contributed to the scarcity of human capital to fill the vacancies.¹⁰¹ Flowing from this scenario, employers of labor

⁹³ 'Nigerian students, dependants contribute £1.9bn to UK' – Report <<https://punchng.com>> nigerian-studentsdependants-c...> accessed on 8 December 2023.

⁹⁴ King Matthew Eja and Manu Ramegowda, 'Government project failure in developing countries: a review with particular reference to Nigeria' [2020] (19) *Global journal of social sciences* 35.

⁹⁵ Sharkdam Wapmuk, 'International migration, Nigerian returnee migrants, and challenges of reintegration into Local Communities' [2019] (9) *Arts and social science research* 174.

⁹⁶ Akeem Ayofe Akinwale, 'Precarious working conditions and exploitation of workers in the Nigerian informal economy' [2014] (10) (1) *Social science Diliman* 117.

⁹⁷ Aminu Mohammed Lawan and Razlini Mohd Ramli, 'The impact of globalization on workers: an analysis of Nigerian public service' [2018] (7) (3) *International journal of engineering & technology* 480.

⁹⁸ Ojokwu Emmanuel, 'Surge In Migration Forces Firms In Nigeria To Adjust Job Employment Criteria' [2022] <<https://www.tekedia.com>> Latest Insights | News> accessed on 8 December 2023.

⁹⁹ Kennedy Atong, Emmanuel Mayah and Akhator Odigie, 'Africa labor migration to the GCC states: the case of Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda: An African Trade Union Overview' [2018] *African regional organization of the international trade union confederation* 13.

¹⁰⁰ Nigerian unemployment rate to hit 41% in 2023 – KPMG. KPMG stated that the Nigerian unemployment rate had increased to 37.7 per cent in 2022 and will further rise to 40.6 per cent, due to the continuing inflow of job seekers into the job market. We estimate that this rate has increased to 37.7 per cent in 2022 and will rise further to 40.6 per cent in 2023. <<https://punchng.com>> nigerian-unemployment-rate-to...> accessed on 11 December 2023.

¹⁰¹ Anene Chidi, Njoku Chinonyerem and Theodore Iyala, 'The push and pull factors of poverty; migration of Nigerians to Europe' [2019] (2) (1) *Journal of African studies and sustainable development* 58.

and organizations are on the edge as they are being compelled to begin to consider and lower the standard and qualifications needed in their recruitment process.¹⁰²

It should be recalled that the surge in migration of Nigerians, it is submitted, has largely been attributed to myriad of problems and challenges that have continued to ravage the nation.¹⁰³ Some of these problems and challenges as earlier noted are socio-economic issues, insecurity, high cost of goods and services, corruption, unemployment and the general high cost of living for the poor masses.¹⁰⁴ As the resignation of employees and mass exodus of the Nigerian work force continues,¹⁰⁵ it portends and poses a huge challenge for public and private employers on a monumental scale on the one hand.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, it brings a sigh of relief to the unemployed¹⁰⁷ and the employees at the low-level cadre in the various sectors of the economy,¹⁰⁸ because the employees are sure of promotion opportunities, while the unemployed will fill the vacant positions.¹⁰⁹

With that being said, companies will learn to value the employees going forward,¹¹⁰ and in the final analysis, there will be pay rise in order to retain the remainder of the work force from migrating.¹¹¹

¹⁰²Benard Omisore and Bernadette Ivhaorheme Okofu, 'Staff recruitment and selection process in the Nigerian public service: what is to be done?' [2014] (4) (3) *International journal of human resource studies* 280.

¹⁰³Alozie cyprian, 'The Nigerian state and the challenges of nation building in the 21st century: the way forward' [2018] (4) (1) *South east journal of political science* 333.

¹⁰⁴Jamila Shuara and Franca Okechukwu, 'Factors and Implications of the High Cost of Living on Households in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja' [2023] (2) (1) *Journal of family and society research* 124.

¹⁰⁵Ojukwu Emmanuel, 'mass resignation rocks companies in Nigeria as citizens seek for better life abroad' <<https://www.tekedia.com> > Latest Insights | News> accessed on 14 December 2023.

¹⁰⁶Tessema, Tesfom, Faircloth, Tesfagiorgis and Teckle, 'The great resignation: causes, consequences, and creative HR management strategies' [2022] (10) (1) *Journal of human resource and sustainability studies* 161.

¹⁰⁷Kayode Asaju, 'Rising rate of unemployment in Nigeria: the socio-economic and political implications' [2014] (3) (1) *Global business and economics research journal* 68.

¹⁰⁸Justin Gabriel and Bennerd Awusa, 'Job design and employee turnover in Nigerian port authority, rivers state' [2021] (6) *RSU journal of strategic and internet business* 2016.

¹⁰⁹Amehojo Daniel and others, 'Promotion and reward for outstanding service as a motivational tool among civil servants in Nigeria' [2022] (2) (4) *A journal of the network for utilitarian studies faculty of humanities* 1.

¹¹⁰Michael Tuffrey, 'Good companies, better employee' [2003] *The corporate citizenship company* 2.

¹¹¹Hein de Haas, 'A theory of migration: the aspirations-capabilities framework' [2021] (9) (8) *Comparative migration studies* 1.

The logical conclusions that can be drawn from the foregoing premises is that the ‘japa’ syndrome is a blessing in disguise¹¹²as it has led to so many vacant positions in different companies across Nigeria, with a very few qualified personnel to fill such vacant positions. It serves as an opportunity for the unemployed Nigerians to get the chance of being employed thereby reducing the rate of unemployment in the country.¹¹³

7 Possible solutions to the mass exodus of Nigerians workers to other jurisdictions

The enticing grip of migration has already enveloped Nigeria, as young minds increasingly pursue better opportunities abroad for a brighter future. While this is desirable because a better life is understandable; to this end, it is imperative for the Nigerian government to address the root causes and proffer effective solutions to retain and harness the country's work force. The government can combat the migration syndrome and unlock its true potentials if it can place priority on:¹¹⁴

- (i) Economic reforms;
- (ii) Educational revitalization;
- (iii) Infrastructure development;
- (iv) Good governance;and;
- (v) Youth empowerment.

Like any other country in the world, Nigeria, as a developing nation, fights with economic constraints, political instability,inadequate amenities, unemployment and limited career growth opportunities.As a result, the Nigerian young people have become disenchanted, being forced toseek better prospects abroad. On top of this, corruption and poor governance have eroded trust in the government's ability to provide conducive environments for growth and development.

Flowing from the above, to reclaim its talent and secure a brighter future, Nigeria as a country has to face the mass exodus of its work force head-on¹¹⁵ by embarking on comprehensive

¹¹²Emmanuel Ehidiemen, ‘Japa syndrome’’: a blessing in disguise?’<<https://remotv.com.ng> > 2023 > December > 4> accessed on 14 December 2023.

¹¹³Ayodele Odusola and Mike Obadan, ‘Productivity and unemployment in Nigeria’ [2018] Social science research network 1.

¹¹⁴ ‘Nigeria Agenda 2050’ [2023] 1-143.

¹¹⁵Florence Konye Igweh and Anthony Anyibuofu Kifordu, ‘Talent management strategies, a panacea for stemming Nigeria youth exodus in the health sector: federal medical centresin Focus’ [2022] (3) (10) Journal of global economics and business 1.

economic reforms, revamp the educational sector, invest in infrastructural enhancement and development, ensure good governance at all tiers of governments and empower young Nigerians. In addition, the country needs to create an enabling environment with a view to nurturing local talents and offer promising prospects. Flowing from this narrative, Nigeria will surmount the mass exodus syndrome and unlock its true potential to foster national development.

8 Conclusions

The problem of worker migration to other parts of the globe is a huge and reoccurring challenge for Nigeria as a nation¹¹⁶ because many skilled and experienced workers have been lost in the process¹¹⁷ and therefore creates difficulties in recruiting and training new workers.¹¹⁸ This trajectory has negatively impacted work spaces and organizations in Nigeria, it affects the country's productivity and profitability at private and public levels.¹¹⁹ However, as unpacked in the preceding suggestions, there are programs the government and the private businesses can implement to mitigate the effects of worker migration.¹²⁰

In a nut-shell, it's possible to mitigate the effects of mass exodus of the Nigeria work force and contribute to the development of the Nigerian economy.

The paper has been able to prove that several factors are responsible for the mass exodus of workers migration, both skilled and intellectual manpower from Nigeria to overseas countries. In addition, it has been able to dissect the effects of the workforce migration on Nigeria. Flowing from this, it is clear that the negative consequences of worker migration from Nigeria far outweigh its gains, because, the industrialized nations of the world where the majority of Nigeria's skilled workers and professionals are moving to in droves are the beneficiaries of the country's human capital crisis.

¹¹⁶Matthias Schmale, 'Common country analysis' [2022] United Nations Nigeria 4.

¹¹⁷Victor Enengedi, 'The 'Japa' Syndrome and How it is Affecting Nigeria's Economy' <<https://www.legit.ng/business-economy/economy/1498235-japa-syndrome-economic-impact-nigerias-economy/>> accessed on 15 December 2023.

¹¹⁸'How Businesses Can Solve the Japa Syndrome' <<https://www.descasio.io/new-year-old-challenges-h>> accessed on 15 December 2023.

¹¹⁹Mike Obadan and Ayodel Odusola, 'Productivity and unemployment in Nigeria' [2018] Social science research network electronic journal 2.

¹²⁰Federal ministry of labor and productivity, 'Labor migration policy for Nigeria' [2010] 2.

It is submitted therefore that the fiend of workers migration should be nipped in the bud without further procrastination with a view to launching Nigeria on the trajectory of rapid, sustainable, socio-economic and political growth and development. On top of this, Nigeria can realize its desires, aspirations and become one of the leading economies of the World among committees of nations and achieve the Africa vision 2030¹²¹ and agenda 2063¹²² respectively.

Finally, the paper ends with this quote: “Irregular migration should be discouraged. There is no point going for a job and you end up coming back with nothing. We should fix our country. Some people do not want to go but we need to make the environment good for our people”¹²³

9 Recommendations

While the issue of mass exodus of Nigerian worker migration is a compounded and herculean task,¹²⁴ the paper therefore makes the under listed suggestions to the Nigerian government both public-private businesses, if implemented, they will mitigate the effects of workers exiting the country for foreign lands:

9.0 Government policies to address the root causes of migration:

The government, no doubt is the key role player when it comes to the issues of workers migration and the root cause of high unemployment and unavailability of economic opportunities in Nigeria. to address the lingering challenges of unemployment, the government should and must formulate policies to promote job creation and economic growth, as well as programs to provide education and training to workers to increase their employability;¹²⁵

¹²¹Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa, ‘Africa 2030: how Africa can achieve the sustainable development goals’ [2017] JICA (2)

¹²²‘Agenda 2063: The Africa we want’ AGENDA 2063 is Africa’s blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future. It is the continent’s strategic framework that aims to deliver on its goal for inclusive and sustainable development and is a concrete manifestation of the pan-African drive for unity, self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity pursued under Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance.

¹²³Olawale Ajimotokan, ‘Nigeria and burden of japa syndrome’ <[https://www.thisdaylive.com](https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/05/02) > index.php > 2023/05/02>accessed on 11 December 2023.

¹²⁴ Victor Domshiwe Shehu, ‘when home is no longer home: the massive exodus of Nigerian youths out of Nigeria’ [2019] (4) (2) Aumen journal of moral education in Nigeria 15.

¹²⁵ ‘New year, old challenges – how businesses can solve the japas syndrome’ [https://www.descasio.io](https://www.descasio.io/new-year-old-challenges-ho....) > new-year-old-challenges-ho.... accessed on 11 December 2023.

9.2 Public-private businesses investing in training and development programs:

Both public -private businesses should invest in training and development programs to build a skilled and experienced workforce, such programs should include education and training to current employees, the programs will also attract and retain new workers;¹²⁶

9.3 Investment in technology to increase efficiency and automation:

It is suggested that both public and private sectors of the economy should place priority in investing in technology to increase efficiency and automation¹²⁷ with a view to assisting businesses become more productive, more profitable and to reduce organizations over dependence on human workforce.

9.4 Partnerships and collaborations with other businesses:

Partnerships and collaborations between and amongst other businesses is suggested to share resources, expertise and technical know-how in the area of research and development projects to create new products and services.¹²⁸

9.5 Encourage remote working:

It is further suggested that remote work should be encouraged and implemented in public and private sectors of the Nigeria work spaces.¹²⁹ Remote working will mitigate the impact of worker migration, this is because, with the advent of advanced technology, businesses can have their employees work remotely with tools such as google workspace to help businesses communicate effortlessly regardless of location of the employees.

¹²⁶ Munyaradzi Chikove, 'the effect of training and development on employee attraction and retention in the gold mining sector in Zimbabwe' [2023] (6) (3) International journal of scientific and management research 41.

¹²⁷ Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi, 'Draft Nigeria digital agriculture strategy (2020-2030)' [2020] National information technology development agency vii.

¹²⁸ Will Kenton, 'Research and development (R&D) definition, types, and importance' [2023] 1.

¹²⁹ Aladejebi, Olufemi, 'Should working from home be the norm in Nigeria after covid_19?' [2021] (9) (9) Archives of business research 97.

To achieve the foregoing and put an end to worker migration, all hands should be on deck,¹³⁰ an approach involving the government, businesses and private individuals in Nigeria.

¹³⁰Nneli Hagen-Zanker and Hennessey, (2022) Migration-relevant policies in Nigeria' [2022] (2) Peace research institute Oslo 2.