

## MIGRATION AND FAMILY VALUES: A PHILOSOPHICAL APPRAISAL

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### Abstract

This paper examines critically the meaning, root causes and effects of migration on family values. The findings reveal that people migrate voluntary or involuntary to other countries either to overcome poverty, to escape war, for family reunification, to get better education, good healthcare and better standard of living. This paper examines different areas in which migration can impact positively and negatively on family values. This paper defines Family values as simply, traditional or cultural values that pertain to the family's structure, beliefs and attitudes. These values enumerated are universal principles which help people to live in harmony with one another not only in families, but in communities, nations, and in the world. This paper attributes the abuse and neglect of these core values: respect, love, honor, forgiveness and sharing to out-migration. The questions that propel this paper are; why do people migrate? Why do most people who migrate to developed countries normally neglect their values and embrace the culture of the receiving countries? What went wrong and how can these values be recovered? Employing the method of philosophical analysis, this paper argues that although migration serves as a catalyst for improved economic opportunities and financial stability for families, it also has strongest negative effects on family values. Migration disrupts family life, challenges traditional notions of relationships, leads to adaptation of a new culture which have caused more harm in the affected societies. This paper submits that the solution to curb the negative effects of migration on family values is to ensure that families and societies create practical ways to orientate and educate the youths.

**Keywords:** Migration, human migration, *japa*, family, family values, culture

### Introduction

First and foremost, migration can be seen as a normal human activity. Human beings have always moved from one country or locality to another in search of greener pasture, employment opportunities, better education, and freedoms or even to escape war, especially those countries are having conflicts. In fact, research has it that early human migrations are the earliest migrations and expansions of archaic and modern humans across continents approximately two million years ago (en.wikipedia.org). However, since Africans got their independence till date, Africa has witnessed many degrees of migration both legal and illegal. Recently, the rate Africans migrate to developed countries in search of greener pasture is alarming, that if appropriate measure is not taken to address the causes, it will have negative effects on the socio-economic development of African countries. This paper examines critically some of the factors that cause migration, and also exposes some of their negative effects on family values. Employing the method of critical analysis, this paper argues that out-migration of Africans has bastardized some good values and culture that African people were known for. The paper blames the African leaders for not being responsive to their duties to build inclusive governments that will create level playing field for their citizens. The paper concludes that for these values to be rebuilt, all hands must be on deck to create practical ways to orientate the people of the need to bring back these values for the sack of our posterity.

### Historical Origin of Migration

Migration has been a fundamental aspect of human history, beginning with the early movement of *Homo erectus* out of Africa around 1.75 million years ago and *Homo sapiens* approximately 70,000 years ago (Terratarn.com). The ancient and medieval periods witnessed the Indo-Aryan migration and Greek colonization. European colonial migration and forced Trans Atlantic slave trade characterized the early modern period. The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were marked by the Greek Atlantic migration, and post- WWII displacement. In this contemporary period, since 1970s till date, there have been so many migrations due to economic disparities, insurgencies, political instability, refugees' crises as a result of war and low income. The recent wars in Ukraine and Gaza have displaced millions of people in those countries, making them refugees. Since African countries got their independence, Africa has witnessed varying degrees of migration both legal and illegal. The economic instability, poverty and insurgencies in Nigeria and other poor countries in Africa have led to incessant migration of people to other continents for safety and better standard of living. Nigeria now records high rate of migration and this can be directly traced to the last decades. The rate Nigerians move to other countries especially in the UK and other parts of the world known as *Japa* is on its high increase, and this has multifaceted implications. No wonder Okunade and Awosusi (2023:1) aver that the current trend of out-migration is beyond unfavorable economic climate and the lingering security issues in Nigeria. They argue that it bears a connection with the neo-liberal structure of the UK and the emerging global trend.

Available statistics have further put the *Japa* syndrome among Nigerians into better perspective. In 2018, Schengen countries such as Germany, Hungary, Finland, Italy, and Spain, which are Nigeria's popular destinations, saw an increase in visa applications from Nigeria (The Guardian: 2019). A total of 88, 587 visa applications were received, of which 49.8% were rejected (The Guardian: 2019). According to the statistics released by the UK government, 486,869 study visas were granted as of June 2022, 77.71% more than in 2019. Nigeria ranks third after India and China, increasing from 8,384 to a record high of 65,929 in study visas to the UK (The Guardian: 2019).

### **Understanding the terms Migration, Migrants and *Japa***

Migration involves the movement by people from one place to another, particularly different countries, with the intention of settling temporarily or permanently in the new location. So, the movement of people from their home to another place (city, state, or country) for a job, education, safety, shelter or some other reasons is called Migration, whereas, "people who move from one place to another in search of work or shelter are called migrants" ( www.toper.com). *Japa* on the other hand is a concept in *yoruba* popularly used by Nigerians to mean "a massive transnational migration of Africans, including Nigerians, to other parts of the world, especially Europe, or through illegal routes, porous land borders, the Sahara, and across the Mediterranean into Europe, or through legalized routes with the required documents"(Okunade andAwosusi, 2023:2)

### **Types of Migration**

Migration can be internal, international, voluntary or involuntary (forced migration).

- **Internal Migration:** This involves movement of people within the same country. It can however be classified into:
  - **Rural to Urban Migration:** This has to do with movement from rural areas to cities. It occurs as a result of employment opportunity, trading, education, job transfer and better living standard.
  - **Rural to Rural Migration:** This type of migration has to do with movement from one rural area to another, basically for marriage, for agriculture and for safety due to internal conflicts.
  - **Urban to Urban Migration:** This involves relocation from one city to another, basically in pursuit of better job opportunities or transfer of service and even business opportunities.
  - **Urban to Rural Migration:** This is moving from cities to rural areas, basically due to climate change, crisis, retirement and overcrowding.
- ♦ **International Migration:** This refers to the movement of people across national borders. It happens when people cross State boundaries to live in another country for a minimum length of time. This can be legal, illegal or refugees.
  - **Legal Migrants:** These are people who move to another country with proper authorization. The reasons for migrating to another country could be for better education, vacation, employment, health care and better income.
  - **Illegal Immigration:** These are individuals who migrate to another country without legal permission. Good examples of these illegal movements are individuals who migrate through the Mediterranean Sea to Europe for either human trafficking or for drug business. This is a notorious endeavor that, for many years has led to the deaths of many Africans in the Sahara desert and the Mediterranean Sea.
  - **Refugees:** These are individuals who cross international borders for safety and escape from death as a result of war or natural disasters. War between the Israel and Gaza, Russia and Ukraine that left many people homeless are examples of Refugees migration. Natural disasters like volcanic eruption, earthquake and even the recent wide fire at Los Angeles in the USA have also displaced many people, making them refugees.
- ♦ **Voluntary or Involuntary Migration:** Voluntary migration has to do with personal choice, and the reasons for migrating are genuine. It is either for better education, good job opportunities or living conditions. Involuntary migration on the other hand involves movement as a result of natural disasters or conflicts.

## Reasons for Migration

There are so many reasons why people migrate to various places. People migrate due to;

- **Lingering Security Challenges:** The high rate of kidnappings, killings, conflicts, police harassments and armed robbery in some parts of Africa is perturbing. This has heightened the fear of many and one of the strategies to save their lives is migration.

- **Better Quality of Life:** Most people in poor countries of the world migrate to rich countries due to quality of life in these countries. There is better quality of life in developed countries. They have strong and inclusive economic system. They have good roads, good drinking water, steady power supply and everything that makes life easy and good. So, these things make people who are in poor countries to go and have tastes of these things that they are not enjoying. Again, people work and enjoy their money in peace without stress and the fear of the unknown gunmen, kidnappers and touts in these stable countries.
- **High-Quality of Education:** We cannot compare education in the developing countries to education in prosperous countries. Quality education is still a huge challenge confronting some poor countries. Some of these countries in developing areas do not have standard schools. Some citizens of these countries do not have access to education due to corruption and bad leadership in those countries. So, people move to countries where they can have quality education and become professionals in their field of study. Again these developed countries like the UK have seamless process for international students to gain admission into their universities. As a result, many Africans, particularly Nigerians have decided to explore and exploit the study route to gain access to these countries. This remains a big factor responsible for migration.
- **Marriage and Family Reunification:** People migrate to reunite with their loved ones and some migrate for marital stability, that is, to secure the family. Some people also move to another country for marriage.
- **Safety and Security:** Countries facing conflicts, war, environmental problems such as earth quake, flooding, wide fire etc. move to different countries for safety and security, especially when the governments of such countries failed to respond immediately.
- **Better Employment Opportunities:** Unemployment is one of the most reasons for migration. Unemployment rate is high especially in some African countries. This has resulted to poverty, so people move to different countries to have quality job opportunities to overcome poverty and hunger
- **Better Healthcare:** Quality healthcare system is also one of the challenges many poor countries are facing. To have effective healthcare people migrate to developed countries where they can have access to good hospitals with better health facilities.
- **Environmental Factors:** Climate change and natural disasters are of one the possible reasons for migration. People move to other places to secure their lives due to frequent natural disasters. The flooding in Nigeria and other parts of Africa is a good example of this.
- **Political Instability:** Political instability is common in many countries today. This has resulted to unrests, oppression, insecurity, loss of human rights and injustice in some countries today. To have peace of mind and safety, people migrate to places or countries they believe are safe and secure for them.
- **Better Living Standard:** For higher standard of living and the chance to find a better job are also one of the reasons people migrate. Some people love to be in a place that provides comfort, quality income and

opportunities that will enable them to attend to their family needs. So, they migrate to stable places that can create enabling playing field for their advancement and expansion.

- Entrepreneurship: Many developing countries are extractive. They go extra mile to block innovations due to corruption and selfishness. People with innovative ideas migrate to other places that have stable economic system to develop their ideas.

### **Positive Impact of Migration**

If there are no impacts or benefits in migration, people will not find it necessary to migrate. The rate people in developing countries move to rich countries are high. Many opportunities and attractions in rich countries pull large numbers of people to these countries. However, migration can have positive as well as negative effects or impacts on the migrants. Here are some top impacts of migration:

- ◆ Innovation: People who move to other countries usually bring new ideas and methods, contributing to creation new businesses and technologies. This innovative activities and create jobs and help in the development of the economic institution.
- ◆ Cultural Diversity: People who migrate to different places use that opportunity to learn the languages, cultures and traditions of those countries they moved to. Same applies to the countries they migrated to. So, migration helps in improving social life of people as they learn new culture and languages which helps to improve brotherhood among people. This cultural exchange can pave way to innovation and foster inclusion.
- ◆ Economic Growth: Migration without doubt helps to reduce unemployment and low income as unemployed people used that avenue to get quality job.

Population Density: Migration helps to reduce the population density and high birth rate. So, the poor countries whose citizens migrate to other countries benefit more due to reduction in population. Countries that bear the burdens are the receiving countries.

### **Negative impacts of migration on Family Values**

#### **Defining Family Values**

Values are the standards that people consider worthwhile in life as approved by the society. These standards are what guide people's behaviours and actions in the society. According to Ezeador and Okpala (2024:66), "family values are those traditional or cultural values that pertain to the family's structure, roles and attitude". These values they stated are respect for others, kindness, responsibility, honesty, integrity, hard work, loyalty, love, kindness, perseverance, forgiveness, patience, etc. these are the moral principles that a family holds and passes down. These values guide a family's decisions and goals, reflecting their culture. They shape how parents nurture or raise their children and the kind of adults they want these children to become. "Family values serve as a moral compass, fostering a sense of identity, unity, and purpose within the family unit" (getmarlee.com). Cultural, religious, ethical or moral, relationship and socioeconomic values are all types of family values.

- ◆ **Cultural Values:** This type of value emanates from cultural background. Obeying, respecting and greeting the elders are the examples of this value. In a family where aging parents and grandparents live in the same roof with children, those children are expected to respect these aging parents because respecting elders is a deeply ingrained value. Cultural values promote kindness, love, happiness, peace, empathy and respect for others.
- ◆ **Religious Values:** Religion preaches compassion, love, service to humanity, forgiveness and repentance. So, families with strong religious beliefs always adopt values in line with their teachings. Religious and spiritual values guide moral principle.
- ◆ **Moral or Ethical Values:** Ethics is the systematic study of morality. Right and wrong, justice, justice, these are all ethical principles. A family may highly value honesty and fairness, ensuring that they inculcate these values in their children from an early age.
- ◆ **Relationship Values:** Some families like to maintain values that foster solid interpersonal bonds within the family unit. These values are; trust, integrity, loyalty and open communication.
- ◆ **Socioeconomic Values:** A family's status and financial condition can shape their values. For instance, A family from a lower-income background may develop the habit of working hard and curtailing unnecessary expenses, but a family from a higher-income background may value helping those in need and giving back to the community.

However, these values are fundamental for creating peace and harmony in homes and help families to live purposeful family life. They serve as a guiding light to children. They help in shaping how parents raise their children. They help families to make decisions. They cultivate strong bonds and foster family unity, making homes more harmonious. They help children to build strong moral compass and make their own decisions.

### **Effects of Migration on Family Values**

Having examined the positive impacts of migration, there are also some negative effects of migration on family values. Migration has caused and is still causing serious problems in Africa by introducing new customs, languages, dressing, leading to cultural endangerment. In Africa, Nigeria precisely, when a child greets and respects his elders and parents, it is a sign that the child has a good upbringing and parental training. Most behaviors we see among the youths today are totally against the African culture. They are not the laid down values gotten from the parents. African migrants always neglect their culture and tradition when they move to developed countries. Culture, the totality of people's way of life differs. For instance the western culture and African culture are totally different. African culture holds societal and family values very strong. They respect their tradition. They believe that their tradition is their identity. One of the challenges facing African migrants who moved to western world is that they easily abandoned their tradition. African migrants when come in contact with the westerners see western culture as superior and theirs inferior, primitive and archaic. That is why it is very hard for them to return back home, and when they return; they will not like to follow those laid down values kept by their ancestors or listen to

their parent's advice. Those who migrated from poor countries to rich countries see the thoughts of their people as illogical and irrational.

According to Ezeador and Okpara, "Family values are disappearing due to the fact that parents of today no longer have time to sit their children down and give them proper teaching about life" (2024:105). Those values that parents instill in their children that make the children more respectful, obedient, loyal and responsible have been bastardized due to contact with some cultures that doesn't regard values. That is why, in some countries that place much emphases on family values, Nigeria for instance has high rate of immorality. The spirit of unity and brotherhood has totally disappeared. Some parents even help in contributing to this by encouraging their children not to return home and even when they return, they should distance themselves from their relatives. These ugly behaviors are practices migrants copied from other countries. There are acts that are abnormal that become normal due to contact with other cultures.

In Africa, Nigeria precisely, when a child commits any offence, the parents of that child corrects the child by either yelling at him/her or using a cane on the child. This serves as a correction and will make the child not to repeat that same attitude again. But this is not so in western world. A child in western world has the right to sue his parents to court if they handle him wrongly. The westerners see punishing a child as child abuse. What is taboo in Africa is a normal way of life in the western world. When Africans migrate to these countries, they copy these behaviors from the westerners; it will now become a very serious challenge because those attitudes copied from the westerners are not part of the African tradition.

Migration contributes in endangering native languages. Not everyone who moves to western country would like to communicate with her mother tongue. Most migrants force their children to speak foreign languages. This is because they believe that their native language is inferior. This has contributed in endangerment of our native languages. Again we can see the way the developed countries are secretly hiring professionals from Africa. These professionals; teachers, lecturers, lawyers, doctors, nurses are the people who supposed to educate their people more about values and other knowledge, but they are resigning their jobs out of frustration to navigate their way to developed countries. When these professionals that the young ones are supposed to learn from are migrating out of the country, then who will guide and these inculcate values to the young youths? This is where the problem lies.

Furthermore, migration has negative effect on the people's mode of dressing. Once migrants move to countries that are more developed, their belief system and identity will change. They will like to divert to that country's pattern of lifestyle. Most women who migrate to western world imitate their way of dressing. Some always go half naked in the name of fashion thereby causing serious damages in their society. Most women who move to western countries totally abandon the laid down values and identity a married woman should have. This is because, in western countries, their women have more right than their men. They have rights to move freely and make choices. But, this is not so in Africa due to some laws and culture that restrict women from doing some certain things. When African women mingle with these women from rich countries, their mode of thinking, lifestyle and behavior change immediately. They will see African culture as being suppressive, marginalizing, oppressive and controlling. This has resulted to high rate of divorce and marital infidelity among women in Africa.

In addition, high rate of unemployment, poverty, hunger, low income and illiteracy in poor countries have resulted to high rate of migration, popularly called "*Japa*" a Yoruba concept. As a concept, *Japa* explains

not only the exodus of Nigerians through its international air borders but also the age-long practice of irregular migration. According to Okunade and Awosusi (2024: 2), *Japa* is a novel term used by Nigerians to describe the outmigration trend of Nigerians into Europe and other parts of the world. They further put it; *Japa* is a word that describes the entrepreneurial spirit of Nigerians; in that same word, it means that Nigerians want to export their contents, gifts, skills, and products, including themselves'. This goes to say that *japa* is a 'self-exportation' of Nigerians abroad. According to Toyin (2022), *Japa* is a Yoruba word that means to flee, and once achieved, a celebration comes with it as it feels more like gaining freedom at last. Everybody wants to move to western countries by all means to witness good standard of living. Nobody wants to stay back to suffer and become productive again. This quest to migrate has lured many people especially the youths into some criminal acts. There are people who have the mindset that they can never succeed in Nigeria unless they migrate to other countries. In other words, there believe is that success only lies beyond the shores of Nigeria. These sets of people will do everything possible to leave their countries to go and witness those things the developed countries have. This is why kidnappings, ritual practices, prostitution, gay practices and yahoo have become the order of the day in Nigeria as the youths don't want to suffer or engage themselves in anything that is stressful any longer. They want to get quick money by all means that's why they do everything possible to get money.

## Recommendations

Our family values and identity are decaying every day by day as a result the quest for migration. These values are our identity, no wonder Ezeador and Okpara (2004:79), citing Nweke argue that our identity is the distinguishing characteristics of a person. These values can be restored back if African people can understand that these values are what define them. This paper recommends that for these values to be restored, all hands must be on deck to return back these values. How can this be achieved? The society, family and government should play serious role to help fight the root causes of incessant migration. The society should ensure that they adopt strategies to re-orientate the youths. Families should make it their priority to inculcate good values on their children; this is because education of a child starts from the family. The government should try all possible means to ensure that they create employment, attend to the needs of the people and make education assessable for all. When all these recommendations are attended to African countries will be safe for every. The quest for *japa* and illegal migration will reduce.

## Conclusion

This paper examined the concepts of migration, migrants and *Japa*. It traced the root of migration from Ancient period to contemporary period. From the investigations made, the paper discovered that there are so many factors that contributed to out-migration of people basically in Africa. This paper observed that this increase in migration is beyond unemployment, hardship, better education, insecurity and killings in some African countries and elsewhere. The paper observed also that the quest to witness life in the western world equally contributes to migration. This paper also looked at some negative effects of migration on family values, and discovered that a lot of Africans are losing their culture and values as a result of culture contact. Africans, when they move to other countries easily adopt their culture and practices, neglecting their own values, seeing them as archaic, old and inferior. To cushion the effects of

migration on family values, this paper concludes that these attitudes can be addressed if the recommendations are put in place.

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