

Migration Dilemma and Safety of Migrants at Work Place

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Abstract

Migration at various levels affords migrants the opportunity to move from their point of origin through a transit point to their point of destination. This movement of people is most often triggered by political crisis, natural disasters and socioeconomic push factors. As people move, they move with their culture and value orientations into an unknown land with different cultural and value orientations. This cultural shock creates suspicion and lack of trust between migrants and their destination communities. This dilemma is made worse due to global economic challenges and terrorism. Also poor political leadership and wars have also increased the desperation of migrants to seek survival and livelihood elsewhere even it means endangering their lives in the process. Migrants are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse at both working place and within their destination communities. Developing nations like Nigeria have had their fair share of migration challenges and abuse at work place. Migration should be seen as an opportunity for cultural and socioeconomic exchange and interactions, which could be positively harnessed for the development of human societies. Focus should be on the quality of migrants and the potentials they have to add value to the socioeconomic realities of both their origin and destination communities. Migration could be perceived as a platform of socioeconomic development in any nation regardless of its status as either origin or destination.

Keywords

Global Economic Challenges, Migration, Exploitation, Abuse

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1. Introduction

Safety at work place has been an issue of concern for many generations. In fact it could be said to be as old as the history of work itself. The wellbeing of workers has made some societies and organizations to adopt certain traditional and cultural precautions at work place to avoid harm and accidents at work place (www.workforcesafety.ca 2017).

Migration forces people to leave their families, and culture and seek survival in a strange land. This migrant status already puts them into a precarious and vulnerable condition. They are easily exploited by their employers and often perceived to be a bad competition by citizens in the destination community (Coe, Cati (2011). According to

UNFP (2004), the increase in migration, both internal and international, has important implications in terms of poverty, development, demographic and gender dynamics, national and international security and inter-State relations. Migration has a significant impact on the population dynamics and scramble for economic opportunities in the destination communities.

According to Michael Flynn, (2014), Language and cultural differences has constituted safety barriers for immigrants at work place. These barriers make it difficult for migrant workers to comprehend and adhere strictly to certain safety and precautionary measures at work. Despite America's

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origins as a nation of immigrants, newcomers may still face a number of challenges when integrating in a variety of areas of everyday American life, including discrimination in the workplace. New waves of immigrants sometimes face opposition from established employers or co-workers who may be averse to, or simply fear, change. In order to ensure equality in the workplace, Congress has granted protections to workers with valid authorization to work as part of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) (www.findlaw.com, 2017). However, the story is changing with President Trump's administration. Migration and State protection has been taken to a higher level in America by President Trump. While the courts are busy with numerous suits against the policy, its socio-economic and psychological impacts are being felt by migrant workers in America. Life becomes hopeless when you are not sure of your tomorrow in the land of "liberty" as America is touted to be historically. The economic considerations for protection of nations and national economy have led to Brexite and other threatening breakups among the EU nations.

These breakups will bring up new immigration policies that will discriminate against migrants and further jeopardize their survival at work place. According to UN human Rights, (2009) the Durban Declaration pointed out that xenophobia against non-nationals, and in particular, migrants, constitutes one of the main sources of contemporary racism. Migrants are often discriminated against in housing, education, health, work or social security. It is a global issue affecting the countries of origin, the countries of transit and the countries of arrival. According to the Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, around 200 million people live outside their country of origin, which will amount to 3.1% of the world population in 2010. Estimates showed that between 1945 and 1990, the number of migrants increased by around 45 million people per year.

However, the migration crisis is fuelled by islama-phobia by the West on account of terrorism. In South Africa, other African migrants are being attacked and their businesses destroyed by youths in South Africa who claim that their unemployment is caused by these other migrants in their country. They claim that their jobs were taken over by these migrants. Safety of migrants has political and economic under tones for both country of origin and that of destination. Even within the same nation, a migrant from a different region is often viewed as a "paste" by youths of the destination community. Religion and ethnic differences usually promote such negative perceptions and treatments.

It is important to note that the quality of the migrant should be the first consideration and not country of origin or religion. Nations and cities have been built by the labour of slaves and migrants willingly or forcefully. So in good and

bad conditions, migrants will always be part of human civilization and must be embraced and tolerated by all.

1.1. The Nigerian Experience

Nigeria has a long history of extensive migration. We can distinguish five different migration patterns within this history. The first were the Hausa transnational links through trans-Saharan trade routes and on pilgrimage to Mecca; the second was the transatlantic slave trade; the third was migration, mostly internal, in search of better wages and living conditions during the colonial period; and the fourth was intraregional migration strengthened mainly by ethnic solidarities of communities separated by borders, and the movement to African countries that had booming economies. The fifth pattern of migration has been the migration of Nigerian professionals to other countries of the world, such as Germany, Italy, Spain, the United States, the United Kingdom, and so on, due to the downturn of the Nigerian economy in the 1980s. Many Nigerians who chose to leave the country at that time, or who were already abroad but chose to remain in their host countries, did so to escape a harsh economic climate at home – in pursuit of the proverbial greener pastures. In other words, most of them left the shores of this country to seek employment and improve their standards of living (National policy on Labour Migration, 2014).

Predominantly young, the majority of these Nigerians embarked on blind, undocumented migration to unknown destinations. They passed through treacherous routes and put their lives at risk to reach parts of the world where they believed they would find work. Many died on the journey and many more are now in various prisons serving a range of sentences for crimes committed in their desperate fight for survival. A significant proportion of these migrants are victims of traffickers and smugglers who subject them to inhumane treatment and modern-day slavery.

The need for effective governing of the process of labour migration has become more necessary because of Nigerian migrant workers in irregular situations – especially women – who are extremely vulnerable to violations of their basic and fundamental human rights. There is a pressing need to check extensive exploitation, lack of social protection, the stigmatization that Nigerian labour migrants are exposed to, and the embarrassment experienced by innocent Nigerians at various entry ports, especially at airports (National policy on Labour Migration, 2014).

Even within the various ethnic groups that make up Nigeria, there is a cold suspicion of non-indigenes who migrated from their place of abode to seek better economic engagements in other parts of the country. The migrant workers in the North

from the South are usually marginalized and often attacked during riots and protests. For instance during religious or electoral protests, the business and properties of migrants in the North who are predominantly Christians of Igbo ethnic origin from Eastern part of the country.

Sometimes these attacks lead to reprisal attacks by Igbos in Onitsha and Aba targeting Hausa Muslims from Northern part of the nation living in the southern part of Nigeria.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The global economic meltdown and its attendant implications on life and living conditions has made people to move out of their state and countries of origin in search of jobs and better living conditions. Most of the push factors that dislocate people from the places of origin are unfortunately found more in less developed nations of the world.

Africa has experienced a fair share of natural, economic, political and religious crisis that has led to increased poverty, unemployment and general hardship among the population.

The major push factor of migration out of Africa is poor and corrupt leadership. This has mismanaged the abundance of human and material resources available in the continent. The youths are often the major victims of this leadership disaster in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular.

Most of the unemployed youths now turn to other nations especially Europe and America for rescue. They are prepared to do anything to get to those destinations at all cost.

Unfortunately, some of those destination nations do not adequately take care of the safety and other needs of these migrants at work places.

Most times they were cheaply exploited and assaulted by both employers and co-workers. Most times the locals of the destination communities feel threatened and dominated by the mere presence of these migrants and launch attack on them without any provocation.

1.3. Justification of Study

This study seeks to assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migrants' issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants. Human beings as social beings need the contribution and interactions of others even if they are migrants to excel and maximize potentials for development.

2. Methodology

This study dwelt on review of exiting relevant literature on migration. The current global happenings to international and

local migrants will be equally explored.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis was the individual migrants, their socio-economic and religious backgrounds and their area of destination. The push factors will be explored to identify the precarious circumstances that motivate their journeys. The perception of the destination countries on the migrants affects how they were treated on arrival and at the work place.

3. Results

It was discovered that most migrants from Africa were economic migrants in search of "greener pasture". The socio-economic and political environments in their countries of origin do not offer any hope for them.

Youths constitute greater population of African migrants. They willingly take risky methods and routes to travel to their desired destinations. The desired destinations for international migrants are Europe and America. Some African migrants also prefer South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt and Libya. These nations equally serve as both transit and destination nations. Many migrants were harassed sexually and financially by the agents who cross them across the borders. Though aware of the risky nature of the journey, most migrants were eager to make the trips regardless.

4. Discussion of Findings

The unfriendly political environment in most African nations is responsible for the level of international migration situations experienced by Africans.

Despite the abundance of natural and human resources present in countries like Nigeria, bad governance is responsible for misuse and corruption at all levels. This hopeless situation makes it difficult for the growing population of youths most of whom are university graduates to get jobs in their country. Hence they are willing to do anything to get out of Nigeria to hustle for survival.

Their desperation is exploited by the agents who cross them and employers in their destination countries. Most of them enter illegally without documents and continually hide from police and immigration in their country of destination. Some take to crime as a way out and most of them are stigmatized in the process by their countries of destination. Religion especially Islamic religion has come to be associated with terrorism and migrants are common suspects.

This in turn affects the perception and treatment of an average migrant that may have some skills and competencies to contribute in their destination nations. The average migrant

is usually sponsored by family and friends. How they are treated at work place will affect the remittances which their friends and family rely on. Migrants are to be accorded certain level of rights especially those with good conduct

5. Conclusion

United Nations - IOM Director General, William Lacy Swing, made a dramatic call for Member States at the UN Sustainable Development Summit “to address the causes and consequences of migration in a way that promotes dignified, orderly, and safe migration for the benefit of all.”

Equally important has been the necessity for organizing labour migration so that it is beneficial to the migrants and their families, as well as to both the origin and destination countries, to ensure labour migration for development. The remittances from Africans in diaspora have been a saving grace to most of its poor and unemployed citizens. An average Nigerian migrant worker is not working for himself alone. Often times a lot more mouths back home depend and benefit from the pay of one migrant worker. It equally means that when such a migrant worker is maltreated or abused, a lot more people from his community/nation of origin suffer.

Migration in itself is not a problem as no nation can completely exist in isolation of others. It is the cross fertilization of ideas that leads to the creation of a sustainable global integration and dependence. Each nation somehow depends on another to function economically and politically.

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