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## EDITORIAL DESK

The Journal of Contemporary Issues in Nigerian Economy stands as a beacon of scholarly excellence, drawing upon a diverse spectrum of researchers hailing from the expansive West African region and beyond. This volume showcases 14 meticulously researched articles curated from contributors in Nigeria and the United States of America. The genesis of these scholarly endives can be traced back to the auspicious conference convened at the Lagos State University Makanjuola Lecture Hall, held in December, 2023.

These articles, characterized by their depth and precision, underwent rigorous scrutiny during the conference, with over 90 participants actively engaging in critique. Subsequent to this extensive quality assurance regimen and plagiarism checks, only 14 articles successfully met the standards set forth by the esteemed guild of the editorial team, in strict adherence to international best practices.

It is with great pleasure that the Board of Editors announces the second edition of the publication schedule of the journal. Our heartfelt congratulations extend to the authors whose papers demonstrated exceptional merit and successfully navigated the rigorous selection criteria. To future researchers, we extend our encouragement to strive for greater heights in their scholarly pursuits.

The Board of Editors appreciates the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Ibiyemi Ibilola Olatunji Bello, mni NPOM for providing the enabling environment for the conference and her directives to the editorial team for strong quality assurance measures. We believe in your leadership and concerted efforts at ensuring high standards for the journal publication.

Prof. M. O. B. Mohammed, FNAEAP  
Editor in Chief

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## DIASPORA REMITTANCE, A ROADMAP TO HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Chigozie Pearl UNEGBU PhD<sup>1</sup>, Olufunmilayo OYELUDE PhD<sup>2</sup>, Ikhianosimhe AKO PhD<sup>3</sup>

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### Abstract

*The remittance from Nigerian citizens in the diaspora has remained a major source of inflow especially in the present economic reality of the country. Nigerians are known to reside in the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States of America, Austria, Australia, Germany and so many other countries whose currencies command high value in the foreign exchange market. Many Nigerians migrate to different countries of the world daily for education, employment opportunities and business engagements. Nigerian diaspora community remits proceed of their economic activities back home to family members, investment and development. The increase in the number of migrants is not unconnected with the high level of unemployment, poverty, bad governance, nepotism, dwindling economy, insecurity, poor health facilities and other socio-economic problems. As a result of the mentioned problems, some of the citizens who feel that their services will be better appreciated, rewarded and enhanced in other countries find their way out in what is called "Japa" in the local palace. This paper seeks to examine the diaspora remittance as a source of foreign exchange to the Nigerian economy. It also explores the understanding of remittance beyond the hard currencies, to include innovations, techniques, experiences, networks and collaborations that will improve the human capital development in Nigeria. This paper emphasizes the need for the government to consider the high migration rate as an advantage while working hard to improve the economy to attract these citizens back home to contribute to human capital development.*

**Keywords:** Diaspora Remittance, Human Capital Development, Innovations, Connections, Collaborations, "Japa",

### Introduction

Migration is a global issue that has continued to gain attention over the years. Many developing countries have witnessed a mass exodus of their workforce for many years with a sharp increase since the new millennium. This global phenomenon involves the movement of workforce from one country to another. There are many reasons people migrate from one country to another which may include and not limited to better working conditions, improved standard of living, improved health facilities, quality education, and security of lives and properties. This movement may be within or across continents. The African continent is not excluded from this global culture as people move in and out of the continent for several reasons.

In the West African region, this has been the trend in the past decades with an alarming increase since 2020. The outbreak of COVID-19 opened a wider door for medical personnel like nurses, doctors, pharmacists, medical laboratory scientists and paramedics to travel out of the shores of their countries for better job opportunities. Many West African countries have been impacted by this global reality. The high inflation rate in developing countries, low exchange rates of the currencies, poor working conditions, and poor and irregular salaries are some of the reasons for the increase in the number of professionals seeking greener pastures outside the shores of their countries (Foli, Forster, Cheng, Zhang & Chiu, 2021; Stamps, Foley, Gales, Lovetro, Alley, Opett & Faggiano, 2021).

Nigeria is not exempted from this trend in developing countries. Apart from the migrants who have genuine processed travel documents, many take unspeakable risks in their bid to travel out of the country. In the opinion of Kari, Malasowe & Collins (2018), there are pulling and pushing factors necessitating illegal migration. These pull and push factors could be poverty, unemployment, poor infrastructure, declining health conditions, unstable political system, poor performing government and insecurity. Again, the government has not been able to maintain and even develop the rural areas. Apart from the developed urban areas, a handful of the semi-urban areas are less developed, leaving the rural areas underdeveloped and backward.

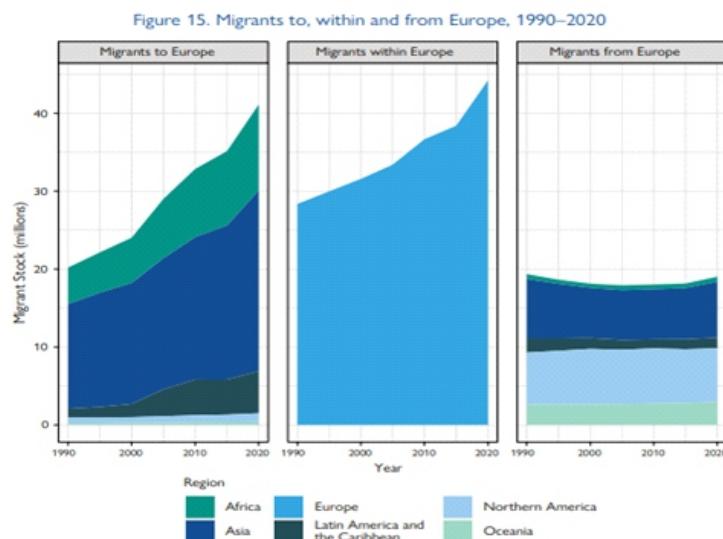
Nigerians and other African citizens in a bid to leave their countries at all costs, subject themselves to all sorts of hardship by going through the Mediterranean coast via Libyans and other African routes in order to accomplish this task (Kari, Malasowe & Collins (2018). This desperation has resulted in many Nigerian citizens becoming victims of kidnapping, drug trafficking, slavery, sex slavery, organ harvesting and underemployment (Ugwukah, 2022). This movement which could be both legal and illegal is called “*Japa*” in the local language. “*Japa*” in Yoruba can be closely translated to “run-away” or “escape”. It has become a colloquial expression that has made its way into the Nigerian lexicon. Even though it is a Yoruba word, it is understood by all Nigerians as the idea of swift and evasive action. It was popularized in 2020 by Naira Marley in his song “*Japa*”.

The objective of this study is to the relationship between diaspora remittance and human capital development in Nigeria. This study also responded to the question “Is there any relationship between diaspora remittance and human capital development in Nigeria, this study used qualitative methods and concentrated on reports, articles, journals and other relevant documents. It also reviewed current and relevant literature on the subject matter.

### The Trend in Global Migration

The number of Africans who have left the shores of their countries either within or outside of the continent has continued to increase over the years. This growth became noticeable in the early 2000s. It also assumed an alarming increase since 2010 and continued tremendously up to date. Nigeria is the giant of Africa with a more than two hundred million population. Nigerians constitute a very high percentage of these African migrants.

Figure 1: Graphical Representation of African Migrants from 1990 – 2020



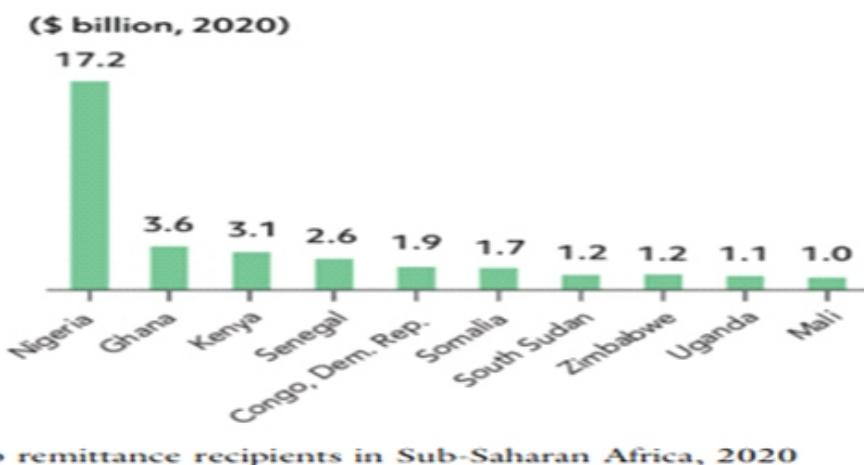
Source: World Migration Report 2022

The graphical representation above shows that there has been little or no migration into Africa from other continents from 1990 to 2020. However, there was a very slight increase in the number of migrants from other countries to Africa from 2010 to 2020. On the contrary, migration out of Africa witnessed a geometrical increase from 2010 to 2020. The destinations that attracted the highest number of migrants are Europe, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean (World Migration Report, 2022). This graphical representation calls for concern by Africans. It shows that Africa does not have those pull factors that can attract intercontinental migrants to Africa. However, many African migrants are pushed out of the continent. We can simply say that Africa is not attractive to non-African migrants.

### Diaspora Remittances and the Nigerian Narrative

In the opinion of Nwafor and Okoye (2023), changing the narrative from negative to positive is important since migration can accelerate development in some developing countries. Africans have a very strong blood and family bond that cannot be disconnected by distance. Nigerians in the diaspora have been remitting funds to the homeland. These remittances are used for educational purposes, development of infrastructure, capital for small and medium enterprises provision of healthcare and maintenance of existing facilities. These remittances are major sources of human capital development and innovations (Wanger & Aras, 2022). *The funds have been used to sponsor innovative ideas that have led to human capital development.*

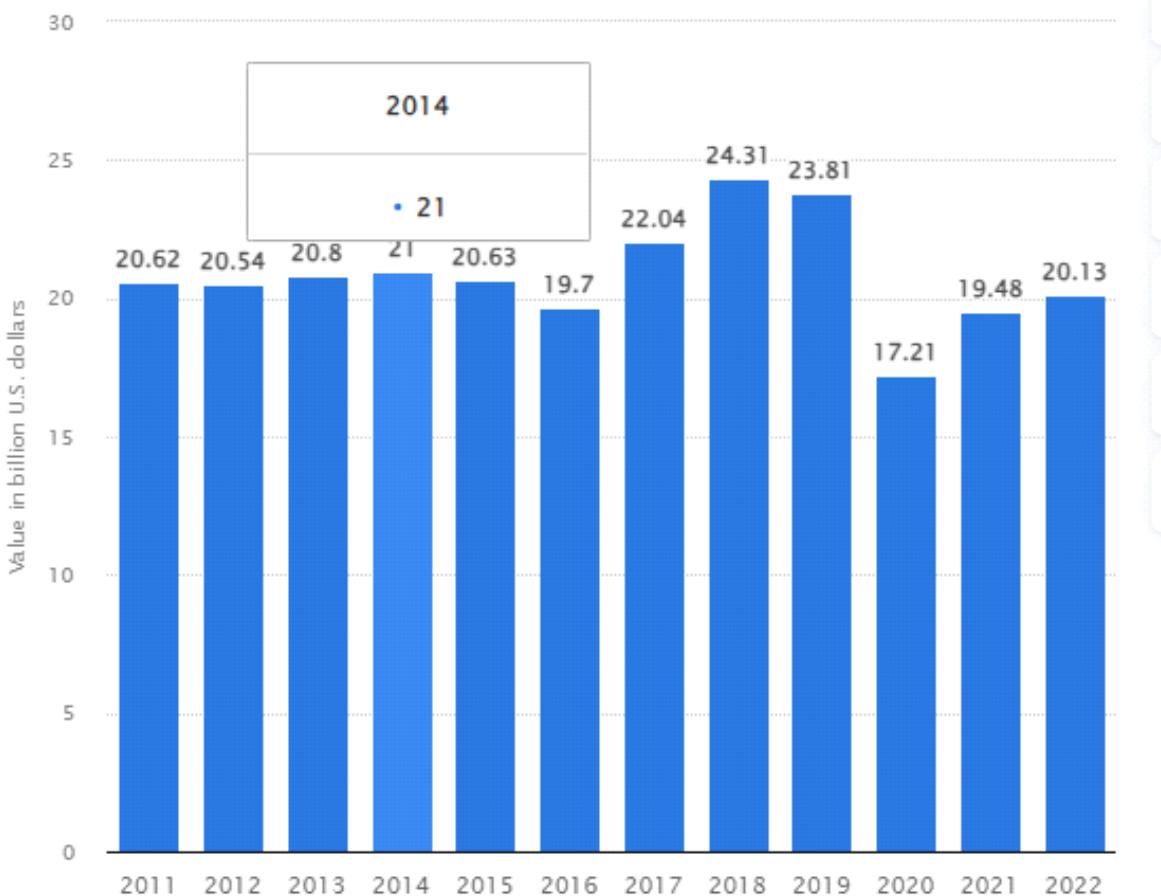
Figure 2: Comparison of remittances in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2020.



Source: Nwafor (2023)

The above graph shows that Nigeria received a total of \$17.6 billion in 2020 which is the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa despite the COVID-19 pandemic. The country next to Nigeria is Ghana with \$3.6 billion. This shows the huge impact of diaspora remittances on the Nigerian economy. It is important to note that the above statistics did not capture all the remittances made through unofficial channels. It represents exclusively the remittance through the formal channel (Nwafor, 2023). There is no gainsaying that there will be some remittances that will pass through the unofficial channels.

Figure 3: Diaspora Remittances from 2011 to 2022.



Source: Statista, 2023

Diaspora remittances have contributed to a huge inflow to the Nigerian economy since 2011. Although there was a very sharp decline in 2016, it increased in 2017. Again in 2020, there was a decrease in the remittances which could be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2019, there has been an accelerated increase till date. There is no gainsaying that diaspora remittances play an important role in improving human development and innovation in Nigeria. Apart from remitting funds to the home country, Nigerians in the diaspora also visit home from time to time. Some at a time decide to settle and operate a business at home. These citizens come home with innovation, ideas, connections, collaborations, networks and skills that become an instrument for national development. This is a strategic way of turning brain drain into brain gain and also brain circulation. In line with the study of Miller and Collins, (2023) certain countries have successfully turned “brain drain” into “brain gain” by effective engagement with a skilled diaspora who have returned to set up business ventures in the homeland'. This can also metamorphose into brain circulation since they bring in new ideas that improve human capital development.

Many of these countries that have been gaining the best brains from the developing countries have stable power supplies, good infrastructure, stable political science, improved health facilities and access to cheaper loan facilities as some of the pull factors encouraging the migrants to leave their countries. The adverse conditions like poor power supply, dilapidated roads, poor health facilities, insecurity, unstable economy and poverty are the push factors forcing them out of their home country.

Interestingly, many of the professionals from developing countries are the first set of people caught in this web of push and pull factors. Their years of training, high zeal for success, robust academic background, and quest for a better life make them attractive to developed countries. These developed countries provide a fertile ground for them to excel in their different professions. They may need a short orientation to sharpen their skills for greater success. The orientation becomes another opportunity to acquire innovations, skills and techniques to enhance their performances.

The greatest investment remains human capital development. It produces high-quality human resources for national development (Ngoc, & Tien, 2023). It is not all about the quality of human development but about the quantity because of the number of citizens in the diaspora (Vithana, Jayasekera, Choudhry & Baruch, 2023). The “Japa” syndrome has become so infectious that every young Nigerian considers it as an opportunity for a better and reliable future.

It is important to redirect the attention of the citizens from the negative impact of the “Japa” syndrome to the gains therein. In consideration of the continuous devaluation of the Naira, the high inflation rate in Nigeria and Ghana, the unstable economic development in many African countries, insecurity and poor infrastructure, it may be difficult to convince the citizens especially the youth who believe that they have a better future in the developed countries to reconsider their decision (Daniel, 2023; Alani, 2023). However, considering this venture as a source of innovation and human capital development may help the nation to effectively tap into the available potential to achieve speedy national development.

### **Human Development as Acquisition of Skills and Techniques**

One of the important sources of knowledge is learning with others which can be seen as brain circulation. This includes and is not limited to being a student or a mentee to a more experienced person but also includes learning in a team. In the opinion of De Felice, Hamilton, Ponari, and Vigliocco, (2023), learning from others is good but learning with others is better. Learning with others involves the development of new techniques and the acquisition of skills within a team. Teamwork provides an opportunity to develop new skills with little or no difficulty. Nigerians in the diaspora work in teams and contribute to the development of their host communities. No country or nationality is the sole repository of knowledge; therefore Nigerians in the diaspora contribute their quota to the development of their teams and also acquire new skills and techniques.

Knowledge comes from interaction and relationships with other individuals. This happens because of the interaction between Nigerians in the diaspora and their colleagues. Team development becomes an important tool in national development and a source of human capital transfer that will continuously have a positive impact on the nation (Wei, Mohsin, & Zhang, 2022). It is very difficult to disassociate an individual from his acquired skills and techniques rather they form part of life and behaviour.

The acquired skills and techniques by Nigerians in the diaspora have culminated into establishing health facilities that person highly specialized surgeries like open heart surgeries, bone replacement surgeries (knee, hip, limb etc), brain surgeries and other first-class medical explorations. All these are products of human development that came as a result of the diaspora skills and technique acquisition. In a conscious effort to improve healthcare and other developments in Nigeria, some have been able to attract other citizens in the diaspora to be part of this effort (Wapmuk, 2021). The efforts of Nigerians in this direction cannot be over-emphasized.

### **The Theories**

This paper will be anchored on Human Capital Theory, the second is the Push and Pull theory.

The Human Capital Theory was developed in the 1960s by two economists, Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz. It posits that education and training were investments that could add to productivity. The theory explains that education is an important component of the workforce. Intellectual and human capital is treated as renewable sources of productivity which continues to have a positive effect on the national development. Nations employ these sources, which increases innovations and creativity. The Nigerians in the diaspora formally acquire education by attaining higher degrees and the informal way through associations, collaborations, relationships, networks, and activities with others. A national problem in human development requires more than just new machines or more money but equipping people to become important tools for national development.

Many Nigerians take the education route to leave the shores of the country which leads to both human capital development and financial resources. In some cases, the motivating factor is not the acquisition of a degree but “Japa” to a working and organized society. They also acquire skills, innovations, experiences, collaborations and networks that become veritable tools for national development. Apart from funds remittance, the Nigerians in the diaspora also visit their homeland from time to time to impact the citizens through health outreaches, career development and the establishment of small and medium businesses. Their remitted funds are also used in payment of school fees and skill acquisitions.

There are critics of human capital theory. Some economists do not agree that human capital directly raises productivity. In 1976, for instance, Harvard economist Richard Freeman argued that human capital only acted as a signal about talent and ability; real productivity came later through training, motivation, and capital equipment. He concluded that human capital theory should not be considered as instrumental to productivity. Despite the criticisms, human capital theory shows a relationship between human capital development and national development. The second theory applied in this work is the push and pull. This theory was discovered by Ravenstein in England in the 19th century. It is the combination of factors that lure the youths to think of leaving their home country and those that fascinate them to move to the destination country in search of greener pastures (Liu, 2023).

The push and pull theory is one of the most important theories for studying the floating population and immigrants. It is said to be one of the theories that explain the development of many first-world countries (Parkins, 2010). The theory holds that one of the reasons for migration is that people can improve their living conditions through it (Allan, 2014). This has been reflected in the living conditions of many Nigerians who left the shores of the country for greener pastures.

As a result, the factors that have caused immigrants to improve their living conditions in the inflow areas have become the pull force of the floating population, and the unfavourable socio-economic conditions of the outflow areas have become the thrust of the floating population. Population migration is accomplished through the combined effect of the thrust of the outflow areas and the pull force of the inflow areas. The outflow country becomes a source of discouragement while the inflow country has many factors that are encouraging. This was instrumental in the development of Japan (Liu, 2023). Many Japanese had some factors that encouraged them to leave the shores of their country. This afforded them opportunities to develop skills that led to national development.

The main criticism of this theory is that it grounds the migration rationale exclusively on wage differentials across countries and does not consider other dimensions such as legal restrictions, cultural differences, or family-related issues. The critics of this theory think that considering the wage factor alone as the reason for migration is not adequate in explaining human development.

This paper adopted the push and pull theory because of its broadness and inclusiveness in explaining human development. The Nigerians in diaspora are attracted by developmental factors in other countries while the underdevelopment in their homeland because a repellent that forces them to migrate. Migration is a source of human capital development that enhances speedy national development.

### Conclusion

The positive contributions of the remittances of Nigerians in the diaspora cannot be over-emphasized especially in the present economic realities of the country. The inflows from the diaspora have remained a dependable source of foreign exchange. These remittances have led to improvements in quality of health, acquisition of skills and access to foreign exchange. There is no doubt the continuous migration of Nigerians to other countries has some negative effects, this paper concludes that the advantage far outweighs the disadvantages. Therefore, this paper posits that there is a relationship between diaspora remittance and human capital development in Nigeria.

### Recommendations

This paper recommends that Nigerians should consider diaspora remittance in a positive sense that leads to national development. Every effort should be geared towards effective use of the potentials, opportunities and sense of responsibility for national development. This will help Nigerians to consider the “Japa” syndrome a present brain drain that will lead to brain gain and brain circulation if adequately harnessed. It also recommends that the desperation to leave the shores of Nigeria that exposes Nigerians to untold hardship and even death should be discouraged and condemned. The process of acquiring genuine travel documents should be encouraged while the illegal routes should be discouraged. The government should promote good governance, improvement in infrastructural development and quality education to discourage the youths from illegal migration. It may be difficult or impossible to change the narrative until Nigeria becomes attractive by possessing those pull factors like stable power supply, improved infrastructure, stable economy, high exchange rate of the Naira to Dollar, improved security, transparency, and accountability by public officeholders.

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