



Migration Aspiration and Wellness: The Undergraduates' View

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Abstract

Migration is a social construct that affects both human lives and the environment they live in. Most often than not, when one seeks to migrate and is unable to or even succeeds in his/her quest, one faces some mental issues like depression, anxiety, or even guilt or despair. This is a pilot study that sought to find out the migration aspiration of students and their feeling as they embark on this quest. Also, the study tried to uncover the likely aftermath psychological implications of failure. This study used a cross-sectional research design, whereby ninety-four (94) undergraduates of the Federal University, Oye-Ekiti were sampled. Results revealed no gender difference in migration aspiration of the participants and willingness of participants to return home. Additionally, only about 53% of the participants sampled are likely to express some forms of psychological disturbances if their migration aspiration were not met. Thus this study concludes that the main pull and push for migration may actually be to escape the hard reality of life in Nigeria and a quest for greener pasture rather than the hatred or dispassion for the country. And also that intention to migrate is not limited to a gender. Anyone may decide to migrate based on his/her aspiration. Findings were discussed in line with existing literature on migration and mental health.

Keywords: Migration intentions, planning, expectation, depression, anxiety

Introduction

It is no news that most individuals do not live in the country where they were born (Boccagni, 2017; Okunade & Awosusi, 2023). Migration world over are embarked on either out of choice or out of inevitability. It involves an individual or a group of individuals changing their residence permanently (Britannica, 2024). It also involves cognitive and preparatory processes (Aslany, Carling, Mjelva, & Sommerfelt, 2021). Migration could be classified in different ways. One of these ways is to see migration in terms of internal (within the same country) or international or external (outside a particular country). Another way to conceive migration is in terms of voluntary and

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involuntary/forced; temporary or permanent (Ikwuyatum, 2016, IseOlorunkanmi, et al., 2021)

Irrespective of the form of migration, most migrations are done in order to access greater economic opportunity, unite loved ones or attain better study prospect. Some are embarked on to avoid conflict, persecution or violations on fundamental human rights. Furthermore, migrations are also done in response to natural disasters, climate change or other environmental factors (IseOlorunkanmi, et al., 2021).

Aspirations are dreams of what individuals feel the future might or should look like *viv-a-vis* the current realities of life (Boccagni, 2017). The current realities of life in Nigeria shows that only the tough can survive as the goings are getting tougher. Cost of living has skyrocketed since the announcement of the removal of fuel subsidy by President Tinubu in his inaugural speech on 29th of May, 2023. Most people now nurse the aspiration to migrate to other countries in search of greener pasture or a more stable economic opportunity (Okunade & Bakare, 2020; Okunade & Awosusi, 2023; Tuki, 2024). Students are not left out in this bid as most are only waiting for the right opportunity to migrate or *'japa (a term used by Nigerians to describe out migration of Nigerian to other parts of the world)* (Okunade & Awosusi, 2023)

Several studies have highlighted reasons why individuals aspire to/or actually migrate out of their country. These reasons include high level of insecurity, pursuit of greener pasture, poor economic conditions; strive for international academic qualifications, high rate of unemployment (Okunade & Bakare, 2020; Okunade, 2021a; IseOlorunkanmi, et al., 2021; Nwosu et al., 2022;); even greed and disinformation have also been identified as part of salient reasons why individuals decide to out migrate (Okunade, 2021a)

This research was a pilot study to investigate the migration aspiration of university students in Nigeria and particularly in Ekiti State. This was conducted to help

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ascertain whether the quest for migration is also imminent among the undergraduates in Ekiti more especially among Federal University, Oye-Ekiti Part-Time students. In this study, mental constructs of desires, intentions, plans and expectations for migration are all seen as migration aspiration. Also, the study tried to uncover the likely aftermath psychological implications of failure to achieve this aspiration.

Method

This study used a cross-sectional research design, where ninety- four (94) undergraduates from the institute of part time studies Federal University, Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE) participated in the research through WhatsApp poll. These participants were conveniently drawn from the department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences. Six (6) of the participants were in 400 level; thirty four (34) were in 200 level while the remaining fifty eight (58) were in 300 level. Male participants were forty one (41) accounting for 41.84 % while the females were fifty seven (57) accounting for 58.16% of the participants. Three questions were culled from the pool of migration aspiration survey items gathered by Carling and Mjelva (2021) while the fourth question was developed by the researchers.

Result

Data generated from the WhatsApp poll revealed the following:

Questions 1

▶ Do you intend to migrate abroad?

	200 LEVEL	300 LEVEL	400 LEVEL	TOTAL
YES	31	57	4	92
NO	0	1	1	2

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Table 1 shows that 92(97.87%) of the participants intend to travel while only 2(2.13%) did not indicate the intention to travel out of Nigeria. This shows a very high rate of migration aspiration among the participants sampled.

Questions 2

▶ I have thought of going abroad?

	200 LEVEL	300 LEVEL	400 LEVEL	TOTAL
YES	30	57	5	92
NO	1	0	1	2

Table 2 shows that 92(97.87%) of the participants have already given a thought to travelling abroad while only 2(2.13%) have not given travelling out of Nigeria a thought. This still indicates a very high rate of migration aspiration among the participants sampled.

Question 3

▶ How do you think not achieving this migration goal will make you feel?

	200 LEVEL	300 LEVEL	400 LEVEL	TOTAL
ANGRY	1	10	1	11
DEPRESSED	3	20	0	23
STRESSED	7	4	3	14
NORMAL	18	24	1	43

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Table 3 shows that not achieving the migration goal will make 11(12.09%) of the participants angry; 23(25.27%) of the participants depressed; 14(15.38%) of the participants stressed and 43(47.25%) of the participants normal. This shows 52.75% of the participants will express some forms of psychological disturbances if their migration aspiration were not met. However, among the participants sampled some would still not have any psychological reaction to any failed aspiration quest.

Question 4

- ▶ **Do you think that you will ever return to this country if you ever emigrate?**

	200 LEVEL	300 LEVEL	400 LEVEL	TOTAL
YES	27	49	4	80
NO	4	9	1	14

Table 4 shows that 80(85.11%) of the participants have no intention of returning to the country if they eventually travel abroad while only 14(14.89%) intend to return back to Nigeria. This data show that despite the quest to leave the country a greater number of participant sampled would prefer to later return back home.

Discussion

Results from the study show that even though about 96% of the participants indicated their aspiration to migrate outside the country, only 14.89% of the participants feel they would not ever return to the country, while the remaining 85.11% still long to return to the country. This is an interesting finding because one would think that less people would intentionally return to a place where they were faced with a lot of hardship. However, it is not clear whether the bid to return back

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home is to showcase ones achievements or just a longing for a feel of one's homeland. Furthermore, 52.75% of the participants indicated that they would be angry, depressed or stressed. Others indicated they would relatively be okay if their aspiration does not come to reality. Decker (2007) in his study on migration among rural and urban adult Botswana men discovered that failed urban migration is related with low cortisol and high depressive affect, and rural residence is also independently associated with high depressive affect. This study also showed that more than fifty percent of the participants studied indicated one form of psychological reaction or the other. This study also lends credence to the work of Tuki (2024) who found no gender difference in migration aspiration just as was revealed in this study.

Thus this study concludes that the main pull and push for migration may actually be to escape the hard reality of life in Nigeria and a quest for greener pasture rather than the hatred or dispassion for the country. This was also hinted by Assfaw & Minaye (2022) to be a major cause of migration aspiration. Another major conclusion of this study also is that intention to migrate is not limited to a gender. Anyone may decide to migrate based on his/her aspiration.

This finding notwithstanding, further studies will focus on these psychological implications and ways of alleviating its impact on individuals. Additionally, a larger number of participants will be incorporated into the study. The research was just a pilot study to check whether FUYOYE students also have high migration aspiration; the main study will also involve all the categories of students in FUYOYE.

The implication of this study is that Nigeria will continue to have her citizens eager to *escape* the harsh realities presently on ground until something is done to alleviate the hardship currently experienced in the country.

The study is limited to the sample size and population. Thus, generalisation of the study should be done with caution.

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