



‘The Poverty -Migration Nexus:Examining the impact of Cross -Border Movement between Nigeria and Benin Republic,1999-2020’

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between cross-border migration and poverty levels in Nigeria and Benin Republic from 1999 to 2020. The study adopted the Push –Pull Approach of the Neoclassical migration theory as the theoretical framework and data were sourced from the secondary sources such as; Journal articles, bulletin, newspaper the United Nations, World Bank development index, International Monetary Fund, and International Organizations for Migration. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficient were the statistical tools used to analyze the data collated. The findings revealed that there is an insignificant positive relationship between cross border migration and poverty in both Nigeria and Benin Republic. The study concluded that cross border migration has not translated into poverty alleviation in Nigeria and Benin Republic, and further suggested policy recommendations to address the poverty challenges associated with cross-border migration. These include improving labor market conditions and protections for migrants, strengthening social safety nets, promoting skills development, and fostering cooperation between Nigeria and Benin Republic to enhance border management and migration governance.

Keywords: Benin Republic, Cross border migration, ECOWAS Protocol, Nigeria, Poverty. Remittance,

Introduction

Cross-border migration is the movement of people across national boundaries and it is the most vibrant characteristic of population distribution since the creation of the universe (Adeola & Fayomi,2012 cited in Ezeabasili,2021). Cross border migration according to Popoola (2016) is the movement of people beyond their country of origin. People migrate beyond the international border based on the prevailing conditions. While the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen (1995) defined poverty as a condition characterized by cruel dispossession of essential human needs, which includes; food, safe drinking water, hygiene facilities, health, shelter, education, and information (United Nations, 1995). Poverty is not only defined by income but also by access to services, including a lack of earnings and productive assets to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; restricted access to education and other fundamental services; increased morbidity and transience from illness; homelessness and insufficient housing; insecure environments and social inequity and omission (United Nations, 1995). The issue of cross border migration and poverty has been a prominent and complex dilemma in Nigeria and Benin Republic, spanning from 1999 to the present day. These two neighboring

countries in West Africa have witnessed significant movements of people across their borders, primarily driven by economic factors and the pursuit of better livelihood opportunities. This phenomenon has given rise to numerous social, economic, and political implications that have shaped the dynamics of both nations.

Throughout the past two decades, Nigeria and Benin Republic have been grappling with high levels of poverty and income inequality, which have fueled the desire for individuals to seek better economic opportunities beyond their own borders. This has led to the growth of cross border migration as individuals attempt to escape poverty and improve their living conditions. Additionally, socio-political instabilities in various regions of both countries, such as the Niger Delta crisis in Nigeria and political instability in Benin Republic, have further contributed to these migration patterns.

The consequences of cross border migration and poverty have shaped the socio-economic landscape of both countries. On one hand, Nigeria has experienced substantial brain drain as skilled professionals and educated individuals seek better job prospects abroad, depriving the nation of valuable human capital. On the other hand, the influx of migrants from Benin Republic has strained the already limited resources and infrastructure in Nigeria, leading to various socio-economic challenges. Moreover, the issue of cross border migration has also posed significant social and cultural challenges. Migrants face issues of discrimination, cultural assimilation, and integration difficulties as they attempt to adapt to their new surroundings. These challenges have created tensions and social unrest in various regions, further adding to the complexity of the issue.

In light of these multifaceted challenges, it is essential to understand the intricacies of cross border migration and poverty in Nigeria and Benin Republic from 1999 to the present. By examining the underlying causes, socio-economic implications, and policy responses, we can gain valuable insights into how these nations can collectively address the issues of poverty and migration and work towards sustainable development.

Cross-border migration is a significant phenomenon that has both positive and negative impacts on countries and individuals involved. One crucial aspect of this migration is the relationship between migration and poverty. The objective of this study is to analyze the dynamic nature of cross-border migration and its implications on poverty in Nigeria and Benin Republic from 1999 to 2020.

Migration patterns between Nigeria and Benin Republic have a long history due to their geographical proximity. These neighboring countries share cultural, economic, and historical ties, leading to a substantial flow of people across their borders. The motivations behind cross-border migration are multifaceted, encompassing factors such as economic opportunities, search for better living conditions, social networks, and political instability.

Nigeria, as the most populous country in Africa, experiences significant poverty rates, with approximately 40% of its population living below the poverty line (World Bank, 2020). The country also faces challenges such as unemployment, inadequate social infrastructure, and limited access to basic services, driving many Nigerians to seek opportunities across the border. In contrast, Benin Republic faces its own economic challenges, including limited job opportunities and insufficient resources to support its growing population. Understanding the relationship between cross-border migration and poverty is essential for both countries' development planning and policy making. While migration can offer economic benefits for individuals and communities, it also poses challenges such as brain drain, social disruptions, and exploitation. Moreover, the influx of migrants may have the probability of straining the local resources and exacerbate poverty levels in specific regions.

This study therefore examine the impacts of cross-border migration on poverty levels in Nigeria and Benin Republic over a 21-year period. By examining various socioeconomic indicators and migration patterns, this study will valuable insights into the effects of migration.

Literature Review

The studies on the relationship between cross border migration and poverty are replete in the literature. For instance, Jaumotte, Koloskova, and Saxena (2016) argue that no matter how controversial migration is politically, it makes sense economically. Also, in the long term, both high and low-skilled workers who migrated bring benefits

to their new home countries by increasing income per person and living standards. High-skilled migrants bring diverse talents and expertise, while low-skilled migrants fill essential occupations for which natives are in short supply and allow natives to be employed at higher-skilled jobs. Gains are broadly shared by the population, so it may be worth-while shouldering the short-term costs to help integrate these new workers.

It is reasonable to presume that the money sent by migrant to their families at home have some comprehensive impact on poverty mitigation because remittances are directly acknowledged by the poor. In a study, on international migration and poverty, Cattaneo, (2009) empirically examined the effect of Migration on Poverty: A Cross country analysis, using an ordinary least square regression for a sample of 61 countries the study revealed that International Migration particularly remittances have significant Impact on poverty alleviation. These findings suggest that the higher the level of migration from developing to developed countries, the lower the degree of poverty in labour sending countries. In collaboration with these views, Bonga and Sahu (2014) examined the impact of remittances on Poverty in Developing countries, using Descriptive analysis the study found out that remittances considerably decrease poverty in beneficiary countries The study of Royuela and Romania (2019) analyzed the effects of international migration on the left behind the household overcrowding level in Ecuador. Using an instrumental variable regression model, the study found out that there is a negative association between International migration and overcrowding. Using the panel data method, De Brauw and Herigaya (2007) examined whether households in Vietnam used seasonal migration to increase their standards of living during the 1990s. Employing descriptive statistics the findings indicate that migration accounts for a 3% point decrease in the poverty headcount, i.e migration played an essential role in the improvement of living standards. Another study by Adelmoneim and Litchfield (2016) investigated the impact of migration on household welfare, using cross-sectional data collected from 1,210 households from four regions in 2014. Using the Heckman model for analysis, the finding revealed that migration has a positive impact on the rural living standards but the benefits are not evenly spread across consumption distribution, the findings further revealed that poorer households experience a reduction in living standards by having migrants. In a related study, Jaumotte, Koloskova, and Saxena (2016) analyzed the impact of migration income levels in advanced Economies using econometric analysis. The findings suggest that immigration significantly increases GDP per capita in advanced Economies, that both high and low skilled migrants can raise labour productivity and an increase in migrants share, benefits the average income per capita of both the bottom 90 percent and top 10 percent of earners indicating that benefits from immigration are widely distributed.

On the contrary, Pekovic, (2017) Analyzed the effects of remittances on poverty alleviation in transition countries, employing Descriptive statistics , and the findings revealed that remittances have a negative statistically significant relationship with poverty.

Similarly, cross-border migration, particularly to neighboring countries, has been a significant phenomenon in Nigeria, driven by various factors such as economic disparities, social networks, and political instability (Adepoju, 2016). In a study, Chukwuone, Amaechina, Iyoko, Enebeli-Uzor, and Okpukpara (2012) analyzed the impact of remittances on poverty and inequality in Nigeria, employing instrumental variable technique and propensity score matching. The findings revealed that remittances had a significant positive impact on poverty. Isiugo-Abanihe (2014) examined the impact of cross-border migration on household welfare and poverty in Nigeria. The study found that households with migrants, particularly those engaged in cross-border migration, tend to have higher incomes and lower poverty levels compared to non-migrant households. This is attributed to the remittances and other resources that migrants send back to their families, which can be used to improve living standards and invest in productive activities.

Olowa and Adeoti (2014) investigated the determinants of cross-border migration and its impact on poverty in Nigeria's border communities. The study revealed that factors such as income, employment opportunities, and access to social services in the destination countries are significant drivers of cross-border migration. Moreover, the study found that cross-border migration can contribute to poverty reduction in the sending communities, as remittances and skills acquired by migrants can be used to start small businesses and invest in agricultural activities. In a related study, Adepoju (2019) conducted a comprehensive review of migration trends and patterns

in Nigeria, including the linkages between cross-border migration and poverty. The study posited that cross-border migration, particularly to countries in West Africa, may serve as a coping strategy for households facing economic hardship. Conversely, Awumbila et al. (2014) found that the relationship between cross-border migration and poverty is not always straightforward. The study, which focused on migration between Ghana and Nigeria, revealed that the benefits of cross-border migration in terms of poverty reduction are often unequally distributed, with some migrant households experiencing improved living standards while others remain trapped in poverty. In another study, Ezeabasili (2024) examined the relationship between cross border migration and remittances in Nigeria and Benin Republic 1999-2020. Utilizing secondary data and pairwise correlation coefficient, the findings revealed that mass exodus of Africans from Nigeria and Benin to foreign oversea has not contributed significantly to the higher value of economic remittances back to home countries

. Theoretical Framework

One potential theoretical framework that examined cross-border migration and poverty in Nigeria and Benin Republic is the push-pull theory of migration, However, mass mobility does not only occur due to wage differences, as Neo-classical economists tend to believed, as a means of International price equalization between rich and poor regions but also there are other factors identified in the form of push and pull factors: Situation Oriented Approaches (**Push-Pull Hypotheses**). This approach was propounded by Lee (1966). He used this approach to explain the erratic nature of migrants. According to him, the most important factors in migration are Push-pull factors. Here, the negative factors in the place of origin are called the Push factors while the positive ones that attract migrants in the destination place are called the Pull factors, he further posit that the decision to move and the process of movement is influenced by factors associated with the areas of origin, destination, intervening factors, personal factors and fluctuation in the economy. Push factors such as natural disasters, civil wars, violent conflict, poor wages, poverty, political repression, low wages, poor remuneration, drought, and famine, etc. have compelled millions of people to move from their home country to others countries. While the Pull factors include: better employment opportunities, high standards of living, better educational system, good basic infrastructures, good healthcare facilities, better wages, etc. all of which attract people from their country of origin to host country.

People move away from their original locality because of those negative factors such as inequality in wages and living standards, unemployment, poverty, the spread of diseases, crime, lack of economic opportunities, inadequate basic infrastructures, flood, violence, terrorism, etc. to another place in search of a more favourable and conducive environment for better education, a healthy environment for living, good Medicare, religious and political freedom, better job employment opportunities, and a safe environment. Mobility in Nigeria and Benin Republic is premised on the fact that the migrant's move away (emigration) from those factors that threatens the individual survivals such as poverty, unemployment, lack of economic opportunities, social instability, and political unrest. These factors may push individuals to seek better livelihoods and economic prospects in other inequality in wages, poor living standard, unemployment, poverty, spread of diseases, crime, lack of economic opportunities, lack of political and religious freedom to a better place for a more favourable and better job opportunities, economic opportunities, better education, and good living standard. When people migrate in the process they may gain employment in their countries of destination and as such earn income and their consumption expenditure may likely increase and also they will have enough earnings to remit back home for the left behinds and also save for investments, this will help reduce poverty.

Methodology

The study employed a secondary method of data collection; data were sourced from textbooks, journal articles, the World Bank development index, website of the International Organizations for Migration. Data gathered were analyzed using Descriptive statistical tools and the Pearson correlation coefficient.

Result and Discussion

Cross border Migration and poverty in Nigeria and Benin Republic, 1999 to 2020

Table 1: Descriptive Analyses of the relationship between international migration and rate of poverty in Nigeria and Benin Republic

Year	Nigeria		Benin Republic	
	Migration (as % of Pop)	Rate of Poverty	Migration (as % of Pop)	Rate of Poverty
1999	-0.10	-2	0.02	2.28
2000	-0.08	1.45	0.21	2.43
2001	-0.08	2.71	0.21	2.75
2002	-0.13	1.82	0.33	2.19
2003	-0.13	1.2	0.34	1.51
2004	-0.16	7.59	0.34	0.35
2005	-0.17	30.36	0.45	1.34
2006	-0.09	0.8	0.22	-1.25
2007	-0.21	5.42	-0.53	0.98
2008	-0.20	4.05	-0.58	3
2009	-0.20	3.49	-0.52	1.97
2010	-0.20	4.13	-0.50	-0.51
2011	-0.15	5	-0.46	-0.72
2012	-0.20	2.12	-0.47	0.12
2013	-0.18	1.52	-0.43	1.93
2014	-0.22	2.61	-0.32	4.24
2015	-0.19	3.52	-0.21	3.43
2016	-0.19	-0.02	-0.12	-0.7

2017	-0.07	-4.16	-0.10	1.13
2018	-0.17	-1.77	-0.09	2.96
2019	-0.23	2.45	-0.13	1.43
2020	-0.18	0.47	-0.32	2.45

World Bank Development Index, 2020 Edition

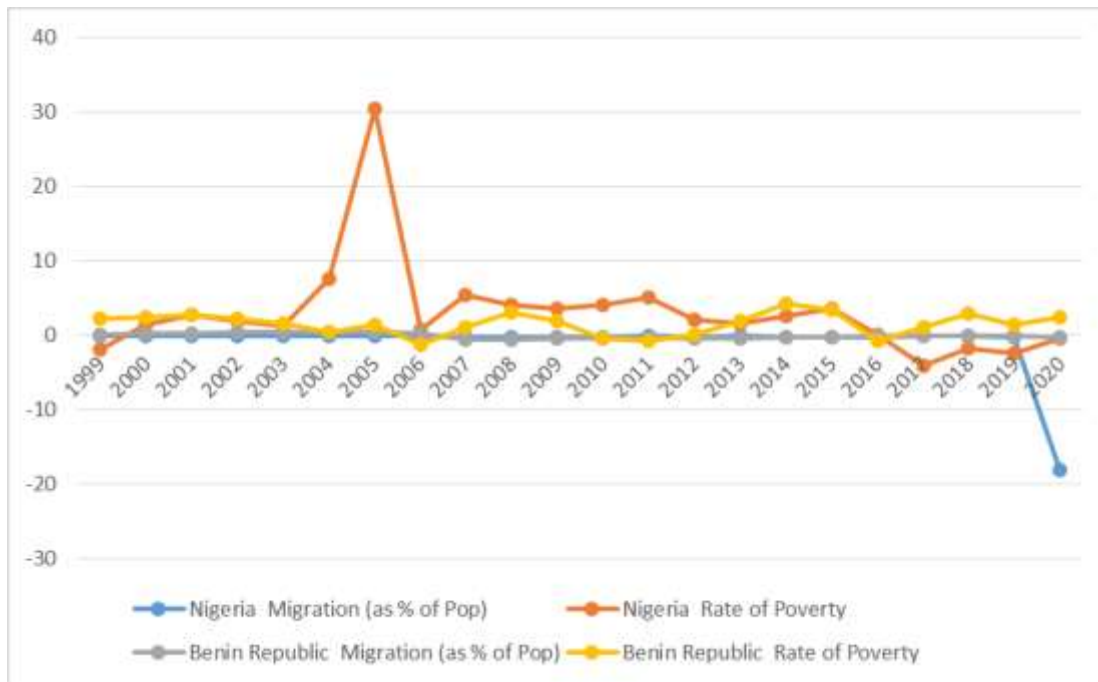


Figure 1: Trend Analysis of International Migration and Poverty Rate in Nigeria and Benin Republic, 1999-2020

The result of Figure 1, above explains the trends in the poverty rate of Nigerian and Benin over the period covering 1999 to 2020. The poverty rate in both Nigeria and Benin reveals a high stochastic trend. This explains that both countries suffer from unstable poverty index within the period under study. This had more unstable poverty state with the level outlier within 2004 and 2005 and a negative poverty score around 2017 to 2020.

The analyses showed the influence of cross border migration on poverty as a proxy for economic security. The rate of poverty in Nigeria as depicted on Figure 1 witnessed a sporadic oscillation throughout the time frame of the study (1999 to 2017). The oscillation in trend of the poverty was on the negative in 1999 and 2015 through 2017. These swings seem to move in a relative opposite direction with the net migration. This suggests a latent negative relationship. This suggests that cross border migration that encourages sizeable number of Nigerian population migration out of Nigeria has deepened poverty in Nigeria.

Like the trend in Nigeria, the poverty rate in Benin Republic was more oscillated depicting higher level of instability in income or poverty status. The trend swung between the negative and positive lines in an infrequent and high order. The swings were more on the positive lines at periods where net migration was on the negative trends. This implies that cross border migration brings about poverty to the Benin citizens as was in Nigeria.

The Relationship between International Migration and Poverty rate in Nigeria and Benin Republic

Table 2: Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Rate of Poverty (NIg) & migration (Nig)	22	.115	.612
Pair 2	Rate of Poverty (BR) & Migration (BR)	22	.004	.986

The coefficient of correlations of Poverty and Net Migration for Nigeria and Benin Republic are 0.115 and 0.004, respectively. This indicates very weak positive correlations. This means that unit rise in poverty leads to a minimal increase in level of net migration for Nigeria and Benin Republic. This tends to suggest that poverty is a reason for African migrants. The probability value of the coefficients is 0.612 and 0.986. Since this p.values is greater than 0.05 level, we reject the null hypothesis, and accept that there insignificant positive relationship between poverty and net migration for Nigeria and Benin Republic. This Implies that cross border migration does not reduce poverty for Nigeria and Benin Republic citizens.

Cross border Migration and Poverty incidence in Nigeria and Benin Republic

From the above trend, migration and poverty rate in Nigeria both moved in opposite directions throughout the period under study, 1999 – 2017. This suggests that cross border migration does not alleviate poverty in Nigeria and Benin Republic. From this result, The Push -Pull Approach of Lee (1966) on the redistribution of labour and the search for better opportunities, does not seem to hold for Nigeria and the Benin Republic. Also, this result is inconsistent with the empirical findings of Bonga and Sahu (2014), Cattaneo, (2009), Isiugo-Abanihe (2014) and Chukwuone et al(2012), whose findings revealed that remittances had a significant positive impact in poverty alleviation. However, this result is in accordance with the findings of Ezeabasili(2024) and Pekovic (2017); whose findings revealed that remittances from international migration have a negative and statistically significant impact on poverty. This suggests that as population movement decreases, poverty increases. By implication this means that remittances from cross border migration has not lifted Nigeria and Benin Republic citizens out of Poverty. This may have resulted from the remittances from migration which may have created dependency and increased consumption of imported goods; it may also have lowered work efforts, as relatives of the migrants may not have invested on productive ventures that will yield more income but rather relied on the remittances from a migrant relative abroad. Furthermore, remittances also increased inflation as more remittances will push more foreign exchange into the economy; this will drive the economy toward consumption of foreign goods rather than productivity, and will invariably dampen the economy. Furthermore, since migrants are within the productive age, the country of origin will suffer from reduced labour supplies especially, the agricultural household that relied solely on family labour for their productive activities.

Poverty incidence in Nigeria and the Benin Republic using the per capita income data.

From Table 1, one can explain the incidence of poverty in Nigeria and the Benin Republic, for instance from 2000 to the year 2005 poverty rate decreased from 2.7 to 0.8 but by 2010 it continued to decrease, between 2015 to 2017. While in the Benin Republic for instance, from the year 2000 to 2005 poverty rate decreased from 2.75 to -1.25 but by 2010 it decreased to -0.72, it continued to increase between 2015 to 2017, -0.7 to 2.96.

The implications of cross border migration and poverty incidence in Nigeria and Benin Republic

From the above result and discussion, it implies that migration has not significantly improved standard of living, despite ECOWAS protocol which allowed free movement of persons within sub-region, has not improved the people incomes, it was expected that the protocol which is a regional framework will help build and integrate regional Economic community with peace and stability. Though the free movement of people within Nigeria and Benin Republic did not translate into the improved living standard. Also, the incidence of poverty in Nigeria and Benin may have been caused by other factors, such as; unemployment, insurgency, crimes, corruption, Non-Diversification of the Economy over- dependency on oil; inequality, laziness, and poor educational system.

Unemployment is a major contribution to poverty in Nigeria and Benin Republic (Chimobi, 2010). There is a strong connection between unemployment and poverty. When people are not employed, their source of livelihood reduces over time. Many graduates in Nigeria and the Benin Republic loiter around the streets without any tangible engagement to earn a living. The government is capable but pays less attention to job creation. Employment in most cases is usually done on man-know-man, not on merit, but on your connection, not your qualification this left many highly qualified people in poverty because they are not gainfully employed.

Conclusion

Cross border migration and poverty have been prevalent and interconnected issues in Nigeria and Benin Republic from 1999 to 2020. The pursuit of better economic opportunities and the desire to escape poverty has led to significant movements of people from Nigeria and Benin Republic across their national boundaries. However, this phenomenon has not alleviated poverty but deepened poverty situation in both countries.

Recommendations

Addressing cross border migration and poverty requires comprehensive and targeted measures:

1. Develop comprehensive migration policies that address both the push and pull factors of migration. These policies should prioritize the protection of migrants' rights, integration strategies for migrants, and the provision of support and services to vulnerable populations. These policies should also address brain drain by providing incentives for skilled professionals to stay and contribute to their home countries.
2. Improving labor market conditions and protections for migrants, strengthening social safety nets, promoting skills development, and fostering cooperation between Nigeria and Benin Republic to enhance border management and migration governance. Economic development: Both Nigeria and Benin Republic should prioritize and invest in sustainable economic development initiatives. This includes diversification of the economy, promoting entrepreneurship and job creation, and providing access to finance and training for marginalized communities. A strong economy will reduce poverty levels and provide better livelihood opportunities, helping to curb migration.
3. Enhanced cooperation and coordination between Nigeria and Benin Republic is crucial in managing cross border migration. This includes sharing information, data, and best practices to address the challenges associated with migration effectively. Joint initiatives should focus on border control, human trafficking, and the protection of migrants' rights.
4. Collaboration with other regional and international partners is essential in tackling cross border migration challenges. Nigeria and Benin Republic should actively engage with regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and international bodies like the United Nations to develop comprehensive migration strategies and harness resources for implementation.
5. Invest in social programs that target the most vulnerable populations, including rural communities, women, and youth. These programs should focus on poverty reduction, education, healthcare, and social

infrastructure development. By strengthening social safety nets and providing access to basic services, the motivation for migration can be reduced.

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