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POLITICS & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Challenges in Nigeria's education sector and the migration of Nigerian postgraduate students to South African universities

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Abstract: Education remains the weapon for upward stratification, social and economic development of any nation but the Nigerian government has not shown enough commitment to the educational sector. The manifestation could be seen in the shrinking government funding on education, decaying and lack of infrastructure in Nigeria's universities which have led to demoralization of the academia. A major consequence of this is the frustration experienced by postgraduate students who are pursuing higher education and having to spend longer period than expected record time. This frustration in pursuing higher educational qualification often leads to stunted career progression. This has led to an alternative decision to migrate in



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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The perennial challenges of the Nigerian education sector include infrastructural decay and deficit, inadequate funding of research endeavours and poor remuneration of the university workers. The failure of successive Nigerian governments to remedy the situation has led to intermittent industrial disputes between the government and the organized university workers' unions. The implication of this is that the workers (teaching and non-teaching) became demoralized with attendant consequences on the academic pursuit of students. Some students abandoned their programme, while others looked for an alternative. With the increasing number of Nigerian postgraduate students' migration to South African universities, this study, therefore, examined the motivation of the Nigerian postgraduate students to South African universities. Among other findings, this study shows that the students migrated to South African universities to escape overstretched programme in Nigerian universities.

search of higher education abroad. Consequently, in recent times, Nigerian post-graduate students have migrated more than ever before to South African Universities that are believed to have modern facilities for training and ensuring completion of programmes in record time. This study employed the use of structured questionnaire to investigate the determinants of this form of migration. Among other findings, this study found that the decision to migrate and pursue postgraduate student abroad is informed by the demoralization and frustration suffered in attaining postgraduate education in Nigeria. The study also found that many Nigerian postgraduate migrant students that desired to stay back in South Africa after the programme were discouraged from doing so because of the frequent hostilities between the bulging South African youths. Their hostility is associated with the shrinking capacity of the host government (South Africa) to create new jobs for them. In addition, the belief of the agitating South African youth that the migrant postgraduates are responsible for their unemployed status, by taking up their jobs especially in those areas where required skills among the South African are lacking further engenders hostilities. This study, therefore, suggests among others that the home country should increase budgetary allocation to improve the education sector as well as monitor such allocation to ensure that it is prudently utilized. It is also recommended that institutional processes and procedures to monitor and evaluate postgraduate studies in Nigerian universities be institutionalized.

Subjects: Migratio; Higher Education; Education & Development

Keywords: Frustration; migration; career progression; education; Nigeria

1. Introduction

The contemporary global system is characterized by phenomenal migration capable of altering the demographic composition of major cities around the world. This is however not a new phenomenon, because migration dates to a long time in the history of human existence. According to Ikwuyatum (2016), migration means a movement of individual or group of people from one geographical location to another. The movement may be on temporary or permanent basis. In a similar view, Yaro (2008) defined migration as mobility of people from one region to the other within an administrative state in a country and/or between contiguous countries or nation-states. According to these studies, migration is influenced by both endogenous and exogenous factors. These factors are improved health services, better living condition, the opportunity for improved education facilities and higher degree pursuit among others.

The migration processes in contemporary times have become much more complex and cumbersome than it used to be in the past (Kristoff, 1999; Sjursen, 2000). However, the purpose of migration depends on individual aspirations and the aspiration is induced by how an ambition can be achieved in certain place other than one state of residence (Bohme, 2012; Flahaux & De Haas, 2016). It is for such aspirations and ambitions that postgraduate students migrate from their states of residence to pursue higher degrees in their choicest countries (Adu, 2019).

In the context of this study, migration refers to the movement of the Nigerian postgraduate students to pursue postgraduate degrees in the South African Universities. Migration from Nigeria to South Africa is induced by opportunities like fee remission, access to modern training and research equipment, funding, research grants, and scholarship. Buttressing this claim, besides the fact that the first five leading universities in Africa are from South Africa, the National Research Fund (NRF) South Africa provides research funds to numerous postgraduate researchers

in South Africa (Ranking web of Universities, 2020). For instance, in 2017, the NRF budget for research in South Africa was about two billion rand. Meanwhile, that was the same amount that Nigeria budgeted for the entire ministry of Education in Nigeria in the same year, at the prevailing market exchange rates of R1/N29. In addition, the South African university provides a conducive atmosphere and prospects for migrants looking at the incentives mentioned above, but the socio-economic environment is hostile to migrants. There are numerous cases of attacks against foreign black nationals and especially Nigerians (Adesina, 2019; Alfaro-Velcamp & Shaw, 2016).

The world system has witnessed an astronomical increase in the number of students who have decided to study outside their home countries. By this decision, they become international students. International students have increased in number from 2.1 million in 2001 to over 5.3 million in 2019 (Institute of International Education, 2020). Apart from the increase in the enrolment rate of international students, there is also the emergence of large numbers of new host countries that are educationally attractive to international students. Their emergence has come to challenge the traditional big five educationally attractive host countries in the areas of students' subscription and destination choice. These big five according to Kell and Vogl (2012) are the United States of America, France, United Kingdom, Australia and Germany. Significant changes have occurred in students' migration trends and patterns over some time (Institute of International Education, 2020). These changes are brought about by policies and strategies that are put in place by some countries to attract higher international subscription. The policies such as jobs and career incentives, scholarship/tuition waiver and introduction of courses to be delivered in English language have given a boost to international students' enrollment in the emerging big players in higher education. This has led to the displacement of some of the traditional migration destination countries. For example, Table 1 shows changes in the migration destination countries in the year 2001, 2017, 2018 and 2019 with the percentage share of global international students.

Table 1 shows the changes that have occurred in international students' migration over time. Three (Japan, Spain and Belgium) of the eight destination countries with a noticeable share in international students in 2001 have been replaced by three (China, Canada and Russia) new countries by 2019. Some others have been displaced in terms of the percentage share of the international students' enrollment. For example, China displaced Germany, while the competition between Canada and Australia have seen the displacement of France. Another prominent change is the decrease in the percentage share of most of the traditional destination countries as well as a decrease in the share attributed to other countries.

Table 1. Mobility trends in international students' migration among traditional destination countries (2001–2019)

No.	2001	% Share	2017	% Share	2018	% Share	2019	% Share
1	United States	28	United States	24	United States	22	United States	21
2	United Kingdom	11	United Kingdom	11	United Kingdom	10	United Kingdom	9
3	Germany	9	China	10	China	10	China	9
4	France	7	Australia	7	Australia	7	Canada	8
5	Australia	4	France	7	France	7	Australia	8
6	Japan	3	Canada	7	Canada	7	France	7
7	Spain	2	Russia	6	Russia	6	Russia	6
8	Belgium	2	Germany	6	Germany	5	Germany	5
9	Others	34	Others	23	Others	25	Others	21

Source: Institute of International Education (2020).

Apart from the changes in the trends of international students' migration among the traditional destination countries, there is a growing trend in regional student's migration mobility. For example, South Africa has not only become a regional hub for the South African Development Countries' (SADC) members, it has become both continental and global student's migration destination (Lee & Sehoole, 2015). In terms of recognition, preferences and motivations, South Africa ranks the 13th most preferred destination among American students in 2013 as well as the 14th most preferred destination globally and the only African country that featured in the 2014 OECD reporting (Lee & Sehoole, 2015).

Lee and Sehoole (2015) show that Nigeria ranks as the fifth sender of students to South Africa. It comes after four SADC members: Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho and Swaziland. Further analysis of the report shows that in terms of postgraduate subscription in South African universities, Nigeria came second with 2008 postgraduate students after Zimbabwe's 6695 postgraduate students.

Following Lee and Sehoole (2015) that there is need for further empirical study on students' migration to South Africa as well as their motivations, this study attempts to investigate what motivates the Nigerian postgraduate students' migration to the South African universities. The remaining sections of the study are structured as follows: Section 2 provides the literature review; Section 3 presents the methodology employed, Section 4 presents data and interprets results while Section 5 concludes the study and offers recommendation for policy formulation.

1.1. Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are (i) to investigate the main reason/factor that influence Nigerian postgraduate students migrating to South Africa for higher education and (ii) to probe into the reasons why some Nigerians desire to either stay back or not in South-Africa after their programme. Nigeria with over 120 universities, yet the country is one of the top 10 nations that sends students abroad seeking admission for higher education. Consequently, for Nigeria and its economic challenges, this large number of students will lead to a huge drain on the economy in term of capital flight (tuition fees, medical insurance, accommodation, flight) as well as the attendant brain drain, hence the need for this study.

2. Literature review

Globalization has influenced higher education in no small measure and students in search of higher education over the years, account for the largest proportion of migrants (Beine et al., 2014). It was predicted that the enrolment of students outside their home countries will increase to about seven million by the year 2020 (OECD, 2015). Previous studies have established the relationship between education and migration (Beine et al., 2014; Hawthorne, 2010; Kell & Vogl, 2012; Ploner & Nada, 2020). This movement can be within a country or between countries. Whenever an individual discovers that there are opportunities provided by the education which should be harnessed, such individual will migrate to the area where such opportunity exists (Boyden, 2013; Crivello, 2011).

While the literature reveals various studies carried out on the relationship between education and migration (see Beine et al., 2014; Ploner & Nada, 2020), much studies have not been on international migration of postgraduate students (Bijwaard & Wang, 2016; Mosneaga & Winther, 2013). Literature established the fact that student's migration for education like other forms of migration is driven by various reasons. These factors are classified as push and pull factors (Li & Bray, 2007). The push and pull factors determine whether a student will travel outside the country for studies. These factors also determine the choice to either return to the home country or remain in the host country. Quality of degree to be acquired is considered as a basis for travelling abroad to pursue the postgraduate programme. When students perceived that the quality of education in their home country is of lower quality compared with that of a foreign country, they are motivated to travel out for studies (Agarwal, 2008; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Szelenyi, 2006). According to Van Bouwel and Veugelers (2013) the decision to migrate for studies is majorly influenced by the

quality of education provided by the university. Therefore, students search for universities that can provide quality education. This is what determines the migration destination. For Kvedaraite et al. (2015); Mihi-Ramireza and Kumpikaite (2014) and Janotka et al. (2013), economic factor has been identified as the major reason students' migration decision. Students considered also the world ranking of universities in their choice of destination. There are indicators by which the quality of education is measured. Consequently, two ways of measuring the quality of education have been identified: the place of a university within the top 200 universities by the Shanghai ranking, and the relative impact of a country in terms of the publications emanating from such country relative to its citations in total world's publications. For example, in a study conducted among the ERASMUS students, González et al. (2011) discovered that university ranking was a determinant of destination choice for the students. Also, Perkins and Neumayer (2014) found that Institutional ranking that is frequently published influence the motivation of students' perception of higher education quality differences. Rosenzweig (2006) discovered that the desire of students to maximize employment opportunities in the host country where they acquire education is a motivating factor. In addition, existing wage differences between the country of origin and the host country is also a factor that motivates as well as determine the migration pattern of students. Mayda (2010) examined the influence of GDP on migration. The findings revealed that the availability of greater income opportunities in the country of destination has a significant influence on the migration flow from the country of origin.

Jena and Reilly (2013) investigated what attracts higher education students to the United Kingdom. The study shows that the exchange rate of the United Kingdom currency has a positive influence on higher education demand. There are also other non-pecuniary motives for why students migrate. For instance, Kahanec and Kralikova (2011) found that students migrate because of the desire to explore and expand not only their knowledge of other societies but also for developing their language skills.

2.1. Research framework

This work is situated within the causal model propounded by De Jong and Fawcett (1981) called the Value-Expectancy model. It is broad and encompassed many components of other theoretical views on migration. The core argument of the Value-Expectancy model according to De Jong and Fawcett (1981) was summarized by Crawford (1973): "Despite differences in terminology, the expectancy X value behaviour theorists all propose that the strength of a tendency to act in a certain way depends on the expectancy that the act will be followed by a given consequence (or goal) and the value of that consequence (or goal) to the individual."

There are two elements of the Value-Expectancy model. These are goals and expectancies. Based on the literature reviewed by De Jong and Fawcett (1981), the identified goals of individuals were subsumed under seven core components: autonomy, wealth, affiliation, comfort, stimulation, status, and morality. Migration decision by individuals or family is hinged on the probability that the goal will be attained by the decision. The desire for higher degree falls within the status component. Motivation to migrate is determined by the value that is placed on such goal(s) as well as the probability of such goal(s) being realized through the migration decision. This model has been used in previous works. For instance, Kley (2011) used the model to build a theoretical framework that explains how the certain stages of the migration process are connected to the phases of the migration decision-making process. Also, De Jong et al. (1983) employed the model to compare the determinants of both internal and international migration intentions of adults in Ilocos Norte province of Philippines.

This model is relevant to this work due to its ability to explain the value that is placed on acquiring a PhD degree (goal) and then the expected probability of such goal being realized. The motivation that such degree will be acquired propels the migration decision of most postgraduate PhD students.

3. Methodology

In this survey research, data were collected through two primary sources: questionnaire and in-depth interview of key informants. The in-depth interviews were conducted at different times between March 2016 and September 2019 at the University of Johannesburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal and University of Cape Town. The choice of starting and cut-off dates is informed by data availability and the fact that the cut-off date, 2019 is the most recent date having several postgraduate students enrolled and have not graduated. With the consent of the interviewees, the interviews were audio-recorded, and their views reported verbatim as appropriate. The quantitative data were collected with the use of Google form administered through the respective Nigerians students' WhatsApp platforms in the three selected universities in South Africa—the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN), Durban, University of Cape Town (CT), and the University of Johannesburg (UJ)—between March and April 2020. Numbers of students as well as accessibility to the WhatsApp platforms were the major considerations in choosing these three universities. The questionnaire was designed in two sections and the English language being the official language of Nigeria, was employed. The first section focuses on the demographic information of the respondents and the other section centres on the research objectives. Responses from the questionnaires were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v.25) and the result analysed thereafter. For the in-depth interviews, this research work adopted the purposive sampling technique and engaged selected Key Informants. Key informant interviews are restricted to only Nigerians pursuing postgraduate degree in South Africa, and whom the researchers believe that have first-hand knowledge and personal experiences on the subject matter of study. In all, 18 persons were interviewed as their selection was purposively done using gender representation, age-range and duration of stay in South Africa. Six key informants each were selected from each of the universities. The responses from the interview were then analysed using qualitative content analysis technique and presented thereafter. The results of both the questionnaire and the in-depth interviews are presented in two sections. We present the analysis of the results of the data obtained from the administered questionnaire, as well as the in-depth interviews conducted for this study.

4. Analysis of results

Table 2 shows the distribution of the respondents' demographic characteristics. The analysis shows that all respondents are Nigerians, 68 (77.3%) are male respondents while 20 (22.7%) are female. The distribution spread showed that 54 (61.4%) of the respondents were married, 33 (37.5%), single, while 1 (1.1%) represents the distribution spread for the widows. The demographic representation for the age range spread showed that 21–30 years with 26.1% while 31–35 years took 28.4% of the spread. Notably, the demographic spread of above 35 took the highest frequency with 45.5%. Above half, 54 (61.4%) of the respondents are married men and women suggesting a great sacrifice on the part of the family.

Table 2. Respondents' demographics characteristics

S/N	Demographic	Variables	Total retrieved	% Retrieved	Cumulative per cent
1	Nationality	Nigerian	88	100.0	100.0
2	Gender	Male	68	77.3	77.3
		Female	20	22.7	100.0
3	Marital status	Married	54	61.4	61.4
		Single	33	37.5	98.9
		Widowed	1	1.1	100.0
4	Age range	21–30	23	26.1	26.1
		31–35	25	28.4	54.5
		Above 35	40	45.5	100.0

Figure 1 shows that 79.5% of the respondents indicated that the desire to escape frustration on a higher degree was the greatest motivation for coming to South Africa. The remaining 20.5% viewed the desire for a foreign degree as the greatest motivation for coming to South Africa. This is also in line with the findings of previous studies that found the desire for a foreign degree as one of the motivating factors for students' migration for higher degree education (see Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Szelenyi, 2006). Even though the motivation for migration changes with time (see Hagen-Zanker & Mallett, 2016), the respondents have the pursuit for higher education as a motivation for migrating to South Africa. Among the Push-Pull factors for highly educated migrants in less developed economies is the fact that they want to escape the challenge of lack of employment in their home country, the desire for greater opportunities and higher financial resources (Browne, 2017).

The result from the figure shows also that contrary to previous studies on why students migrate and enrol abroad which include the non-recognition of their qualification (Banerjee & Verma, 2009), the reason given by the respondents showed that they migrated to South Africa for higher education not because their qualification was neither recognized nor largely by the desire to acquire a foreign degree but to escape frustration arising from non-completion of higher education on time in their home country.

Table 3 presents the crosstabulation of marital status and gender of the respondents with their greatest motivation for coming to South Africa to pursue a postgraduate degree. For marital status, the result shows that 48 of the respondents that are married came to South Africa for postgraduate degrees to escape the frustration of overstretched programme, while 6 respondents came because of the desire to acquire a degree from a foreign university. For the single respondents, 21 respondents came to South Africa to escape the frustration of overstretched programme, and 12 respondents took the migration decision to acquire a higher degree from a foreign university. For the widowed, only 1 respondent is a widow and the greatest motivation for coming was to escape frustration arising from the overstretched and prolonged programme. The cross-tabulation of gender with the greatest motivation for coming to South Africa for postgraduate degree shows that the greatest motivation for 56 male respondents for coming to South Africa was to escape frustration over the overstretched programme and 12 male respondents to acquire a higher degree from a foreign university. For the female respondents, the analysis shows that 14 female respondents took the migration decision to escape frustration as a result of the overstretched and prolonged programme, while 6 female respondents decided to acquire a higher degree from a foreign university.

Figure 1. Respondents' greatest motivation for coming to South Africa for higher education.

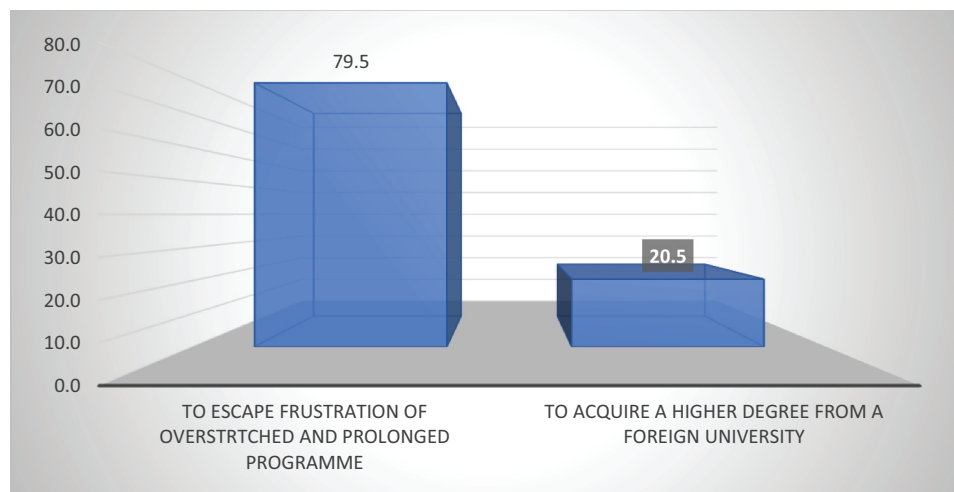


Table 3. Crosstabulation of marital status and gender with greatest motivation to migrate

Marital status	Greatest motivation				Total	Gender	Greatest motivation				Total
	To escape the frustration of overstretched and prolonged programme		To acquire a higher degree from a foreign university				To escape the frustration of overstretched and prolonged programme		To acquire a higher degree from a foreign university		
	Count	%	Count	%			Count	%	Count	%	
Married	Count	48	6	54	Male	Count	56	12	68		
	%	89	11	100		%	82	18	100		
Single	Count	21	12	33	Female	Count	14	6	20		
	%	64	36	100		%	70	30	100		
Widowed	Count	1	0	1	Total	Count	70	18	88		
	%	100.00	0	100		%	79	21	100		
Total	Count	70	18	88							
	%	79	21	100							

Table 4 presents the crosstabulation of marital status and gender concerning their desire to stay back in South Africa after the completion of the postgraduate programme. A total number of 29 married respondents desired to stay back, while 25 married respondents do not desire to stay back after their postgraduate programme. For the single respondents, 13 of them desired to stay back while 20 single respondents do not desire to stay back in South Africa after their programme. The gender dynamics of those that desired to stay back in South Africa shows that 32 males desired to stay back while 36 do not desire to stay back after their programme. This shows that majority of male didn't desire to stay back after completing their postgraduate programme. The result also shows that 11 female respondents desired to stay back while 9 female respondents do not desire to stay back in South Africa after their programme. This shows that while most of the male doesn't desire to stay back, the majority of the female respondents desired to stay back in South Africa after their programme.

From **Figure 2**, out of a total of 88 respondents, 45 revealed that they abandoned the programme to come to South Africa to pursue a PhD.

Result of the analysis also shows that majority of the respondents (80%) abandoned their PhD programme. The programme was abandoned because of frustration arising from overstretched or prolonged completion time. This frustration can also be linked together with the reason given by about 13% of the respondents who abandoned the programme due to inadequate and unpleasant experience with their supervisors. From the above quantitative results, we present a diagrammatic

Table 4. Crosstabulation of marital status and gender with the desire to stay back

Marital status and desire to stay					Gender and desire to stay			
	Marital status	Desire to stay back		Total	Gender	Desire to stay back		Total
		Yes	No			Yes	No	
Married	Count	29	25	54	Male	32	36	68
	%	53	47	100		47	53	100
Single	Count	13	20	33	Female	11	9	20
	%	40	60	100		55	45	100
Widowed	Count	1	0	1	Total	43	45	88
	%	100	0	100		49	51	100

Figure 2. Why respondents abandoned the programme in Nigeria.

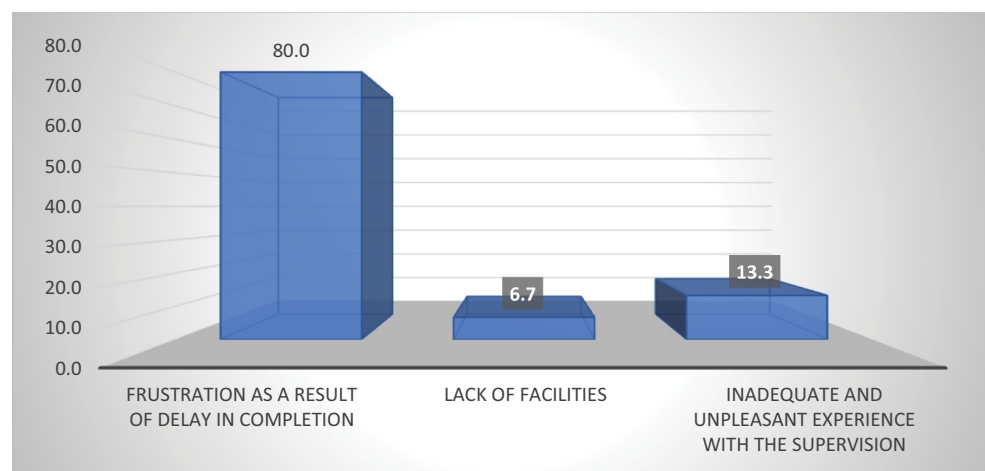
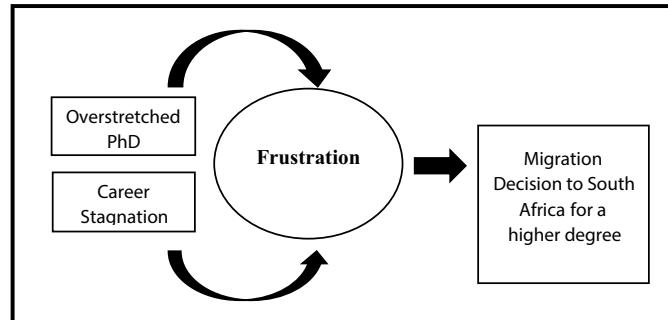


Figure 3. Frustration–migration decision nexus.



representation of the nexus between goal, frustration and migration decision derived from the experiences of study participants as shown in [Figure 3](#) below.

The second aspect of the analysis of the questionnaires focuses on the second objective of the study which was to probe the intention of Nigerian postgraduate students on whether to stay back in South Africa or not after their programme. The analysis shows that out of the 88 respondents, 51.2% said they never desire to stay back in South Africa after their programme, while 48.8% desired to stay back in South Africa. For those that desired to stay back in South Africa after the completion of their programme, stated these as factors that could influence their decision to stay back: a conducive environment for the respondents in South Africa has the highest percentage of 31%, while the opportunity for research grants and job opportunity after study has 29% and 25%, respectively.

Also, the analysis from the questionnaire shows that 44% of the respondents cited the hostilities from the locals,¹ that is, the xenophobic attacks as the major reason why they never desired to remain in South Africa after their programme. Lack of permanent job has 22% as foreigners are rarely offered a permanent job with the accruing benefits. Granting of permanent residency to students' migrant is not automatic. This accounts for 6% of the reason why students' migrants from Nigeria desired not to stay back in South Africa. Increasing stringent conditions for migrants represents the view of 22% of the respondents on why they never desire to stay back in South Africa after the completion of their programme.

To analyse the in-depth interview, the first stage of analysis forms the bases for exploring the raw data and developing the preliminary codes; thematic analysis was employed. However, similar codes were categorized into sub-themes, while redundant codes were obliterated through the iterative process. With a more manageable number of codes, the researchers began to compare similar codes from different participants; these were later arranged into themes.

[Table 5](#) presents the major themes and sub-themes derived from participants through the in-depth interviews.

5. Theme 1: Career growth

Participants in the in-depth interview emphasized the importance of PhD to their career growth. They revealed their frustration in the pursuit of the degree in Nigeria as it was responsible for the stagnation they experience in their career. For faculty that are already employed, it is required that such should have a doctorate in the related field. Therefore, individuals employed without such qualification are expected to enrol for the programme. This is linked to the second driver, as career progression is determined by the acquisition of a doctorate. If such faculty stays long on the programme, the implication is career stagnation. This could lead to frustration on the programme as well as on the job. The faculty member facing frustration may have to decide on either to continue with the programme at the university in the home country, this

Table 5. Themes and sub-themes derived from the in-depth interviews

S/N	Themes	Sub-themes
	Career growth	Frustration Overstretched programmes
	Challenges in Nigeria's education sector	Poor government funding Persistence industrial disputes leading to frequent Industrial Actions Prolonged academic programmes
	The decision to return to Nigeria or stay back in South Africa after studies	Hostilities from the locals (Xenophobic crises) Job opportunities Stringent migration policies Conducive environment and availability of research grants

could be in the same institution or change to another institution within the same country, or decide to migrate to a foreign country in pursuit of higher education. For other individuals who desire to join the academia, and with the benefit of hindsight may also not want to experience the frustration associated with an overstretched programme or career stagnation, will decide immediately to seek admission for a higher degree in a foreign institution.

On the implication of having a higher degree and career progression, a participant narrated his experience:

... higher degree especially PhD is a required qualification for promotion to a senior lecturer cadre. I became stagnated for many years on a level due to my inability to acquire the required qualification for no fault of mine. For how long will I have to continue, hence, my decision to come to South Africa. (UKZN, 2)

When there is career stagnation, frustration sets in. This is most painful when such stagnation is no fault of yours. This participant narrated his ordeal thus:

... I became so frustrated when I discovered that some of the students that I taught during their undergraduate study returned to our department as faculty members having obtained their PhD and placed above me. I have to report to one of them when he was made the Head of Department. (CT, 4)

The cost of the programme is another reason given by another participant. To him

... every academic year, you are expected to pay school fees. The school has a policy of completion of PhD in four years with a given grace of an additional year. After this your studentship becomes stale and you are expected to reapply for another PhD. They are strict to implement that but fail to look at why programme extended beyond the stipulated period. Having spent many academic years paying school fees without progress, I simply abandoned the programme. (UJ,5)

From the above-expressed opinion of participants, it shows that the career progression of faculty is tied to their obtaining a PhD. Therefore, when the programme is overstretched, they are not only stagnated in career growth, they also incur extra cost on the programme.

6. Theme 2: Challenges in Nigeria's education sector

From the views and opinions expressed by the participants, the challenges in the Nigerian education sector are interwoven. These challenges are subsumed under three sub-themes as they emerged from the codes. These are poor funding of the universities that lead to an infrastructural deficit. The efforts by the organized universities' union to make successive governments remedy the situation resulted in various industrial disputes between the government and the organized unions with negative attendant consequences on the educational pursuit of students.

7. Sub-theme 1: Poor government funding and infrastructural deficit

During the in-depth interviews, participants consistently expressed their displeasure on poor funding of education by successive governments in Nigeria. For some of these participants, they identified the lack of support from the Nigerian government as due to policy inconsistency, discriminatory treatment of students from private and public universities as well as pervasive corruption in the disbursing agencies. A participant said,

the intervention funds were meant for Nigerians, but what we have witnessed is that students from private-owned tertiary institutions are excluded from the supports ... such students bear the cost of financing their education themselves ... (UKZN, 1)

Another participant explained the exclusion of students from the government's education fund from policy inconsistency. The participant opined that

... the lack of supports is not limited to the privately-owned tertiary institutions alone ... most students from government-owned institutions don't benefit from the fund. The reason is that the government instituted a policy setting out criteria for students' eligibility. For students to be eligible, the students' school must be one of the best three institutions in some selected countries based on Higher Times education ranking. This policy affected many of us. (UJ, 2)

Another participant corroborated this by emphasizing the implication of frequent policy changes:

... the constraint is not limited to the choice of institutions alone, but to the frequent changes in policy. Sometimes students would have chosen an institution initially listed as among the approved universities, only for such institution to be removed before the admission is offered to the prospective students or before the prospective student is considered for the scholarship. More confusing is the fact that some of the approved and officially recognized universities may not even be among the top three universities in those countries. (CT,1)

The participants were unanimous in their views on the state of infrastructure in Nigerian universities. This participant captures it thus:

... The state of infrastructure in Nigerian universities is so bad. For you to be able to do any meaningful research or experiment, you must be ready, as the student, to bear the cost. This is worst in science-related programmes ... be ready to buy chemical reagents etc. (UKZN, 6)

The study revealed that there is a shortage of funding allocated to the education sector in Nigeria because the government has continuously fallen short of the minimum requirement in budgetary allocation to the educational sector. For example, various international organizations like the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) which Nigeria belongs established that a minimum of 20% of the budget of the country should be allocated to the education sector. Unfortunately, Nigeria has repeatedly failed to meet up with the minimum standard requirements. The Dakar framework in its recommendation expects countries to invest at least 20% of their national budget or 5% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the education

sector. Unfortunately, Nigeria has failed in this regard. Table 5 shows the budgetary allocation to the education sector from 2012 to 2020.

From Table 6, the amount budgeted for education seemed to have increased nominally by 24.5% between 2015 and 2020, but in terms of percentage of the total budget, there is a decrease. This points to the reality that there is less focus on the development of the sector because what was allocated falls short of the UNESCO's recommendation of allocation of 15–20% of total national expenditure being allocated to the education sector (BUDGIT, 2020). The above budgetary allocation was not meant for university education alone. Allocation to education is shared among 28 parastatals, 25 federal polytechnics, 21 Colleges of education, 104 unity schools and 37 federal universities. With this, the allocation to the federal universities has not been enough to cater for the development needs of the sub-sector. In the last two decades, Nigeria has witnessed an increase in the number of universities. It has 43 federal government-owned universities, 48 States owned universities and 79 privately owned universities (National University Commission, 2020), making it home to the largest number of universities in Africa. This quantitative increase doesn't, however, translate into quality as most Nigerian universities lack modern research laboratories and equipment. In terms of international ranking, only three Nigerian universities were included in the Times Higher Education ranking in 2019. These are Covenant University, University of Ibadan, and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. By this ranking, it shows that Covenant University and the University of Ibadan respectively occupy the fifth and sixth position on the African table. South African universities occupied the first, second, third and fourth positions in this order: University of Cape Town; University of the Witwatersrand; Stellenbosch University; and the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Another three universities from South Africa also occupied the seventh, eighth and ninth positions. They are University of Johannesburg, the University of Pretoria and the University of the Western Cape. The criteria for the ranking are based on core issues such as research, knowledge transfer, openness, teaching and international outlook.

8. Sub-theme 2: Persistent industrial disputes

Adding this incessant strike actions as one of the motivations that lead to the search for alternative opportunities elsewhere, another participant revealed that

... the consequence of government's refusal to hearken to the demands of the lecturers are passed to the students ... apart from the incessant industrial actions that do truncate academic process, whenever the academic activities resume, students are made to bear the brunt of the failed negotiation. (UJ,4)

Table 6. Budgetary allocation to the education sector in Nigeria (2012–2020)

Year	Nigeria's budget (Trillion rand)	Education budget (Billion rand)	% of the National budget
2012	4.697	463	9.86
2013	4.987	509	10.21
2014	4.695	566	12.05
2015	4.425	551.6	12.28
2016	6.080	557.4	9.20
2017	7.441	540.9	7.27
2018	9.120	651.2	7.14
2019	8.85	634.6	7.1
2020	10.59	686.82	6.48

Source: Compiled by the authors from BUDGIT (2020).

Various attempts have been made by Nigerian universities under different industrial unions and associations. The faculty came under the auspices of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) to challenge the gradual and systemic decline of the sector. This has resulted into incessant strike actions which often have not achieved the desired result but rather have brought negative consequences on the students' programme in form of prolonged academic timetable. Among the issues that have been on the demands of ASUU is the proper and adequate funding of the university. The association decried the inadequate funding of the universities by successive Nigerian administrations. The budgetary allocation to the education sector in Nigeria over the years has been below the UNESCO minimum benchmark. In comparative terms with other African countries, many smaller countries in Africa spend more on education than Nigeria.

9. Sub-theme 3: Prolonged academic programmes

When participants were asked of the reasons why most of them must abandon their postgraduate programme and migrated to South Africa in pursuit of higher education, they expressed the challenges from various dimensions. Their views cover the expended cost of the abandoned programme, the effect of the overstretched programme on their career growth, the psychological trauma of staying so long on a programme. On the reasons why the participants must abandon their higher degree programme in Nigeria, the participants were unanimous in their responses. For example, a participant said,

... I must abandon the programme when it became obvious that I am not making appreciable progress. As a student, you know when you commenced the programme, but you cannot say when you are likely going to finish ... there is no functional academic calendar to be followed ... you are at the mercy of the lecturers. (UKZN, 4)

Similarly, another participant had this to say;

... during my undergraduate programme, the duration was extended by two academic years due to incessant industrial actions. I spent four years on a two-year programme. I thought things would have changed during the compulsory national service. I enrolled for a Master's programme, the same thing happened. Four years for a two-year programme. I thought within myself that PhD will be multiplied by two ... so it will take me a minimum of eight years to complete. I never bothered to apply. (CT, 2)

The views of these participants which represent the general experiences of most Nigerian students shows that disruption of academic programmes due to the industrial dispute between the organized universities unions and the Nigerian government has become an endemic occurrence with devastating consequences on the goals and aspirations of many students during both undergraduate and graduate programmes.

10. Theme 3: decision to return to Nigeria

This theme emerged from questions that were posed to participants on whether they desire to return to Nigeria after their programmes. Among those who expressed the desire to stay back were unanimous in their views that the environment is conducive for learning, and there is the availability of research grants and job opportunities. According to this participant,

... I desired to stay back in South Africa after my programme because the environment is conducive for learning and further personal development ... there is research equipment to work with. (UJ, 6)

The funding of education in South Africa attracts this participant. According to her,

... given the opportunity to stay back after my programme, I will grab that with both hands. There are available research grants and support for conferences and workshops that allow for further intellectual exposure and network. (UKZN,3)

Participants who said they never desire to stay back in South Africa after their programme also expressed their reservations. Their reasons revolved around the security of their lives and families, increasing difficulty in securing permanent residency permit and non-permanent jobs for most foreigners. Majority of the participants cited the frequent xenophobic attacks as the major reason why they don't want to stay back in South Africa. Below is the view of one of the participants.

... when I was coming to South Africa, my thought was that I was going to a second home, a place where I will be welcomed and accommodated, but how mistaken was I when the crisis started, the destruction of foreign Black Africans' property and even death. I became scared, praying daily for the programme to come to an end. (CT, 6)

Another participant having corroborated the above view, also explained further the challenge of obtaining permanent resident permit and job:

... it is increasingly becoming difficult possessing the required documents that will make ones' stay legal ... you go through a rigorous process to even get your visa renewed, and the stringent conditions to obtain a permanent resident permit. Apart from these, you are offered any job on a temporary basis. Though, it may be renewable sometimes. I will prefer a pensionable job at home than working in a place where there is no job security. (UJ, 1)

Previous studies have shown that decisions to migrate as well as the choice of destination depend largely on the perceptions of the individuals involved which is taken based on their evaluation of both the political and socioeconomic environments of both the home country and the country of migration (De Jong, 2000; De Jong et al., 1996). From the views above, it shows that while some desired to stay back in South Africa, many due to the xenophobic crises resolved never to stay back among other reasons. Hostility from the locals is the main reason given by those who don't want to stay back in South Africa after their programme. This collaborates the view of Marginson (2004) that security and safety in the host countries is one of the most important factors, which choices of migration destinations are to be made. Recurrent attacks against foreign nationals are well documented (Adesina, 2019).

11. Conclusion

This study investigated the determinants of postgraduate students' migration from Nigeria to South Africa. Using a structured questionnaire and interview, the study found among other things that demoralization and frustration suffered by postgraduate students to attain higher education in Nigerian universities account for migration decision. Furthermore, the study also revealed that shrinking capacity of the South African government to create new employment for its bulging youth has created hostility between the migrant postgraduate students who desire to stay behind after their programs and the local South African youth. Understanding the fact that Nigerians find it more convenient, due to training facilities available in South African universities, to migrate to South Africa for postgraduate studies, this might also be disastrous to the development of university education in Nigeria, most especially postgraduate trainings. The migration may also serve as encumbrance to development of postgraduate programmes in Nigeria. However, if not checkmated, it may lead to brain drains and capital flight at the expense of the home-grown universities.

Anticipating the danger that postgraduate migration may pose on intellectualism, brain draining and poor growth on the Nigerian universities, this study recommends adequate funding for the Nigerian universities. This includes staff motivation, regular payments of salaries and allowances, training and retraining at workshop, seminars and conferences. Budgetary allocation to the universities in Nigeria should also be monitored to ensure prudent use. In addition, it is also expedient that an adequate monitoring system is institutionalized to ensure strict adherence to academic policies and calendar as well as the conduct of both lecturers and students in Nigerian universities. This is believed to restore the decadence in the Nigerian university education system as well as it will in long term enhance the productive capacity of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

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Note

1. These are usually the Black South Africans who want to claim originality and ownership of the land

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