

## **Socioeconomic, Ethnographic and Political Integrations and Challenges of Igbo Migrants in Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

The study examines the socioeconomic, ethnographic and political integrations and challenges of Igbo migrants in Lafia. Quantitative and qualitative techniques were adopted to collect data on integration variables via the administration of questionnaires to groups of Igbos from the five states of the Southeast region, and the conduct of In-depth Interviews (IDIs) with Igbo elders. Fifty copies of questionnaires were distributed to each group, totaling 250. Data were analysed by SPSS version 25, and tables and charts were generated and the qualitative data were content analysed. On socioeconomic integration, the results showed that the majority (88.1%) of Igbos were first generation migrants, who arrived to start business in Lafia over 40 years ago, whereby, almost three-fifths (59.5%) of them started their current occupation. Majority (37.6%) of Igbo migrants' present occupation was facilitated by 'master', 'family' (66.8%) facilitated their accommodation, close to 70 per cent of them possessed their personal houses, and over two-fifths (43.1%) of them got landed property through 'friend' while close to three-quarters (74.8%) got married to Lafia indigenes. On ethnographic integration, three-quarters were proficient in Hausa language, with half rated their proficiency in Hausa language 'excellent,' while Gwandara language became the best secondary proficient language. As par political integration, over half (52.0%) of Igbo migrants held political office within their association politics but few with the wider politics. In summary, Igbo migrants have been experiencing dynamic and positive integrations but facing challenges of ethnic divide and nepotism.

**Keywords:** Socioeconomic, Ethnographic, Political, Integration, Igbo Migrants, Lafia, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

The Igbo extraction from the southeast of Nigeria have been known for their migratory prowess and adventurous business acumen, within and beyond the shore of Nigeria. These people are known for their high degree of resilience and adaptability to situations for survival in an increasingly monetizing economy coupled with sparse land resources (Olutayo, 1999). This has been one of the factors leading to the high rate of migration among them. Aside from this, high population density, as a result of high birth rate, (particularly in a case of male child preference), has been attributed to high migration experience in Igboland (Nwokocha, 2015). As a result of this, limited availability of land among the Igbo community has been translating to the "survival is the fittest" or out-migration or emigration.

On the one hand, the integration of Igbo migrants in the places of destination; within or outside Nigeria has been credited to their continual primordial (prehistoric) linkages among themselves than any other group in Nigeria. The interpretation of a popular saying among the Igbos, as Nwokocha (2015) put it, "onye aghala nwa nne ya," means that "do not abandon your brother or sister," has prompted the formation of the Igbo Town Union Association (ITUAs) or Igbo

Community Assembly (ICA) as the case may be. The ITUAs or ICA are formed to cater for one another, particularly those that are moving from the rural Igbo villages to towns or cities of destination. In the literature, several benefits were enumerated to integrate Igbos migrants belonging to the association/assembly into their places of destination, among them are: 1) for emotional and psychological support in times of difficulty, 2) encouraging perseverance, self-reliance, courage, hard-work, goal-setting, accountability and innovativeness, 3) settling disputes among individuals and subgroups, 4) an avenue for social interaction and exchange of ideas, 5) strive to help Igbos maintain a balance between traditional values and diversity and the concomitant relativism in urban centres across Nigeria and beyond (Onwumehili, 2000; Olutayo 1999; Nwachukwu, 1989).

On the other hand, after five decades of the civil war, the Igbos are still crying of marginalisation and reintegration, particularly into the socio-political mainstream of Nigeria and by their host community in general. These and other detrimental attitudes against the Igbos have been a serious concern in the literature. Okwuosa et al. (2021) recalled the rhetoric of the words of assurance spoken to the Igbo extraction after the civil war Igbos by the Nigerian government; “Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Reintegration” (the 3Rs) seem to becoming non-functional and without much impact (Okwuosa et al., 2021; Azuakor, 2021).

The people of Igboland are still being confronted with hostilities in the places of destination across the country. According to Uwalaka (2003), Igbos, for whatever reason, have been made targets of internal terrorism and crises which characterised them as an endangered species. For instance, internal terrorism against Igbos had been reported in Kano, Kaduna and Plateau states, among others. And of recent, handful reportages of harassment, threat, systemic violent attack and anti-government policy against Igbo people and their properties in Lagos State.

### **Theoretical Explanation**

The theoretical underpinning adopted to elucidate the integration of Igbo migrants in this study is through structural integration model (SIM) (Eze, 2021). This model focuses on immigrants' socioeconomic incorporation into the host society, including factors such as labour market participation, educational attainment, and income levels. The model is influenced by macro-level factors such as immigration policies, economic conditions, and social welfare systems, as well as individual-level characteristics such as human capital, skills, and social networks (Crowley–Henry et al., 2023; Han et al., 2022).

Portes & Rumbaut (2001) in their study adopted structural integration theory to examine the experiences and outcomes of the children of immigrants in the United States, focusing on issues of identity, education, and socioeconomic mobility. The same authors in their study explored the concept of structural integration theory and its significance in understanding social relationships, networks, and collective action (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Leong et al., 2020).

The review of structural integration theory of Igbo migrants in Lafia involves examining various aspects of how the Igbo migrants were being integrated into their new societies, via social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions (Olokodana-James, 2021). The key themes in the adoption of the model include access to education, employment, housing, language acquisition, social networks, and civic and political participation.

The importance of this model to the study is to identify barriers to integration and effective strategies for promoting inclusion and social cohesion. Adopting social science techniques, the present study specifically analyses the integration and challenges of Igbos migrants in Lafia, with respect to in-migration, adaptation and challenges viz-a-viz their contributions to the socioeconomic, ethnographic and political milieus of Lafia, as the capital of Nasarawa State.

## Methods

### Study area

Geographically, Lafia is located between latitudes 8°20'N-8°38'N and between longitudes 6°34'E-7°30'E, and situated on the trunk railway from Port Harcourt to the Northwest and Northeast regions of Nigeria, and on the main highway between Makurdi and Jos. Lafia Local Government Area (LGA) shares boundaries with Nasarawa Eggon and Wamba LGAs in the North, Obi and Doma LGAs in the South, Kokona LGA in the West and Awe LGA and Plateau state in the East (see Figure 1).

It became the administrative capital of Nasarawa State in 1996. It is formerly known as Lafiya Beri-Beri or Lafian Bare-Bari (aka Lafia Garin Madidi). Lafia city has an estimated population of 445,300 according to 2016 estimation (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019).

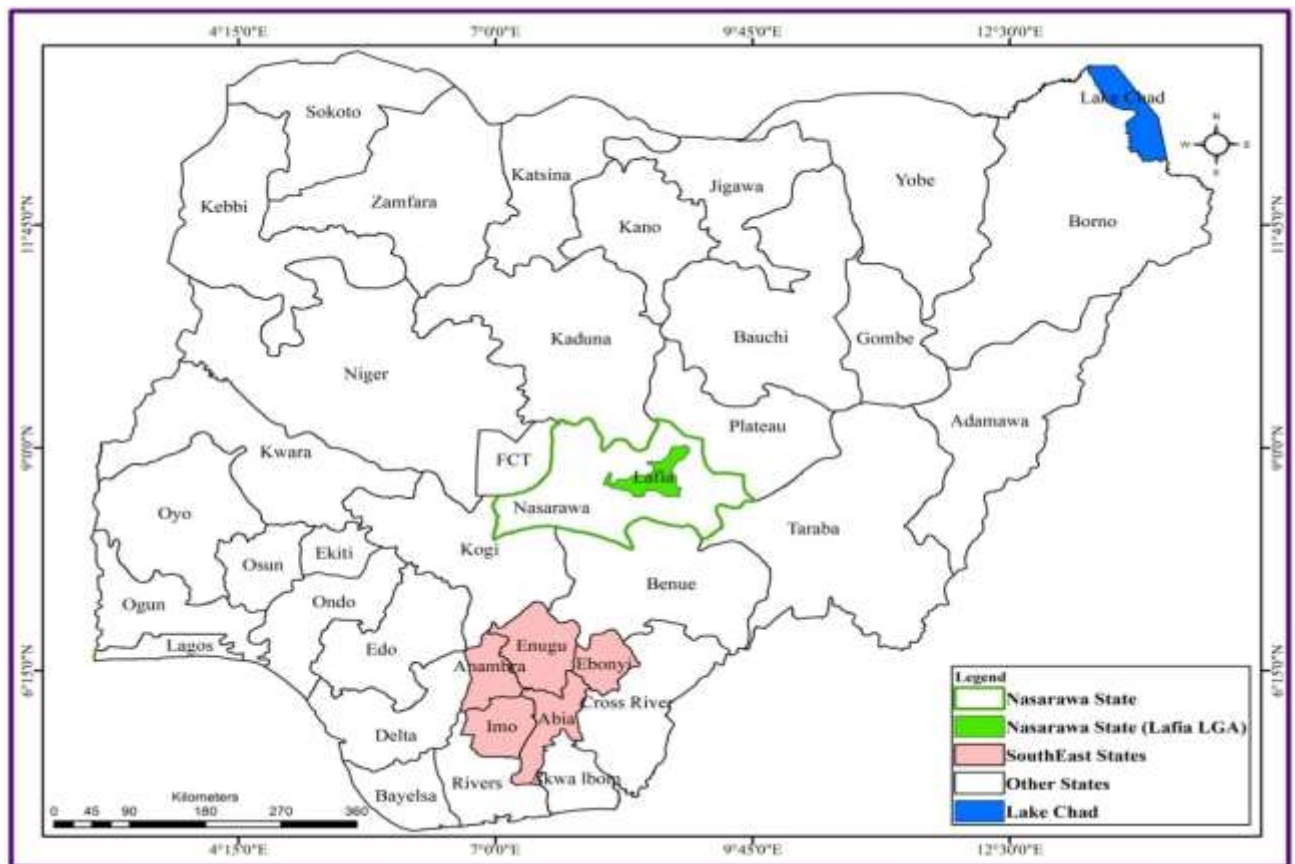


Figure 1. Map of Nasarawa State depicting Lafia LGA and its adjoining LGAs

Source: GIS Lab. Dept. of Geography, Federal University of Lafia

Lafia is populated mainly by Eggon, Alago, Kambari, Gwandara and Koro. It also has large populations of Igbo, Hausa, Mwachavul, Yoruba settlers who formed the internal migrant settler groups across the town. This is due to the hospitable nature of the indigenes and has made the city a miniature Nigeria. The two prominent religions: Islam and Christianity are widely practiced in the town, though, some traditionalists are scantily present. Lafia has a big market called, modern market in a centralized location within the township, which deals with diverse items of man's need- foods, clothing, house ware, electronics, etc.

### Research design and instrument

The study adopted a survey research design, with which both primary and secondary data were collected. The former involved the visitation to the President-General of Igbo Community Association (ICA) and to the Presidents of N'digbo Assemblies of all the five (5) states constituting the Southeast Geo-political Zone of Nigeria, in Lafia. This was followed by the administration of a designed, one-round structured self-administered questionnaire for acquiring quantitative data, and the In-depth Interviews (IDIs) were conducted to obtain qualitative data. The secondary data entailed gathering of relevant information from the Igbo Community historical and traditional archives, internet, journals, and public records to compliment data gathered from the primary source.

### **Sampling techniques and method of data collection and sample size**

A multi-stage sampling method was adopted for the study. The first stage was purposive sampling of Igbo extraction from the five (5) states that constituted the South-east Geo-political Zone of Nigeria, namely: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. Purposive sampling was adopted because the sample population is dominated by the Igbo community.

The second stage was the adoption of cluster sampling, in which N'digbo group from each of the five (5) South East states in Lafia were selected. This sampling eliminated the dominance of a specific occupation and gives room for varieties of occupation. Lastly, the simple random sample was adopted to select respondents from each of the groups representing the five (5) states in Southeastern, Nigeria. This sampling method was adopted to avoid bias and give room for universality of the sample population.

Data collection for the study was in two phases; one, the administration of a one-round, self-administered questionnaire to randomly selected Igbos from the pool of their various state assemblies across the five (5) states of southeast in Lafia. Two, was the conduct of in-depth interviews (IDIs) with the Life Patron of ICA and President, Enugu State Igbo indigenes residing in Lafia.

The items of questionnaire were generated from the questions earlier posed in the introduction. The selected respondents for the study were certified members, adult, male and female of the N'digbo groups representing the five (5) southeastern states in Lafia. The sample size was based on equal number from each of the states, irrespective of their population sizes, gender inequality or socioeconomic peculiarities. Fifty (50) set of questionnaire forms were handed over to the accredited members of the state ICA by the President of each assembly and were randomly distributed to the respondents, which totalled 250 sampled population.

### **Data analysis**

The quantitative data were checked for inconsistencies, incompleteness, and outliers. After, the data were imputed via Office Excel of Window 16, exported and analysed via the IBM SPSS<sup>+</sup> version 25. Cross tabulations of socioeconomic and socio-ethnographic characteristics with other variables were computed; tables, charts and graphs were generated. The IDIs were transcribed and translated from tape recording and content analysed.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Socio-demographic integrations of Igbo migrants in Lafia**

#### ***Respondents' given birth to in Lafia by state of origin***

Analysis of the place of birth of respondents, according to Table 2 indicates that the majority (88.1%) of the respondents were born in their various states of origin while few (11.9%) of them were born in Lafia. On the one hand, among the states, one-fourth (25.8%) of the respondents were born in Anambra, above and less than one-fifth (22.5% & 19.1%),

respectively, were born in Abia and Enugu while 17.4 per cent were born in Ebonyi and 15.2 per cent were born Imo.

Table 1. Respondents' given birth to in Lafia by state of origin

State of Origin	Yes		No		Total	%
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%		
Anambra	4	16.7	46	25.8	50	24.8
Ebonyi	8	33.3	31	17.4	39	19.3
Imo	4	16.7	27	15.2	31	15.3
Abia	5	20.8	40	22.5	45	22.3
Enugu	3	12.5	34	19.1	37	18.3
Total	23	100	178	100	202	100
%	23	11.9	178	88.1	202	100

Source: Field-work, 2023

On the other hand, Ebonyi has the highest; one-third (33.3%) of the respondents born in Lafia, followed by Abia; one-fifth (20.8%), Anambra and Imo; 16.7 per cent each, and Enugu; 12.5 per cent, as presented on Table 1. In other words, the birth places of the majority Igbos are specifically in their land of origin before migrating to their current destination; Lafia. In addition, the IDI conducted to the Igbo stakeholders' reveals that, majority of the elderly members of Igbo community migrated to Lafia. The responses of the stakeholders are the following:

I migrated to Lafia in my youthful age, over 50 years ago, with close to fifty (50) of my contemporaries moved to Lafia the same year. Most of my age mates and contemporaries were not born in Lafia, but very few of them had their parents moved early (IDI, Life Patron, ICA, Lafia).

About eight (8) or nine (9) of us that are presently the elders of Igbo Community Assembly were born here in Lafia, while more than fifty (50) of us migrated to Lafia (IDI, President, Enugu State Indigene).

By implication, therefore, having the majority of the respondents not been born in Lafia reveals the level of in-migration of Igbos to Lafia over time, while leaving very few as non-migrant Igbos. The above results corroborated the assertion of Igbos being the most travelled ethnic group, who are living outside their birthplace and most populous community in the Northern part of Nigeria.

#### ***Year of arrival of respondents in Lafia by state of origin***

Table 2 reveals that over three-quarters of Igbos (77.2%), who were not born in Lafia, came to the town between 1980 and 1999, that is 33 to 43 years prior to the year of the study. The same temporal pattern obtains by the state of origin, as above one-quarter of them (26.9%), from Anambra State came to Lafia between 1980 and 1999, followed by above one-fifth of them (22.4%) from Abia, Ebonyi and Enugu recorded 18.0 per cent, with the least from Imo that came to Lafia between 1980 and 1999. The number and percent of Igbos coming to Lafia dropped, with over one-(22.2 per cent each) fifth respondents from Imo and Abia States having the highest Igbos that came to Lafia between 2000 and 2023, that is 23 years to the year of carrying out the study. This is followed by Ebonyi State, with one-fifth (20.0%), and Anambra and Enugu States, with 17.8 per cent each.

Table 2. Year of arrival of respondents in Lafia by state of origin

State of Origin	1980-1999		2000-2023		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Anambra	42	26.9	8	17.8	50	24.8
Ebonyi	28	18.0	9	20.0	37	18.3
Imo	22	14.1	10	22.2	32	15.8
Abia	35	22.4	10	22.2	45	22.3
Enugu	29	18.6	9	17.8	38	18.8
Total	156	100	46	100	202	100
%		77.2		22.8	100	

Source: Field-work, 2023

The high volume of out-migration of Igbos from their state of origin to Lafia, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, as against the millennium years (2000s) could probably be as a result of the Federal Government of Nigeria pronouncement of a series of austerity measures in September 1981, in order to cut public expenditure; save foreign exchange and relieve some of the strains on the economy. The measures, which later culminated in the launching of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in June 1986, which resulted in substantial reduction of government spending on and participation in critical social services (Abejide, 2016). The policy however, subsequently gave rise to inflation and devaluation of Nigeria currency, hence, led to people scouting for survival elsewhere, particularly in the cities and major towns.

***Year of respondents starting present occupation in Lafia by state of origin***

Table 3 reveals that approximately three-fifths (59.5%) of the first-generation Igbo migrants started their current occupation immediately they got Lafia. According to the table, migrants from Anambra were the majority of migrants with one-fourth (25.2%) of them started their present occupation between 1980 and 1989. This is closely followed by Abia (23.6%), Enugu (18.3%) while Ebonyi (16.9%) and Imo (16.0%) came last. In the same vein, over two-thirds (68.8%) migrants from Anambra started their current occupation between 1990 and 1999 and followed by migrants from Ebonyi. Significant percentage of migrants from Abia, Enugu, Imo and Ebonyi, respectively, 28.0, 26.0, 20.0, 18.0 per cent started their present occupation between 2010 and 2020.

Table 3. Year of respondents starting present occupation in Lafia by state of origin

State of Origin	1980-1989		1990-1999		2000-2009		2010-2020		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Anambra	33	25.2	11	68.8	2	40.0	4	8.0	50	24.8
Ebonyi	22	16.9	5	31.2	3	60.0	9	18.0	39	19.3
Imo	21	16.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	10	20.0	31	15.3
Abia	31	23.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	14	28.0	45	22.3
Enugu	24	18.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	13	26.0	37	18.3
Total	131	100	16	100	5	100	50	100	202	100

Source: Field-work, 2023

The above results imply that for Igbo migrants to still maintain their present occupation for almost half of a century it is likely that majority of them are into self-employed occupation. Since the majority of Igbos in Lafia are into business or trading, it could be explained that as

soon as young Igbo migrants arrive at Lafia, they are instantly engaged as apprentices to the persons that facilitated their move from the village to the city, that is “Master.”

Another possible explanation for the Igbos migrants to still maintain their current occupation could be explained through the business empire they built for themselves by setting up their apprentices up in the same business they are doing and forming a chain of successive business acumen.

**Facilitator of respondents’ present occupation in Lafia by state of origin**

On the one hand, Table 4 generally depicts over one-third (37.6%) of respondents’ present occupation was facilitated by ‘master,’ over one-fifth (23.3%) by ‘friend,’ one-fifth (20.3%) by ‘family’ and less than one-fifth (18.8%) by ‘government.’ On the other hand, at the states’ level, the majority of respondents (31.6%, 26.8% & 25.5%) respectively, from Anambra were facilitated by ‘government,’ ‘family’ and ‘friend.’ ‘Master’ facilitated slightly above one-quarter (26.3%) respondents’ present occupation from Abia and less than one-fifth (19.7% each) from Anambra and Ebonyi. ‘Friend’ is another prominent facilitator (21.3% each) of present occupation of respondents from Imo and Abia.

Table 4. Facilitator of respondents’ present occupation in Lafia by state of origin

State of Origin	Master		Family		Friend		Government		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Anambra	15	19.7	11	26.8	12	25.5	12	31.6	50	25.0
Ebonyi	15	19.7	8	19.5	7	14.9	9	23.6	39	19.3
Imo	12	15.9	8	19.5	10	21.3	1	2.6	31	15.3
Abia	20	26.3	7	17.1	10	21.3	8	21.1	45	22.2
Enugu	14	18.4	7	17.1	8	17.0	8	21.1	37	18.2
Total	76	100	41	100	47	100	38	100	202	100
%		37.6		20.3		23.3		18.8		100

Source: Field-work, 2023

The above analyses imply that for ‘master;’ to have been the most prominent facilitator of Igbo migrants’ present occupation, the ‘master-apprenticeship’ tradition that is synonymous to the Igbo extraction is existing and still in practice in Lafia; evidence of integration in to a new life in the city. Aside this, the fact is, for an Igbo man or woman to have gotten a formal occupation, such as teaching, civil service, administrative position and so on, he or she must have a trading or business outfit adjoining the formal occupation. According to the interviewees of IDIs, they submitted the following:

Your assertion is 80 percent correct. No Igbo man or woman will be comfortable without buying and selling some things (IDI, Life Patron of ICA, Lafia)

The answer to your question is very true and it is a must for Igbo man or woman to have goods he or she will be selling after coming back from government work. For example, during my active years in the Federal civil service, I have a chemist shop that I opened in the evening after a day’s work, where I sell drugs. And after my retirement, I face the business squarely (President, Enugu State Igbo Indigenes, Lafia).

**Facilitator of respondents’ accommodation in Lafia by state of origin**

Table 5 reveals that two-thirds of respondents (66.8%) were accommodated by ‘family,’ while less than one-third (31.7%) by ‘friend’ and very infinitesimally few (1.5%) by ‘master.’ At the states’ level, ‘family’ and ‘friend’ are the prominent facilitators of respondent’s

accommodation from Anambra with 25 per cent each. Respondent's accommodation was prominently facilitated by 'friend,' (21.9%) and 'family,' (20.7%) from Abia, by 'family,' (20.0% and 18.5 %) from Ebonyi and Enugu. However, all (100.0%) respondents from Abia had their accommodation in Lafia being facilitated by 'master.'

Table 5. Facilitator of respondents' accommodation in Lafia by state of origin

State of Origin	Friend		Family		Master		Total	
	frequency	%	frequency	%	frequency	%	frequency	%
Anambra	16	25.1	34	25.2	0	0	50	24.6
Ebonyi	12	18.6	27	20.0	0	0	39	19.3
Imo	10	15.6	21	15.6	0	0	31	15.4
Abia	14	21.9	28	20.7	3	100.0	45	22.4
Enugu	12	18.8	25	18.5	0	0	37	18.3
Total	64	100	135	100	3	100	202	100
%		31.7		66.8		1.5		100

Source: Field-work, 2023

By implication, the above results attested to the fact that successful Igbos in business and trading in their places of destination do go back to their villages to bring in teenagers of their kinsmen to the cities, where they are thriving economically. These successful Igbos are most times, directly related to the potential migrants that are brought to the town. To integrate such potential migrants, he or she could either becoming an apprentice to the facilitator of his/her migration, thereby living with such relative or being seconded to a distant relative to learn a trade or skill from such 'master-relative,' whereby such migrant lives with the 'master-relative.'

**Respondents' possession of personal house in Lafia by state of origin**

As has been shown on Figure 1 and Appendix 1, on the overall, over two-thirds (69.3%) of respondents do not possess a personal house in Lafia while less than one-third (30.7%) did. Breaking it to states' level, less than one-quarter (24.1%) each of the respondents from Anambra and Abia possessed personal houses, followed by Enugu (19.4%) and Ebonyi and Imo (16.1%) each, possessed personal houses in Lafia. On the other hand, one-fourth (25.0%) of the respondents from Anambra do not possess personal house in Lafia, followed by respondents from Abia (21.4%), Ebonyi (20.7%), while Enugu (17,9%) and Imo (15.0%) came last of respondents possessing house in Lafia.

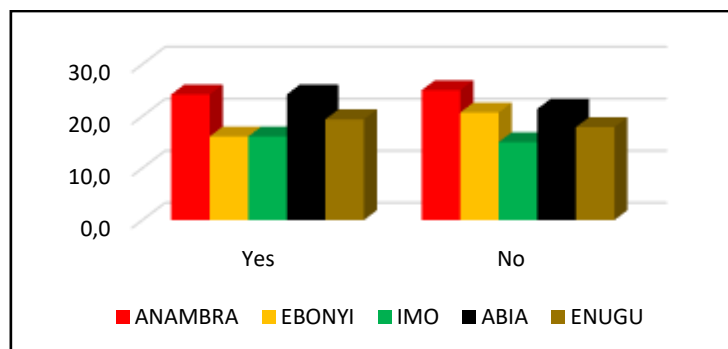


Figure 2. Respondents' possession of personal house in Lafia by state of origin

Source: Field-work, 2023



The above results revealed that close to half of the respondents had already built their personal houses in Lafia. This could have been as a result of the high level of the hospitality and acceptability of the indigenes of the state capital. Again, according to one of the IDI interviewees, he reiterated that the meaning of Lafia is synonymous to peace, tranquillity and serenity. He further puts it this way:

The relationship between Igbo community and the indigenous people of Lafia in all ramifications is cordial, peaceful and excellent. In fact, the name of this town from Hausa language perception means tranquillity, and this has been our experiences all these years of our living in this town. Therefore, our coexistence with both the indigenes and other tribes in this town has been good and excellent, and it has brought unity among us; (the Igbos) and the indigenes (IDI, Life Patron of ICA, Lafia).

### **Facilitator of respondents’ acquisition of landed property in Lafia by state of origin**

Over two-fifths (43.1%) of the sampled population, acquired their landed property through friend, above one-third (35.1%) of them, through family while slightly over one-fifth (21.8%), through Lafia indigene, according to Table 7. Majority of respondents (27.3%) from Anambra state acquired their landed property through Lafia indigenes, followed by respondents (20.5%) from Abia state while respondents (18.2%) each from Ebonyi and Enugu states. On the same hand, the majority of respondents (26.8%) from Anambra state acquired their landed property through family while one-fourth (25.3%) of them from Abia through friends. Other prominent facilitators for acquiring landed property by respondents across the states are through friends, 18.4 per cent each from Ebonyi and Enugu states, 21.1 and 19.7 per cent through family from Ebonyi and Abia states.

Table 6. Facilitator of respondents’ acquisition of landed property in Lafia by state of origin

State of Origin	Through Friend		Through Family		Through Lafia Indigene		Total	
	frequency	%	frequency	%	frequency	%	frequency	%
Anambra	19	21.8	19	26.8	12	27.3	50	24.8
Ebonyi	16	18.4	15	21.1	8	18.2	39	19.3
Imo	14	16.1	10	14.1	7	15.8	31	15.3
Abia	22	25.3	14	19.7	9	20.5	45	22.3
Enugu	16	18.4	13	18.3	8	18.2	37	18.3
Total	87	100.0	71	100.0	44	100.0	202	100.0
%		43.1		35.1		21.8		100

Source: Field-work, 2023

On the one hand, for ‘friend’ and ‘family’ of Igbo migrants to have pulled over three-quarters (78.2%) as facilitators for the acquisition of landed property in Lafia, possibly revealed the fraternity among the people of N’digbo. The traditional statement of “onye aghala nwa nne ya,” meaning; “do not abandon your brother or sister,” has fortified Igbo community towards their lives of communality, commonality and clustering habitation wherever they found themselves, and this has become the same scenario in Lafia. To collaborate this assertion, one of the interviewees of the IDIs proved the assertion to be right in this way:

For Igbo community to dominate Lafia East, particularly behind the Modern Market along Makurdi Road was deliberate. The location was at the outskirts of the town and virgin, it was the Igbo community that opened up the area to what we have today. In fact, when the Modern

Market was to be built, many of our people were dislocated but relocated, so as to give way for the construction of the market. Also, the adage of our fathers says: “A fruit doesn’t fall away from the tree that bears it and usually falls where it thinks it is safe.” Therefore, the main reason why many of us; Igbos settled along Makurdi Road is because we believed that the location is very safe for us (President, Enugu State Igbo Indigenes, Lafia).

However, for the slightly over one-tenth (21.8%) of the Lafia indigenes to have facilitated the acquisition of landed property for Igbo migrants depicted the possibility of inclusiveness and equality. In fact, there is a pocket of Igbos living in the core of Lafia and among the indigenes, particularly, the first-generation Igbo migrants. As been put by one of the IDI interviewees:

Igbo people in Lafia lived or built houses wherever they wanted in this town, and not only in Lafia East along Makurdi Road. The matter is that it depends on the individual interest and affordability of the price of the landed property (IDI, Life Patron of ICA, Lafia).

***Respondents got married to Lafia indigene by state of origin***

Figure 3 and Appendix 2 depict almost three-quarters (74.8%) of the sampled population got married to Lafia indigenes while the remaining one-quarter (25.2%) did not get married to the indigenes. On the one hand, the results from the states revealed that over-fifth (23.8%) of the respondents from Anambra got married to Lafia indigene, closely followed by respondents from Abia (22.5%). Substantial per cent of respondents from Enugu (19.3%) and Ebonyi (18.5%) got married to Lafia indigenes while the least (15.9%) is from Imo. On the other hand, respondents that did not get married to Lafia indigenes were highly recorded from Anambra, with over one-fourth (27.5%) of them. This is followed by a tie per cent (21.6% each) from Ebonyi and Abia and the least per cent from Enugu (15.6%) and Imo (13.7%).

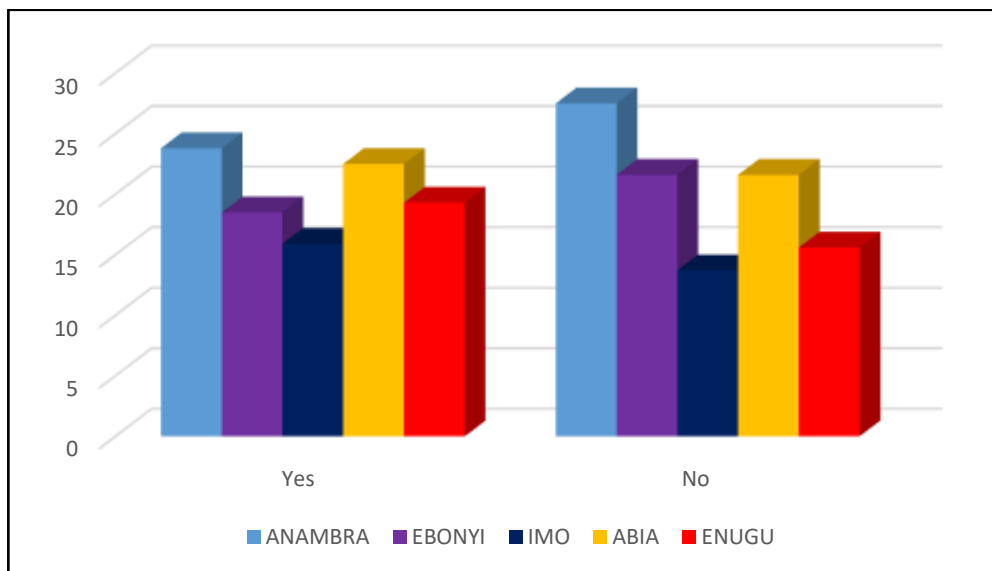


Figure 3. Respondents got married to Lafia indigene by state of origin

Source: Field-work, 2023

The implication of the above results indicates Igbo migrants would do everything within their powers to make their stay in the place of destination to be real, formidable and strong. Intertribal or interethnic marriage has been known to promote the following: one, the exchange of cultural practices and languages between different ethnic groups. Two, contribute to social integration that promotes inclusivity with communities; of host and migrants, three, reduce conflicts and tensions among ethnic groups by creating personal connections and shared

interests that transcend ethnic boundaries. Finally, increasing resilience and adaptability in the face of societal economic and environmental challenges. These and many benefits were attested to by the two IDIs interviewees:

Many of our contemporaries got married to Lafia indigenes or other tribes (both male and female) and among the tribes within Lafia instead of getting married from our tribe. And the marriages have been so blissful (IDI, Life Patron of ICA, Lafia and IDI, President, Enugu State Igbo Indigenes, Lafia).

### **Ethnographic integration of Igbo migrants in Lafia**

#### ***Respondents' proficiency in Hausa language by state of origin***

Figure 4 and Appendix 3 depict the high level of ethnographic integration of the respondents, with three-quarters (75.2%) of them speak Hausa language proficiently while the remaining 24.8 per cent do not speak the language. Across the states, Anambra and Abia have the highest percentage of respondents (23.7% each) proficient in speaking the language. This is followed by respondents from Ebonyi and Enugu, each with 18.4 per cent while the least is Imo, with 15.8 per cent. On the other hand, respondents from Anambra were prominent (28.0%) for not speaking Hausa language, followed by Ebonyi (22.0%), Abia and Enugu; 18.0 per cent each and the least; Imo, with 14.0 per cent.

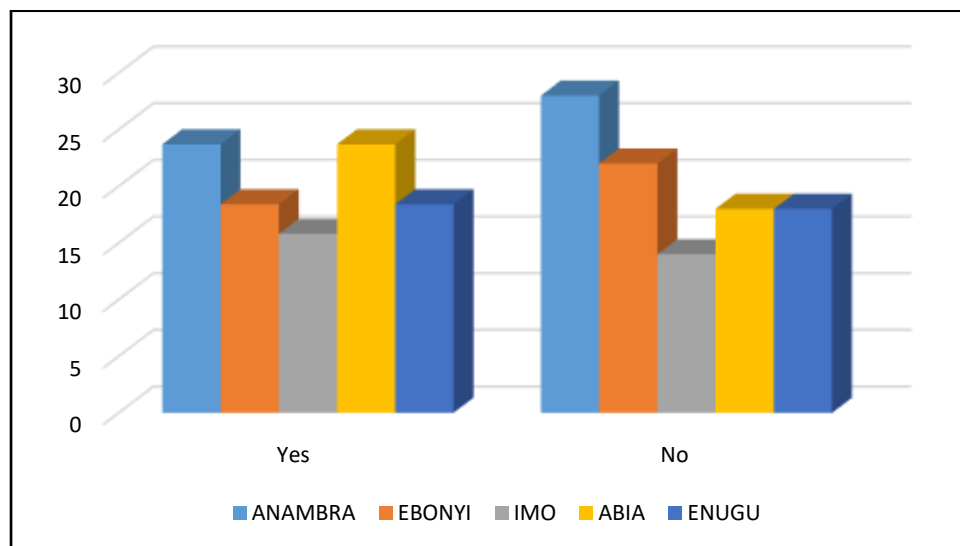


Figure 4. Respondents' proficiency in Hausa language by state of origin

Source: Field-work, 2023

The implication of three-quarters of the sampled population being proficient in Hausa language possibly affirmed the long duration of stay or majority are second-generation migrants; that is, they were born in Lafia. In addition, Igbos are well known to have a high level of adaptability to their environment, particularly in terms of mode of communication. This is possibly availed of them having robust interactions with their hosts in any of their places of destination. One of the interviewees of the IDIs ascertained the speaking of Hausa language this way:

Yes, myself and all my family members speak Hausa language fluently. And, the reason why the language is universal to us is because of the nature of our occupation; we trade with these Hausa people; therefore, we must learn their language. In addition, all my children were born here in Lafia, and children and women are known to be fast learners when it comes to mastering languages (President, Enugu State Igbo Indigenes, Lafia).

**Proficiency rate of respondents in Hausa language by state of origin**

Figure 5 and Appendix 4 indicate that half (50.0%) of the respondents rated their proficiency in Hausa language as ‘excellence,’ followed by over two-fifths (43.6%) of them rated it as ‘good’ and very few rated it as ‘fair.’ Among the states, respondents from Anambra recorded ‘excellent’ in the proficiency of Hausa language above other four states, with 28.7 per cent, this is followed by respondents from Ebonyi (19.8%), Abia and Enugu tallied, with 18.8 per cent each. Respondents for Imo were the least (13.9%) rated ‘excellent’ in Hausa language proficiency. Abia respondents led the ‘good’ rating of proficiency in Hausa language, with 27.3 per cent, followed by Anambra (20.5%), Ebonyi (18.2%) and Imo and Enugu (17.0%) each. Respondents from Anambra, Ebonyi and Enugu, respectively 23.0 per cent each rated their proficiency in Hausa language as ‘fair’ while 15.5 per cent of them each from Imo and Abia recorded the same ‘fair.’

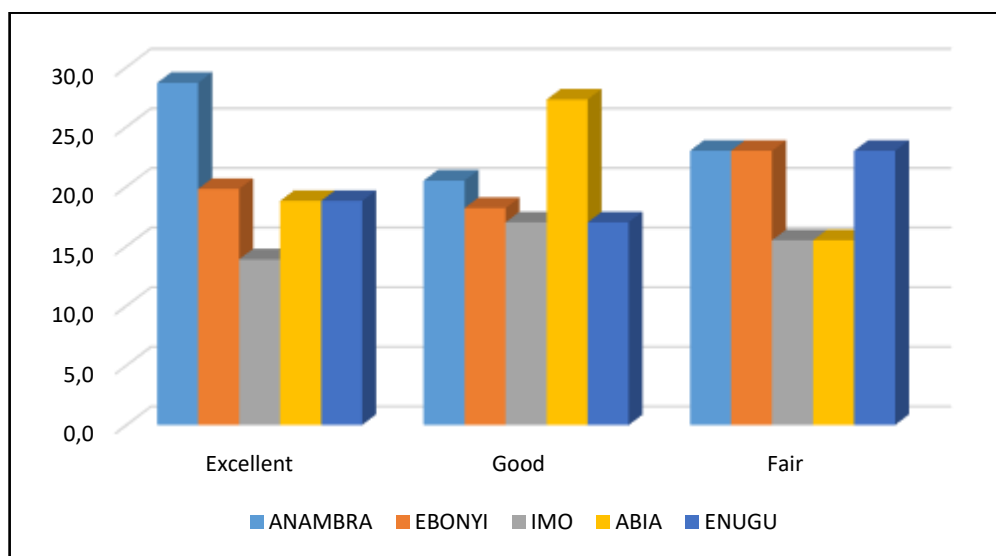


Figure 5. Proficiency rate of respondents in Hausa language by state of origin

Source: Field-work, 2023

The above results imply that for virtually all sampled populations of Igbos (93.6%) to have great skill in speaking Hausa language demonstrates the high-level cordiality in the socio-ethnographic behaviours between the host community and the Igbo. This could be as a result of the inter-tribal marriages and other related cultural activities of the host community engaged by the Igbos. Again, the results reveal the depth of brilliancy of the Igbos, particularly their swift adaptability to external languages, aside their mother tongue. In addition, since the majority of the Igbos engaged in trading or business, therefore, their quick learning and acquaintance to speaking and understanding Hausa language is highly imperative. However, the few that could not speak Hausa language fluently could possibly mean that they just arrived in Lafia but still learning how to be proficient in the language.

**Proficiency of respondents in other languages by state of origin**

The other language aside from Hausa that the sampled population were proficient in, is Gwandara, with close to one-third (31.7%). This is closely followed by Kambari (29.2%), Eggon, (23.8%) and the least; Yoruba (15.3%). At the state level, majority of respondents were proficient in Kambari, with (42.4%) from Anambra, followed by Yoruba (38.7%) from Imo, Gwandara (27.3%) and Eggon (26.0%) were proficient to respondents from Abia. One-fifth

(20.0%) each of respondents from Anambra and Ebonyi were proficient in Eggon while 18.0 and 21.0 per cent, respectively were proficient in Gwandara.

Table 7. Fluency rate of respondents speaking other languages by state of origin

State of Origin	Eggon		Gwandara		Yoruba		Kambari		Total	
	frequency	%	frequency	%	frequency	%	frequency	%	frequency	%
Anambra	10	20.0	11	18.0	4	12.9	25	42.4	50	24.8
Ebonyi	10	20.0	13	21.0	4	12.9	12	20.3	39	19.3
Imo	6	12.0	6	9.6	12	38.7	7	11.8	31	15.3
Abia	13	26.0	17	27.3	6	19.4	9	15.3	45	22.3
Enugu	11	22.0	15	24.1	5	16.1	6	10.2	37	18.3
Total	48	100.0	64	100.0	31	100.0	59	100.0	202	100.0
%		23.8		31.7		15.3		29.2		100

Source: Field-work, 2023

Substantive respondents (22.0%) from Enugu were proficient in Eggon and 24.1 per cent of them in Gwandara. The least proficient language by respondents from all the states was Yoruba, as being shown on Table 7.

From above results, for the Igbos to be vast in speaking other languages aside Hausa could probably because some of the languages are easier to learn and adopt. Also, the Igbos being business men and women, they would always transact businesses with other tribes within the town, therefore, they by all means, have to learn to speak those other languages. For instance, the Gwandara language that is recorded to be widely spoken by Igbos could have been as a result of the location of most of their businesses and trading centres, which are situated along the UAC road; an area hosted by Gwandaras (Tudun Gwandara, meaning hill of Gwandara) in Lafia. Again, the fact that some Igbos speak Yoruba language is another indicator of integration of these people's acclimatisation with their immediate environment. According to one of the IDIs interviewees:

I always speak Hausa language only during transacting business with my customers, and my friends that are Hausa speaking people. In addition, only me can speak both Yoruba and Alago languages very well in my family (IDI, Life Patron of ICA, Lafia).

### **Political integration of Igbo migrants**

#### ***Respondents holding political office by state of origin***

Figure 6 and Appendix 5 reveal that over half of the respondents (52.0%) held political office while less than half (48.0%) of them were not holding any political office. Responses across the states show that majority (25.7%) of the respondents that held political office were from Anambra, followed by one-fifth (20.0%) each from Ebonyi and Abia, closely followed from Enugu (19.0%) while the least is Imo, with 15.3 per cent. Majority of respondents that did not hold political office is from Abia, with close to one-fifth (24.7%) of them, closely followed by respondents (23.7%) from Anambra. Other respondents; 18.6, 17.5 and 15.5 per cent, respectively, from Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo were not holding political office.

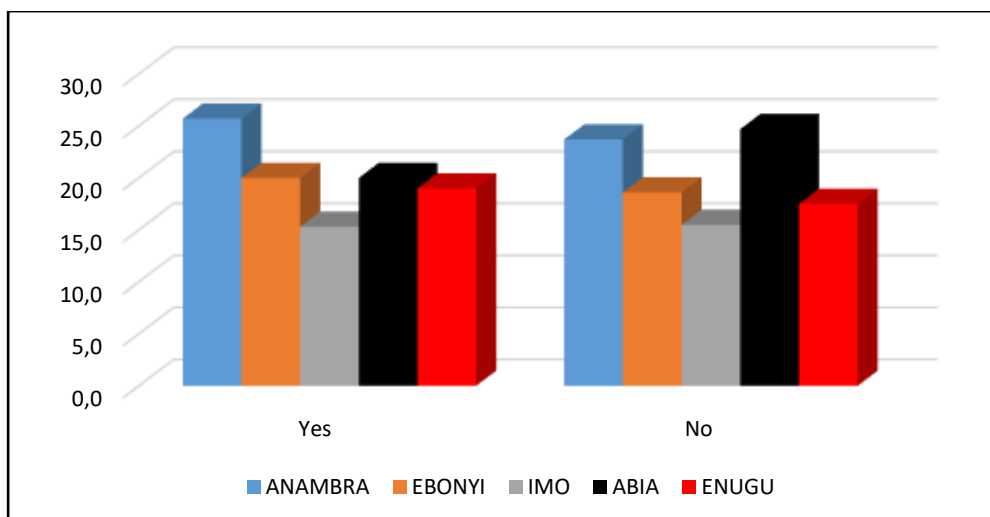


Figure 6. Respondents holding political office by state of origin

Source: Field-work, 2023

The above results imply that Igbo people are very dynamic to politics; either within their community or general involvement in the wider place of destination politics. According to the literature, Igbo migrants do form associations or unions outside their places of origin, where a series of political manipulations and scheming are involved. Similarly, Igbo community in Lafia have their associations at the central and state levels. Each of these levels has its state presidents and executives, while at the centre, it has president-general and its executives, and at the top of all the presidents, they have the Igwe of all Igbos residing in Lafia. This local politics within has brought a series of acrimonies, strives and court cases that some time ago, led to the death of one of the contestants of the stool of Igwe of Igbos in Lafia. Despite the odds happening within the local politics, many Igbos are still interested to either add more 'feathers' to their 'Red Caps' or become one of the 'Red Caps' chiefs within their association in Lafia. As per the external politics, very few of the Igbos do engage themselves in such endeavour. One of the interviewees of the IDIs described their involvement in external politics as a waste of time for those involving themselves in such politics. He stated further:

Personally, I don't involve myself in the external politics but we have many of our brothers that engage in the politics of this state; Nasarawa. The reason many of them are involved in state politics is for personal gains and it is a waste of time. None of our brothers in any of the parties known in this state has ever been given any political appointments or been nominated to run for any political positions since the creation of the state or before then because I came to this town almost 50 years ago and none of such as ever happened. However, some of our brothers who are politicians, particularly those with the ruling party were able to get some contracts and supplies from the government (IDI, Life Patron of ICA, Lafia).

### Major challenges faced by Igbos in Lafia

According to this study, the challenges faced by Igbos in Lafia are not different from what other Nigerians outside their places of birth are experiencing. The study maintains that in general, ethnic based discrimination is prevalent and it is a defining attitude in relationships built in Nigeria with close to 400 ethnic groups (Nwokocha, 2015). However, in the case of Lafia community, one of the IDIs interviewees reveals that the case as regards Lafia is a little different but not with its encounters. He further explains:

Lafia has been a place of tranquillity for me and my family, and to the Igbo community as far as I can remember. My experience in this town has been a good one except for two reasons.

One, if there are opportunities from the government, such as teaching jobs or civil service job for our children that do not like business or trading, most of the positions are filled with the children, relatives and people of the host community, despite the fact that most of our children were born here. And two, none of our Igbo politicians with the incumbent party in the state has never been remembered for any political appointment or position, despite the fact that they spent their time and money. Aside, these two reasons, Lafia community and other indigenes within the town have been cordial in their relationships with us (President, Enugu State Igbo Indigenes, Lafia).

## Conclusion

The results from the study have shown that the majority of Igbos in Lafia were first generation migrants that arrived in Lafia over four decades ago and their socioeconomic integration, in terms of occupation and accommodation in Lafia, were facilitated by either their family members, friends or masters. The majority of these Igbos were economically empowered in business and trading by family members, friends or masters. Majority of the Igbo migrants were able to secure their own accommodation through friends, family members or Lafia indigenes. The results revealed that the majority of Igbo migrants got married to Lafia indigenes. As regards the ethnographic integration of the Igbo migrants, the study showed that the majority of Igbo migrants were proficient in Hausa, Gwandara, Kambari and other indigenous and Nigerians language such as Yoruba. Finally, half of the Igbo migrants held political office within their local association and union but rarely from the state politics. In summary, Igbo community are experiencing very dynamic and positive integrations; socially, economically and ethnographically but having few conundrums with ethnic divide and nepotism in terms of opportunities. The government of Nasarawa State should therefore give equal opportunity to all the residents of the state, particularly non-indigenes, so that they would have a sense of belonging.

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