

Youth Out-Migration in Nigeria: The Dual Role of Social Media as a Cause and Solution

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Abstract

The phenomenon of migration has been recorded to be a part of human history. Over the years, scholars have averred that people migrate for different reasons. While some do so for economic reasons and in search of greener pastures, others do so to escape either the wrath of the society in which they live or the government owing to their actions and way of life. This phenomenon is not restricted according to gender and age, as both males and females, old and young, are involved. Of late, it has been discovered that there is a huge desire among youths, including those who have jobs, to exit the country, thereby leading to a massive emigration of youths out of Nigeria. Although it is an undeniable fact that the economy of the country is in shambles, which leads to a desire to search for greener pastures elsewhere, the trend in the youths' desire and rush to leave Nigeria transcends this sole reason. Given the revelations by migrant returnees, it has been discovered that social media platforms play a pivotal role in both stirring and dampening this desire. Utilising a secondary data analysis in addition to a systematic literature review, this study explored the contribution of social media, especially Facebook, to the desperation shown by Nigerian youth for out-migration and how various social media platforms can be used for economic benefit in order to dissuade the youth from doing so. The study recommends that Nigerian youths should realise that the essence of social media meant to foster human interaction and healthy communication is gradually turning into an abode of misinformation that has embedded youths' lives within the discourse of youth out-migration in Nigeria, as anecdotal evidence as well as empirical evidence has shown. The study informs policy, society, practice and theory within the discourse of youth out-migration and social media studies.

Keywords: emigrate; Nigeria; Nigerian youth; social media; Facebook

Introduction

The impact of social media on all aspects of human endeavours cannot be overemphasised. It cuts across sport, tourism, education, leisure, health, politics, migration., etc., as social media has resulted in a paradigm shift in how we interact, communicate, and the ways in which we do things. Despite its many advantages, social media's consequences include the proliferation of information, thereby turning everyone into a manufacturer of information as well as proclaimers of news without being censured. Savin-Baden, Burden and Taylor (2017) assert that social media platforms promote unconfirmed information, while Fielden, Grupac and Adamko (2018) state that internet platforms are a primary channel for fake news due to misinformation, a bane for most migrants of which Nigerian youths are not an exception.

Immigrants from many developing nations in the diaspora post pictures of exquisite homes, exotic cars and designer clothing that cause youths in their home countries to believe that the streets of the Western world are lined with gold that can be picked up by anyone. These falsehoods have caused untold pain and anguish and led to the loss of many young lives. As Jennings (2015) notes, social media is filled with deception as what people post is not a true reflection of who they are or what they are going through at that point in time. Martin and Allday (2019) add that impostors, human traffickers and smugglers are always on the prowl for gullible youths who can be easily swayed, misled or manipulated by what they see on social media, forgetting the African adage that "not all that glitters is gold!"

En masse youth out-migration in developing countries such as Nigeria is thus not surprising as most young people lack the critical intellectual capability to determine the integrity of migration information products and services posted on social media platforms. This could also be attributed to the fact that the youth are attuned to the "now", i.e., what they see on social media, without weighing the present or the future consequences on their personae. They lack the requisite insight to judge the veracity of information on social media platforms, which is packaged in different formats such as pictures, posts, Facebook/Instagram Live, memes or comments. Similarly, many youths aspire to instant wealth by whatever means without going through the mills of life. Therefore, they subscribe to the Machiavellian notion that all is fair in love and war (Matei 2011), thus consuming all information on these spaces without censorship.

Misuse of social media has thus become a cause of concern among stakeholders in the field of migration and information science research. Van Meeteren and Pereira (2013) note that while previous studies have examined the role of social media in immigrants' community life, there is dearth of research on its role in facilitating immigration, especially within a developing context such as Nigeria. Not unmindful of the current volatile state of the Nigerian economic, political as well as social landscape and the

manifestation of other “push and pull” factors as identified by various scholars, this study critically analysed social media’s dual role as a cause and one of the potential solutions to youth out-migration in Nigeria.

The first section introduced the purpose of the article, while the second reviews the literature on the migration trajectory in Nigeria. The third section examines the domestic factors responsible for citizens’ desire to emigrate from Nigeria. Section four investigates Nigerians’ perceived diasporic experiences and their influence on the Nigerian youth. Section four explores social media as a causative agent promoting youth out-migration as well as opportunities offered on social media that can be explored to create wealth, and the final section presents conclusions and recommendations to dissuade the Nigerian youth from embarking on such a dangerous and uncertain adventure.

Overview of Migration Trajectories in Nigeria

Migration is part of human history and in Nigeria it predates the colonial epoch when Africa was partitioned into smaller kingdoms. Before colonial conquest, Nigerians moved freely as traders, herders and pilgrims to holy sites in the Arabian Peninsula, across various empires and kingdoms within and outside the country, without fear or threat as the borders and boundaries were not well defined (Ezeokafor 2018). Colonisation resulted in the demarcation of borders to clearly define the territorial limits of sovereign states, restricting movement and migration (Afolayan, Ikwuyatum, and Abejide 2008). Post-colonial states have maintained these borders. However, many Nigerians still find ways to cross the country’s vast land borders, which span more than 400,000 square kilometres and are difficult to police (Afolayan, Ikwuyatum, and Abejide 2008).

Post-independence Nigeria has witnessed numerous civilian and military regimes with diverse policies and programmes. The country’s short-lived oil boom attracted many foreigners, especially Ghanaians. A sharp decrease in the quality of living conditions led to anti-foreigner sentiment, especially against Ghanaians, exemplified in the slogan “Ghana Must Go” (Adepoju 2015). The Nigerian government revoked Articles 4 and 27 of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Goods and Services in 1983 and 1985, respectively, leading to the expulsion of between 900,000 and 1.3 million foreigners, mainly Ghanaians. This had an adverse effect on the implementation of the second phase of the ECOWAS Protocol on Right of Residence, which coincided with the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in Nigeria and the expulsion of undocumented migrants in 1985 (Okunade and Ogunnubi 2021).

Nigeria’s sharp economic decline has pushed different classes of Nigerians, from academics to skilled and unskilled individuals, to migrate in search of greener pastures. The migration of academics and artisans has resulted in a brain drain. The major drivers of such emigration include poor wages when compared to their counterparts abroad, poor working conditions and low productivity (Aboderin 2007; Astor et al. 2005;

Carrington 1999; Hagopian et al. 2005; Museckaite and Obialo 2008; Nwajiuba 2005). Other reasons include a lack of equipment and technology, frequent power cuts, ongoing industrial action due to retrenchments and underutilisation of resources by the ruling class. The SAP adopted by President Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida's military regime in 1980 contracted the economy, downgrading both working conditions and professionals' salaries. It also led to a decline in existing infrastructure and social services. The naira was devalued and public officials engaged in massive looting of the national treasury (Afolayan, Ikwuyatum, and Abejide 2008).

Nigerian migrants' destinations vary based on the motive for their decision, the class of migrant and the nature of the environment they target. For instance, professionals (academics and engineers) and skilled migrants emigrate to countries such as the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), Canada, South Africa and Western European countries such as France, Denmark, Spain, and Ireland etc., while traffickers and the trafficked (women and children) transit via Mauritania, Mali and North African countries such as Morocco and Libya to cross the Mediterranean into Spain and Italy (Carling 2005; Museckaite and Obialo 2008; Nightingale 2002; Nwajiuba 2005).

Some emigrants are driven by socio-cultural factors. For example, the Ejigbo people who are predominantly found in the southwestern region of Nigeria emigrated to Cote d'Ivoire due to the perceived affluence of that country. The first set of migrants who migrated between 1950 and 1970 told success stories that prompted their relatives and friends to follow suit, a trend that persists to date (Adegbola 1972; Afolayan 2004). In the 1960s, 192,000 Nigerians emigrated to Ghana, representing 23% of the country's population. However, the Alien Compliance Order of 1969 forced Nigerians and other foreigners out of Ghana (Afolayan, Ikwuyatum, and Abejide 2008).

Entry programmes adopted by different countries have also resulted in a brain drain from Nigeria. These programmes provide jobs and resident status to successful applicants either through a poll as in the American Visa Lottery or through the Skilled Immigrant Visa programmes adopted by Canada and Australia. Many Nigerians have emigrated under these programmes over the years. Ngwainmbi (2014) notes that the US Department of States' DV Visa Lottery Programme (DLVP) exempts African immigrants from the formal and rigorous process of obtaining a visa because of Black Africans' long-standing immigration history in the US. Although Black Africans from Africa, the Caribbean, Europe and other regions have a history of forced migration to the US, especially during the slave trade, few Black Africans from the African continent were allowed into the US thereafter compared with those from the Caribbean and the continent of South America. The programme has enabled the legal entrance of more than a million Black African immigrants from politically and economically challenged countries of the South (Ngwainmbi 2014). While many continue to live on American shores, some have returned to their countries of origin due to socio-cultural disparities and economic factors (Ngwainmbi 2014).

The “Push-Pull” Theory of Migration Vis-à-Vis Nigeria’s Domestic Environment

Both in-migration and out-migration are caused by what the literature terms “push” and “pull” factors. In the Nigerian context, these include the political, economic, and socio-cultural environment.

Lee (1966) notes that the “push-pull” theory of migration draws from sociological principles in a bid to consolidate a migration theory that would critically explain the migration flow between countries of origin and destination. Scholars such as Dinbabo and Nyasulu (2015) consider socio-political and economic factors in both the sending and receiving countries as triggers of migration. Specifically, King (2012) identified such “push” factors as those reasons that force people to leave their countries of origin for another country which they feel would give them the opportunity for expression and a better life. Such factors include extreme poverty, high unemployment rates, gross human rights violations, political instability, etc. Currently, these factors are fully present in Nigeria’s political space. Therefore, it is key for the purpose of this study to identify these “push” factors that are present in Nigeria so as to ascertain if they are enough for people to subject themselves to a journey they are unsure of or take a decision to leave their country of origin for an unknown destination through irregular means. These factors are discussed below.

Political Environment

Since independence, Nigeria has been ruled by both military and democratic regimes. Following the return to a democratic form of government in 1999, successive governments have endeavoured to deliver the dividends of democracy to citizens in a fair and equitable manner using the tools of democratic governance such as the rule of law, and separation of powers (Isiugo-Abanihe and IOM Nigeria 2016). However, these efforts have not borne fruit and the majority of citizens continue to wallow in abject poverty while the ruling class continues to amass wealth by siphoning off public funds to their personal coffers. This points to a leadership failure in the country (Alo 2014; El Rufai 2013).

One of the most significant contemporary challenges is Boko Haram, whose activities are mainly felt in the northeast. According to Salkida (2012), the sect has unleashed mayhem on the Nigerian polity and its citizens, leading to high levels of insecurity and humanitarian crises. Massive displacement of people from the troubled zones to areas that are relatively safe has exerted undue pressure on the receiving environments.

Economic Status

While Nigeria experienced economic growth under the various regimes, and notwithstanding the efforts of different administrations, this has not translated into economic development (Bamgboye 2014).

The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) adopted in 1999 aimed to promote stability, economic growth and development across the country and was the blueprint for Nigeria's socio-economic development plans (Chete and Falokun 2010). The policy was drafted in line with the African Union (AU) initiative, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that aimed to eradicate poverty (Akande and Roberts 2010). Its achievements included an increase in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate, which rose to 6.0% between 2004 and 2007 compared to 3.3% in 1999. The oil and non-oil sectors reported GDP growth rates of 0% and 8.3% respectively; foreign reserves increased to US\$43 billion in 2007 as against US\$4 billion in 1999 and foreign debt stood at US\$34 billion with an inflation rate of 9.5%. Commercial banks were consolidated, and the telecommunications sector was liberalised. In addition, about 110 government-operated enterprises were privatised between the year 2000 and 2006 (NPC 2007).

A more recent initiative, Vision 20:2020 aimed to serve as a blueprint to harness the country's vast resources for the betterment of all citizens and to place Nigeria among the top 20 developed economies globally by 2020. According to Isiugo-Abanihe and IOM Nigeria (2016), while there were some remarkable achievements, these could not be sustained due to constant conflict among states due to political and ethno-religious differences as well as conflict over resources. The Buhari-led administration recently adopted the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) (Onwunyi and Nwobu 2020), which aimed to revamp the system before the end of 2020.

Unemployment

Despite the growth in GDP, Nigeria remains characterised by unemployment, underemployment, and low per capita income. Increased unemployment and underemployment among the educated youth are serious socio-economic challenges (Abata, Kehinde, and Bolarinwa 2012). While the number of graduates increases each year, the labour market offers fewer employment opportunities. "This supply-side challenge in the labour market has been exacerbated by the high rate of population growth, which is vibrant and youthful. Besides, the Nigerian labour force is characterised by capacity underutilisation and low productivity" (Bolarinwa 2012).

In 2011, Nigeria's unemployment rate increased to 23.9%, meaning that 38.24 million Nigerians, mainly young people, were unemployed. The latest National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) survey (2010) indicated that there were more unemployed females (24.9%) than males (17.7%). In 2010, unemployment among the youth aged 15 to 24 stood at 39.9%; it stood at 23.3% among those aged 25 to 34 and at 16.8% among the 35 to 44 age group. In 2012, the National Baseline Youth Survey (NBS) showed that about 54% of Nigerian youth were unemployed (Isiugo-Abanihe and IOM Nigeria 2016). The ERGP aimed to reduce unemployment to 11% by 2020 (Onwunyi and Nwobu 2020).

Poverty

Despite the efforts of various administrations, poverty rates have risen sharply in Nigeria (Oshewolo 2011). Ironically, as the economic growth rate increases, so does the poverty level. The NBS Survey shows that the poverty level grew from 54.4% in 2004 to 69% in 2010, representing about 112.8 million Nigerians. According to Taiwo (2013), a researcher at the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER), the healthy economic growth witnessed in Nigeria has had no positive influence on poverty reduction and inequality, but rather a negative one. A study carried out by NISER in 2012 attests to this. The rate varies across the country's regions: "The north-western and north-eastern geopolitical zones of the country experienced the highest rates of poverty of 77.7% and 76.3%, respectively, while the south-western geopolitical zone had the lowest rate of poverty" (Isiugo-Abanihe and IOM Nigeria 2016). While the federal government continues to adopt policies and programmes to address this challenge, there seems to be no solution in sight.

As emphasised above, these factors reveal the current situation in Nigeria, which may naturally stir up the desire in the youths to emigrate. However, what is unclear is what is responsible for the desperation of the youths to emigrate through whatever means available to them. The succeeding section will bring this into clear perspective.

The Dual Role of Social Media as a Cause and Solution to Youth Out-Migration in Nigeria

The importance and advantages of social media to human interaction as well as our social co-existence cannot be overemphasised. These varied internet platforms have made interaction boundless, without any inhibition of time, means and location due to the ubiquitous nature of these technologies (Bakare 2018). However, despite the plethora of advantages that these internet-based platforms have brought in redefining all aspects of human endeavour, these come with far-reaching negative impacts on youth out-migration within the Nigerian space. This is corroborated by Akram and Kumar (2017) who assert that despite the myriad of social media advantages, it is laden with all sorts of risks associated with the digital world. In the same vein, Shu et al. (2017, 22) affirm social media as a double-edged sword that promotes rapid information dissemination but is at the same time a domain of "fake news" laced with impure intents to deceive the consumer, which has extremely negative impacts on individuals and society, of which youth out-migration has become a bane within the Nigerian space (Ikuteyijo 2020). Therefore, it is on this premise that this section enunciates ways social media is acting as a causative agent that promotes youth out-migration as well as ways of harnessing its advantages as a form of wealth creation that the Nigerian youth can embrace.

Social Media as a Causative Agent of Youth Out-Migration in Nigeria

Social media, which is also referred to as crowd-sourcing, user-generated content, and Web 2.0., has been defined in different ways. Manning (2014) defines it as a new form of media that entails interactive participation with friends, family members, associates or new acquaintances with whom one shares ideas. According to Bertot, Jaeger and Grimes (2010), social media refers to both the enabling tools and technology and the content that they generate. Bakare (2018) citing Buettner (2016) defines social media as computer-mediated technologies that enhance individual or collective communication among people, thus facilitating the sharing, creation and exchange of information in real-time within a virtual space. Social media include, among others, wikis (e.g. Wikipedia), blogs, social networking sites (e.g. Facebook), multimedia sharing services (e.g. YouTube, Flickr) and micro-blogging services (e.g. Twitter).

Social media enabled by Information Communication Technology (ICT) plays a vital role in the life of its users of which teenagers and youth form a large percentage. It has a significant influence on their psyche, which could be positive or negative depending on its usage. Singh et al.'s (2017) study in India concluded that social media has had a negative influence on many of the youth, while it has had a positive impact on some. The same can equally be said about the Nigerian space, howbeit Ikuteyijo (2020) describes social media as one of the negative motivating factors for youth out-migration from the country, which comes with dire consequences. It should be understood that social media platforms on their own were not created to foster any form of negativity but to promote cordial interaction amongst humans.

However, humans are at times selfish and involved in self-aggrandisement, and some who want to exploit others who lack the requisite information regarding a particular issue have turned this social space and its features to vices promoting the menace of youth out-migration in Nigeria. This is corroborated by Dalomba (2020) who affirms that social media in itself is not the problem, but rather the human factor that surfaces in communication and socialising when people who are tagged friends are not actually friends but enemies in disguise who use misinformation as a way of misleading others. In the same vein, Huddleston (2021) asserts that celebrities employ unwholesome influencer strategies to portray a make-believe life on social media platforms to please their followers' insatiable thirst for information, and most of the time this information is misleading. The followings social media features are used as causative agents in promoting youth out-migration: comments and textual content; status updates/bios; videos; display pictures/memes; Facebook Live/IG Live; Facebook/IG stories/Twitter Fleets; picture uploads; groups; post likes and shares; stickers, emojis and GIFS, etc.

1. Comments/textual content: These are expressions or opinions of social media users about an issue, a picture or a video. It comes as a form of status update, which can be accompanied by a picture, video or GIF attachment or upload. Godawa et al. (2019) affirm these as affecting the attitude of youths and also

causing them to make impracticable decisions that are not realistic to their own detriment.

2. Status updates/Bios: This can take the form of content, pictures or videos by social media users. Akram and Kumar (2017) assert that this inadvertently pressures youth to adopt different lifestyles that are alien to who they are physically. For instance, users' bios are often false, and users act as imposters, giving false information about their location and work status. They do this by displaying international mobile lines that one can get freely online as well as displaying any of the developed countries' flags to mislead online friends.

3. Facebook/Snapchat/IG Live: This enables social media users to livestream on the go, which is also called broadcasting life, through which users reveal uncensored information about themselves as well as their location. The user posting the live stream can upload the video to misinform other youth about the kind of lifestyle he/she is enjoying in the diaspora. This kind of content could all be false and could stem from a self-esteem problem caused by the usage of social media (Piyushi 2018). It is on this premise that McGillivray (2021) avers that 49.1% of users have read false news on social media that has led them to make inappropriate decisions.

4. Facebook stories/Twitter Fleets: With these features, users upload pictures that might not be a true reflection of what they are going through presently. It is unlikely that a youth in any of the developed countries will post that he/she is suffering for the whole world to see when they know that Nigerian youths already believe that everything is rosy for those outside the shores of the country. As Atewolara-Odule, Ojo and Akinreti (2016) explain, the misconception by Nigeria youths that nothing works in the country is aggravated by such news being broadcasted, which comes with its attendant consequences such as youth out-migration.

5. Social media group: This is an avenue through which people of like minds come together to discuss issues based on the vision and mission statement of such a group. However, anecdotal evidence has shown that most group members do not follow the tenets of the group and in essence promote misinformation. This is affirmed by Shu et al. (2017) who assert that users of Facebook groups distort the narratives of the group as they polarise opinions, which results in an echo chamber effect by which people consume and believe misinformation.

All these social media features are woven around "online consumption," which has been associated with negative repercussions and undesirable outcomes for youth (Krasnova et al. 2013). It also promotes impractical expectations as well as unverified friendships whose authenticity cannot be crosschecked (Prajapati 2021) due to the principle of

anonymity that operates on these platforms. There is no disputing the fact that Nigerian youth make use of social media, and some have even become addicted to it; however, they lack the necessary skills to understand its intricacies and are not mature enough to decipher misinformation, which makes them susceptible to negative vices. This was accentuated by the study of Krasnova et al. (2013) which affirmed that the underlying logic of this dynamic is little understood by the youth.

The Influence of Social Media on Youth Out-Migration from an Empirical View

Over the years, many young Nigerians have migrated to Europe, the US, the Middle East, and some African countries for different purposes, ranging from academic pursuits to better job opportunities, all of which are geared towards living a better life. Many Nigerian migrants, both professionals and skilled workers, have shared their success stories. Many have been able to acquire higher education, secure good jobs, establish stable businesses and raise a family (Firsing 2016). However, many migrants, both adults and youths, are jobless and living in abject poverty in different countries. The majority do not have the required documentation and are constantly on the run from the police and immigration officers. Nonetheless, the stories disseminated through various social media platforms, especially Facebook, which is the most popular and commonly utilised in communicating with their peers both at home and abroad, have a great influence on those left behind and encourage them to take the same path.

As noted by Okunade (2021), participants in a survey of returnees from Libya said that what their friends posted on social media led them to believe that they were living in paradise while they suffered in Nigeria. A few participants averred that while they were succeeding in their businesses in Nigeria, they were lured by the kind of lifestyle their peers flaunted on social media on a daily basis for them to see. This stirred up their desire to migrate to Europe so as to earn more money. Some participants who were small-business owners and university students explained that their decision to leave for Europe was based on their interaction with their peers abroad who assured them of getting a good job that would earn them good pay. Rikewe noted, “I was told by my friend Aaron the good life he lives in Europe and how much I will be making in a month and how much I can send home monthly to start building a house for my mother. She is dead now because of the trouble I put her through when I was in Libya” (researchers’ field interview, 2019). Joy, an interior decorator, noted: “My friend in Italy told me to leave my business and come over to make good money. She always showed me her wardrobe with beautiful clothes and shoes whenever we do video chat. I was carried away” (researchers’ field interview, 2019).

Thus, it can be concluded that many Nigerian youths fall prey to misinformation from their friends in the diaspora who hide their ordeals in the diaspora and encourage their friends back home to sell their assets and follow them. It is only when they reach their destination, if they are fortunate enough not to be kidnapped by smugglers or human

traffickers, that they realise they have been deceived and misinformed by what they see on social media platforms.

Moreover, I recall my experience while on vacation in the United Arab Emirates in 2015. I decided to visit Ras Al Khaimah, one of the emirates where some Nigerians and Africans live (see Figure 1). They occupied a dilapidated building far from the city, from where they go to perform odd jobs, while those without jobs roam the streets of Dubai dropping their résumés at offices and taking pictures of local attractions and posting them on their Facebook and Instagram pages for their friends back home to see. This whets their friends' appetite to leave Nigeria and live lavish lives like their friends.



Figure 1: Dilapidated building inhabited by some African migrants in the United Arab Emirates. (Photograph supplied by the authors)

It is worth noting that concerned Nigerians have shared their negative experiences and those of other Nigerian youth abroad in newspapers and on social media, but many of the youth spend their time on Facebook checking profiles and commenting on pictures and lifestyles posted by friends that are unreal. These same friends justify their long stay abroad without visiting home on the basis of the good life they are living rather than admitting they do not have the necessary documents to qualify as legal residents and to guarantee them exit and re-entry.

According to *Vanguard* (Anyagafu and Sam-Duru 2014), the poverty endured by many Nigerians results in them engaging in criminal activities and being imprisoned. Some have been tortured to death. Joseph Ugboulo shared his story. He explained that the

inhumane living conditions in Nigeria led him to decide to leave his growing business and migrate to South Korea. Upon arrival, he secured a job as a casual worker in a production company, but the salary only covered his monthly living expenses, and he was unable to send money home to his family in Nigeria. He told *Vanguard*:

[I]t is so pathetic how Nigerians are being lumped together by foreign hosts as people without a future, or direction. Here in South Korea, my fate is hanging, and I have no future. We are about seven Africans sharing an apartment that could barely accommodate three persons comfortably, and if you feel so disturbed, someone waiting would gladly take your position and you will be thrown out on the street. The conditions of many of us in South Korea aptly capture the pathetic condition back home in Nigeria as a good number of us would rather die than come back to Nigeria as a nobody. (Anyagafu and Sam-Duru 2014)

This situation puts many youths in a vulnerable state, a situation Nigerian smugglers latch on to in order to deceive them and push them to take a risk. They promise them a good life abroad and offer to assist them to migrate for a fee. Many smugglers have been apprehended by the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) while some have escaped arrest (NAPTIP 2016; *Vanguard* 2018).

Social Media: A Potential Source of Wealth Creation

Wealth creation is among the positive uses to which social media can be put as it offers job opportunities and the potential for entrepreneurs to create jobs. Okande (2015) notes that social media provides a platform for corporate bodies to establish a link with individuals, groups and institutions, which promotes their brands. This is mainly achieved through the use of online newspapers, websites, and professional platforms such as LinkedIn, Jobberman, Robert Half, CareerBuilder, Ladders, Glassdoor, and LinkUp. Nigerian youth can harness these platforms to familiarise themselves with different companies and interact with those who might be interested in their skills instead of seeing migrating out of the country as a matter of life and death, which prompts many to go through illegal routes that have led to the loss of many lives.

Fiverr is another useful platform that houses the world's top talent. It facilitates virtual transactions between service providers and potential users of services. Once an agreement is made and the job is delivered, payment is made into one's account. This does away with the need for a registered office or shop before one can sell one's products and services. Everything can be done from the comfort of one's home.

Moreover, recently these social platforms have been utilised for trading purposes by small-, medium- and large-scale businesses. According to Njoroge (2013), they serve as virtual spaces of real economic infrastructure that allow users to access Real Trade Money (RTM) for buying and selling purposes. Fashion designers, hair stylists, make-up artists, furniture makers, painters, builders, traders, etc., now advertise their products and designs on Facebook and Instagram to attract prospective clients. Many have

attracted virtual clients with whom they transact daily and deliver their products to them on time. This has enabled many businesses to grow, thus promoting entrepreneurship, and is a medium that the youth should consider.

While Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and others have been singled out as negative influences on the youth, my interactions on these platforms for over a decade have shown that one can access quality information products and services if one has the mental and intellectual capacity to critically interpret the source of information, a deficiency among most Nigerian youth who have preconceived ideas about the purpose of these social platforms. The fact that they spend a lot of time on these sites does not imply they know the appropriate way of deciphering the truthfulness of every piece of information they get on these platforms.

In order for Nigerian youth to access the true picture of migration on social media, they need to change their orientation and critically analyse all information they get from all social media features (pictures, posts, comments, live videos, etc.) so as not to become victims as most of the information posted on these platforms is not a true description of reality. All information should be measured against the dimensions of data quality, which Caro et al. (2008) identified as critical in human interactions and communication based on technology. These dimensions are:

- a. Validity: Are the migration information products and services logically or factually sound and based on critical personal research or empirical research?
- b. Reliability: Is the migration information product trustworthy and has it performed well consistently? This implies the need to critically analyse the information product to ensure it is not a hoax.
- c. Accuracy: This refers to the degree to which the migration information product correctly reflects the real-world object or migration event described. Do data objects accurately represent the “migration real world” values they are expected to model or are they false?
- d. Completeness: Does the migration information product provide comprehensive information on migration?
- e. Consistency: This implies that the data across all systems reflects the same information and is in sync across social media platforms. Are there any distinct occurrences of the same data instances that provide conflicting information on migration?
- f. Timeliness: Are the migration information products and services timely or outdated?

g. Integrity: Are the migration information products and services accurate and free of errors?

Were the Nigerian youth to use the dimensions of data quality as a yardstick to decipher misinformation on migration, there would be fewer agonising tales such as those recounted by Libyan returnees.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

This article has shown that social media has a dual effect: it can either be a cause of or solution to youth out-migration in Nigeria. It noted that many Nigerian youths fail to critically interpret migration information products and services, thus falling prey to misinformation which causes untold hardship.

It is thus recommended that Nigerian youths should realise that the essence of social media meant to foster human interaction and healthy communication is gradually turning into an abode of misinformation that has embedded youths' lives within the discourse of youth out-migration in Nigeria, as anecdotal evidence as well as empirical evidence has shown. This is mostly due to a lack of the requisite skills in deciphering the truthfulness of any piece of information on this social landscape disseminated through different social media features.

Secondly, Nigerian youths are also encouraged to engage in a self-reorientation process where they reconsider what is of value to them and the kinds of information that inform their opinion and actions. The principle of eating healthy should be translated to the social media space too. This would enable them to avoid being swept off their feet by misinformation peddled by friends and those who are only interested in robbing them of their possessions. It would shield them from dangerous adventures that will harm them and maybe even cost them their lives.

Thirdly, there is a need for societal reorientation. Our value system is fast eroding and material possessions are prioritised over diligence, hard work, and consistency. This contributes to the desire among the youth to get rich quick and the belief that the only way to do so is to leave the shores of Nigeria, a grave misconception as research has shown. Family members should desist from comparing what these individuals have to offer with what their peers have amassed even though the sources of their wealth are unknown. The recent internet fraud case against one of the Instagram big boys "Hushpuppi," who young Nigerians deify, should be a lesson to all Nigerian youth.

Fourthly, undergraduate and postgraduate curricula should be revised to accommodate digital citizenship as most of the Nigerian youth involved in this irregular out-migration fall within this age cohort. This will equip our youth to know that consuming all information products and services online will be detrimental to their psyche and might affect them in making inappropriate decisions. Also, sensitisation about misinformation

is essential in this era of digital connectivity as misinformation has been shown to be one of the fundamental causes of youth out-migration in Nigeria.

Finally, the government should be proactive in growing the economy. Dwindling economic growth and development have led to massive unemployment and high levels of poverty, as well as diminishing public support for the government. Job creation and poverty alleviation would go a long way in discouraging the youth from abandoning the country at all costs. Nigeria is blessed with human and natural resources and if properly harnessed and utilised it could be a better place to live.

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