

# THE NIGERIAN YOUTHS WITH JAPA SYNDROME: A REFLECTION OF THE UNSECURED CONDITION OF THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY

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## **Abstract**

*Japa syndrome is a trending phenomenon for which the number of Nigerians that are desperate to leave for greener pasture is on the increase day by day. The unsecured condition of the Nigerian society is so terrible that a deportee may rather choose to die rather than to be sent back to Nigeria. Therefore, this paper discussed the meaning and causes of Japa Syndrome, implications of Japa Syndrome on the security of lives of Nigerian as well as the needs for an enabling environment of the Nigerian society. This paper concluded that Nigerians should begin to start rebranding the Nigerian society so that our dear country will be a better and safer place that the immigrants around the world and every Nigerian will love to live when the wasted blessings and social virtues have been restored. This paper suggested that all measures must be taken to end the social vices that drive Nigerians out of their homes to serve in foreign countries at the detriment of the development of their fatherland.*

**Keywords:** Social vices, Japa syndrome, Greener pasture, Enabling environment.

## **Introduction**

The importance of the environment to the survival of human being cannot be over emphasized, human being cannot live in vacuum but they must exist with others in an environment. As a result, the condition of the environment is no doubt one of the factors that contribute to the safety, growth, development and survival of man generally. Obiefuna (2010) buttressed this fact that human being are products of their environment. The fact remains that man influences the environment and vice versa, no man is an

island and likewise the different countries of the world cannot live in isolation without interaction and interrelationships with one another.

Invariably, environment and humans remain important to different Fields of Studies such as Social Sciences, Humanity, Education and even Sciences. This is why studies or researches on these two variables continue to be relevant and the center of attraction to scholars across the different fields. For instance, the National Council for Social Studies (2023) stated that the purpose of Social Studies is to help learners make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse democratic society in an interdependent world. Okunloye, Oladele and Balogun (2019) acknowledged that Social Studies was designed to study human as well as how they fit into groups with emphases on the moral virtues so as to bring about the development of the environment and the world. But, the ways through which the Nigerian youths are migrating to other countries around the world is really worrisome.

Formerly, the Nigerian society was seen as a blessed society that was highly recognized around the world for its rich human and material resources. It becomes a wonder that citizens, especially the youths are now trooping out of Nigeria even to other African countries which are not as giant and recognized as the Nigerian society. The rate at which the Nigerian youths are migrating out of the country through legal and illegal routes also call for concern by relevant stakeholders. Whereas, the youths are the backbones of every society with their contributions to educational, social, political, economic, religious development. The youths form the essential segment of every human society, they are the driving force that determines the future and hope of the society (Uzoigwe 2013). Nevertheless, when these youths who are regarded as the strength of the society are not feeling secured in the country as they are battling with different social and economic vices that filled the Nigerian society such as insecurity, book haram insurgence, inflation, high cost of living, unemployment, under employment, bribery and corruption, injustice, kidnapping, ritual killing, stealing, robbery and a host of other abuses and molestations that are making the Nigerian youths to try at all cost to look for alternative where they can migrate for opportunities and safety.

Furthermore, the problems that Nigerians are struggling with make many Nigerians to be seen as managers even in their homes as they have to manage to feed themselves so as to survive the hardships that is making life more unbearable apart from insecurity that is creating fear in their minds. The safety of the environment cannot be discarded as one of the reasons why Citizens may choose to stay or move out of a country with consideration to the environmental comfortability; infrastructural facilities or amenities available, cost of living and a lot more that are essential for living a meaningful and successful life. Invariably, Nigerian migrate in or out of the country for different reasons, but the rate at which Nigerian youths are desperate to leave their father's land now is outrageous that if care is not taken, every sector of the Nigerian industries will be affected with low man power. Many Nigerian youths that cannot follow the normal process of migrating to the foreign land have taken the irregular route just to get out of the unpalatable situation of the Nigerian society. The number of Nigerians that apply for Visa is increasing day by day, the Guardian (2019) reported that a total of 88,387 visa applications were received, of which 49.8% were rejected. No wonder that some Nigerian youths not minding their lives migrate through the desert. Okunade (2021) stated that irregular migration cultures are notorious endeavor that has led to the death of many Nigerians and Fellow through backway migrants in the Sahara Desert, the Maghreb region and the Mediterranean. This shows the level of desperation of Nigerian youths to leave at all cost not even minding their lives, many of the promising souls in Nigeria have lost their lives in the desert.

### **The Meaning and Causes of Japa Syndrome**

Different definitions have been given to Japa by different scholars, though it connotes the same meaning. Japa is not new to Nigerians, it is commonly used and understood by many people that are not native speakers of Yoruba language. Japa means desperate to leave Nigeria to other countries around the world at all cost, it is also referred to as international migration. Japa is a Yoruba word which means to desperately leave for greener pasture. The Premium Times (2022) defined Japa as a Yoruba word that means to flee, and once achieved, a celebration come with it as it feels more like gaining freedom at last. What an irony!!!! Freedom to leave one's fatherland to a foreign land as a breakthrough? According to the Punch Newspaper of the 25 January, 2024, the term "Japa" derived from the Nigerian words 'ja'

and 'pa' means 'to break free' has evolved into Nigerian slang means the act of relocating overseas for better opportunities. Then, why will Nigerians prefer to leave their fatherland for other foreign countries? The irregular migration is a notorious endeavor that, over the years, has led to the deaths of many Nigerians and fellow 'backway' migration in the Sahara Desert (Okunade, 2021).

Nigerian struggled to move out at all cost through both illegal and legalized routes. As people are migrating out of the Nigerian society, the talented and more resourceful people are being picked on daily basis to different countries around the world and this is a big blow on the different sectors of the country. For instances, medical doctors, nurses, lecturers, bankers and other professionals who supposed to be helping in building a vibrant Nigerian society are trooping out on daily basis. Whereas, for the Nigerian society to be better, Nigerians must be ready to build and reshape the country for better. Therefore, it is important to consider some of the causes of Japa syndrome as this will drive towards the solutions to these problems; Needs for re-orientation of the Nigerian Education for empowerment with scientific and technological advancement. Japa syndrome can be traced to the needs for re-orientation that education is not just to acquire certificate but for empowerment of Nigerians. A meaningful education is expected to instill critical thinking and the ability to perform certain skills that will unravel the discovery of different opportunities and an added advantage to the individual and society. Education, as defined by Okunloye, Balogun & Oladele (2019) is the only medium through which knowledge, techniques, principles as well as the development of positive attitudes for functionality in the society can be achieved. Education is to enable individuals to function in the society, this is possible when such individuals have the enabling environment to utilize his or her talents but with different challenges that hinder the performance, what becomes the hope?

Invariably, the certificate will be more meaningful when it becomes the key to explore the different opportunities for a productive, functional and meaningful life but it becomes meaningless when nothing can be offered in terms of the cognitive, affective and psycho-motor achievements. In short, education is expected to enhance the productive and meaningful contribution to the development of individual and world at large. Therefore, there is the need to change the orientation that certificate acquirement is

automatic for jobs' provision as the world is becoming more competitive and it is now more of what you have to offer and not the certificate you acquired. Omokaadejo (2015) reported that teaching across the different levels of education in Nigeria is synonymous to how an army officer gives an order to his subordinates. Whereas, the modern-day teaching has gone beyond the conventional methods; where the teacher passes information without the active involvement of the students in the teaching and learning process which invariably did not challenge students to think and to be active in class.

In addition, the world has gone digital with the modern trend in education that entails different activities with enhancement of students' curiosity to develop their minds and soul through productive activities. Modern day education is to unravel the different talents which the students are blessed with and this will not only restrict the students to the status of job seekers but an employer of labor that has something to offer beyond just the certificate. This could be one of the reasons why the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023) iterated that teachers need to be provided with appropriate software and training that provides technological knowledge and should be taught the various ways to incorporate this into their lessons. Hence, the need for re-orientation for an effective and more functional Nigerian educational system becomes very important.

Employment, underemployment and high poverty rate are all contributing to why many Nigerian youths struggle to leave their father land as some desperately sold their properties in order to leave for greener pasture. It is not new that a first class graduate and even Ph.D. graduates may live for years in Nigerian without any reasonable job. Despite, the struggle to further and acquire more knowledge and certificate. It is so terrible that private investors cannot accommodate the applicants as they have limited offers too. Omokaro and Akparo (2022) affirmed that it is possible for graduates to have academic credentials but not the particular skills and competences that companies are looking for due to this mismatch between education and job demands. The Federal Ministry of Youths Development (FMYSD) (2022) recently estimated that minority of the Nigerian youth demographically are employed within the formal sector. Nigeria ranks low on the United Nation's Human Development Index, with 30.9% of the

population living below poverty line, mostly around the rural areas in the Northern part of the country. While, the Federal Ministry of Youths Development (FMYSD) (2022) affirmed that a notable 35% of Nigerians between 15-34 years are unemployed, available for work and actively seeking work or working less than 20 hours a week instead of working for like 40 hours from Monday to Friday, whereas 28% of young people in the work force are officially recognized as underemployed, working 20-39 hours a week.

Whereas, the proverb that says “an idle hand is the devil’s workshop” is relevant to the growth of social vices as many of the able bodied youths who supposed to use their strength to move the country forward have nothing reasonable to lay their hands on despite the rigors they passed through while in school. Nigerian youths take to illegal drugs, which serve as a means of income generation and a pathway to social and economic autonomy for young Nigerians living in conditions of poverty and limited job opportunities (Nelson,2023). The growth of social vices copied with the Japa syndrome is a pointer to the unsecured condition of the Nigerian society.

Moreover, “In Nigeria, corruption pervades every aspect of public life, from recruitment exercises to award of contract, admission processing to teaching and learning experiences as well as other bureaucratic and everyday life engagements of the people” (Falola, 2021, p.282). Corruption is a blockage to the growth and development of the Nigerian society. Corruption has drained the Nigeria’s economy and treasury so terribly that generations will still be paying back accumulated loans taken by different governments, from the different countries without any noticeable impacts on the lives of the people. Corruption has painted the image of the Nigerians badly to the world that nobody is to be trusted and seen as a saint in Nigeria, this is really pathetic to the innocent ones who are trustworthy, honest and prudent in Nigeria.

### **Implications of Japa Syndrome on the Nigerian Society**

For every action, there must be reaction, there is the need to consider the negative or positive implications of Japa syndrome on the Nigerian society. While some reported that international emigration contributed positively to the growth and development of the different societies and countries, some

were of the opinion that it contributed negatively to the Nigerian society. Umeh, Ugwoegbu and Sam (2024) categorically stated that emigration of skilled professionals like doctors, engineers, and academics can lead to a shortage of talents in critical sectors, hindering economic growth and development. The different talents and professionals are the backbone for the development of the different sectors with enabling supports to ensure the growth and development of the country. The more talents leave and relocate to other countries, the more the gaps to be filled and this will have effects not only on the economy but of the general growth and development of the country. International emigration otherwise known as Japa Syndrome has remained a vital issue in the Nigerian system because migration within and across the Nigerian state directly affects some of the defining elements of economic development of the Nigerian state (International Organization for Migration, 2016). Nigerian that went through the legal route cannot enjoy the same right with the citizens not to talk of those that went through the illegal means.

Moreover, the exposure and experiences of the emigrants will enhance the growth and development of the individuals who will come back to build and restructure the Nigerian society in the future. Fayomi (2013) also added that emigration is advantageous to the economic development of the Nigerian society and that it expands the economy as some of the highly skilled citizens who reside abroad come home to establish and build factories which serves as assets to develop the economy of the Nigerian society. Other developed countries around the world are using immigrants like machine to increase the workforce and to boost their economy. Emigration too will help to improve the workforce, aid productive and invariably improve the Nigeria's economy.

## **Conclusion**

A deserted home left without care cannot be free from unwanted grasses, harmful insects and such building may finally collapse. Nigeria is like a home and every member of the home have distinct roles to perform but in a situation where any of the member left with a vacuum, the gap will have impact on the growth and development of every member of such home. Therefore, there is the need to look at the problems facing the different sectors of the Nigerian society which contributed to the reasons why Nigerian youths migrate to other countries. Therefore, all hands must be on

deck to work on the solutions so as to restore the wasted blessings and resources that Nigeria is blessed with so that everyone will have all it takes to live a meaningful life and to enjoy the Nigerian society. It is important that change should start with every Nigerian irrespective of age and tribe, everyone should begin with a change of attitude and the determination for a better Nigeria where everything works.

## **Recommendations**

Therefore, the following points are recommended;

- Nigeria is our home and we must strive to rebuild the structure to that we can save the country from total destruction. Nigerian must be ready to uphold the social virtues and morality must be embraced while everyone must wipe off the immoral behaviors.
- The youths should take bold step to revive the Nigerian society and every youth who stays in Nigerian should be ready to work and rebrand the Nigerian society so that those that travelled will have reasons to come back and settle down in Nigerian.
- Government must be ready to provide amenities that will encourage people and boost the economy. Corruption must be frowned at while offenders must not go unpunished.
- Parents must be ready to provide more for their children and children too must be ready to endure the test of time as nothing is permanent in life.
- Government should encourage the youths by providing jobs opportunities and regular payment of salary, price control on goods, control of the economy and so on.

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