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RESEARCH ARTICLE

POLITICAL DISTRUST AS A PREDICTOR OF ILLEGAL MIGRATION AMONG THE YOUTH IN THE ANAMBRA STATE OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

burdens the home and host country and exposes migrants to numerous dangers. The trend is pervasive among young people. While researchers have identified multiple reasons for illegal youth migration, disbelieving in the political system has not received much literature attention. The present study examines illegal migration among the youth based on political distrust. Five hundred and twenty-eight youths (n=528) were conveniently selected from different locations in the Anambra States as the respondents. Data for the survey was collected using a self-report measure assessing political distrust and intention to migrate. Linear regression analysis was conducted on the data, and the result showed that political distrust statistically significantly predicted illegal migration among the youth in Anambra State. The study concludes that political distrust is a significant contributory factor in youth's irregular emigration in Anambra State.

Illegal migration is a global phenomenon that substantially

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Introduction:-

Migration which refers to the movement of people from one economy to another (WorldBank, 2009), has become a theme that occupies the centrality of contemporary international debates (Santos & Brasil, 2020). Over the years, there has been growing concern about people entering various countries other than theirs without proper documentation. Migration from the developing world to other parts of the world raises many important political, economic, and humanitarian topics (Mbaye, 2014). Illegal migration, also considered undocumented, irregular, and unauthorized migration (Donato & Massey, 2016), is an umbrella term encompassing a complex set of conditions and embraces various patterns of transnational mobilities. However, there is no universally accepted definition of illegal migration. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) described illegal migration as a movement that takes place outside the governing norms of the sending, transit and receiving country (IOM Global Migration Data Analysis Centre, 2017). The trend is a global topic (Perkowska, 2016) and has attracted massive research attention in recent decades (Baldwin-Edwards, 2008; Danilov, 2020; Demmelhuber, 2011; Hasan, 2019; Jovanović, 2019; Kis-Benedek, 2016; Mangin & Zenou, 2016; Mbaye, 2014; Schluter & Wahba, 2021; Solovyev & Urda, 2020; Vlasova, 2019).

For many decades, the world has regularly witnessed tragic events related to the illegal migration of people from Africa into Europe and America. The increasing media coverage of people arriving onto European coasts proves how strongly most people are willing to exit their country at any cost with the expectation of finding a better life. However, while the colossal rate of illegal migrants from Africa arrives Europe countries regularly and a large number of them

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perish in transit, literature on illegal migration is mainly focused on the situation of Mexico and the United States (Gathmann, 2008; Hanson, 2006; Hartman, 2011; Reichert & Massey, 2014; Román González & Zúñiga, 2014). Whereas there is limited literature examining illegal migration from Africa to Europe. In particular, illegal migration seems tough to track because it transpires outside the regulatory rules of countries and is typically aimed at evading detection. However, while the trend of migrants arriving in a host country without proper documentation is not new (de Haas, 2008), there have been new approaches to illegal migration that seems to overstep restrictive immigration policies and border controls. Initially, migrants from sub-Saharan Africa used the Maghreb route via the desert to reach their prospective European destinations. However, the intensified border policies and increasing organized crimes have instigated the massive boat pattern of migration from the African continents. Also, many migrants gain access to Europe using fake documents, mostly in connivance with officials.

The increasing wave of migrants heading to Europe and other continents escaping Africa's social, economic, and political challenges reflects a massive challenge for the receiving countries as they struggle to control the influx of undocumented travelers. The Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (2017) reported that about 7000 illegal migrants were either dead or missing. More than half of the crisis were recorded along the Mediterranean, with most victims originating from Africa. While unlawful migrants are more exposed to increased health deteriorations, hopelessness, substantial financial loss, and starvation, the social, economic, and security burden inflicted on the host countries have led to the adoption of extraordinary measures to cope with the migrant influx (Arenas-Hidalgo, 2016). Regardless, many young people are constantly planning to migrate to other countries through the back channels. The dangers associated with illegal migration has been widely discussed in the literature (Amenta et al., 2021; Arenas-Hidalgo, 2016; Kassar & Dourgnon, 2014; Krcmery & Kulkova, 2014; Mannik, 2016; Pavlidis et al., 2018; Pinchi et al., 2017; Setrana, 2021; Tefera, 2019; Yahaya, 2020).

The motivation for survival and the urge to seek better living has continued to force many African youths to engage in a vast risky adventure to cross over to Europe and other parts of the world. This motive to escape poverty, hunger, unemployment, and insecurity, including the quest to compete with others and get to a certain level, has contributed to people migrating to developed countries. Young Nigerians are at the top of the list of the population with the intention of migrants from Africa to developed countries. The bulk of illegal migration in Nigeria occurs among youth aged 18 to 35. Individuals within this age population are primarily single. They have the strength to withstand the turbulence of irregular migration compared to the older people, who are more likely to be married, with more commitments and less energy to withstand the rigors of migration (Ikuteyijo, 2012). In particular, most of the migrants involved in the Mediterranean Sea disaster in 2016 were mainly from Nigeria (Nwalutu, 2016). These individuals, usually in their youth age, engage in risky voyages across the globe, despite the increasing mortality and morbidities relative to undocumented journeys across borders. Hence, understanding the underlying motive for embarking on an undocumented trip remains essential in controlling the tide.

Several factors, including economic issues, unemployment, personal ambitions, insecurities, inadequate basic amenities for survival, degradation of the environment, and social situations, have substantially instigated and motivated much Nigerian youth to move to different parts of the world. In addition, the trend in illegal migration among young people can be attributed to job recruitments by foreign agents, the prospects for better education, increasing earning power, and cultivating enhanced living conditions through access to improved economic setup and advanced infrastructural framework lacking in Nigeria. Although the trend cut across the regions in Nigeria, the present study is focused on the young individual in the Anambra state and their quest to migrate abroad.

Intimations suggest that nearly one in ten households in Anambra state has one of its members abroad or had attempted to migrate. Although, a large number travel through the standard visa corridor. Those who could not meet the visa requirements choose to fake travel documents or take a risky route to a foreign country, traveling across the Saharan desert to the Mediterranean Sea despite the risks associated with this route. Furthermore, young people youth living in Anambra state experience high levels of monetary intimidation by the haves, physical and material jamborees that constantly motivate the younger ones to escape the country. However, there are indications that the government's inability to fulfill political promises, provide basic amenities, and attend to the needs of the people as witnessed in every society exacerbates migration. The present study examined political distrust as a factor that could explain the variations in youth intention to emigrate at all costs.

Political distrust and illegal migration

Intimations suggest that the modern-day democratic ecosystems are constantly experiencing an increasing trend of political distrust (Bertsou, 2019). Indeed, the growing social unrest in many societies may be ascribed to the expanding citizen's distrust towards the government and the political system. The concept of political distrust describes a uniformed attitude that resonances with perceptions of dishonesty, fraudulence, untrustworthiness, and selfishness that define the political system and its structures. Political distrust reflects an unfavorable attitude held by the citizens towards the political system. Notably, there are indications of distrust towards the Nigerian government, primarily occasioned by persistent unmet responsibilities. In particular, the inability of the government to fulfill its promises, create a favorable environment, provide a sustainable mechanism that could accommodate the youth, ensure the security of her young citizens, and secure a conducive future for the youth activates distrust towards the government. Thus, the trend decreases patriotism and exacerbates migration intention. However, given the challenges associated with legal migration, many young people resort to alternative routes. Indeed, previous studies have linked political distrust to non-compliance to government policies (Banaji, 2008; Ezeibe et al., 2020). However, there has been a lack in the literature relative to the effect of political distrust on the willingness to emigrate illegally. Thus, the primary purpose of the present study is to examine political distrust as a previously unexplored variable that could predict illegal migration among the youth in Anambra State.

Hypothesis:

Political distrust would significantly predict illegal migration among the youth in Anambra State.

Method:-

Participants

The target population for the present study was young people between the ages of 18 and 35 years residing in Anambra State. The rationale for targeting this cohort is because the objective of the survey primarily emphasized youth migration. The participants were approached in different communities in Anambra State, Nigeria, between August and November 2021. In particular, they were briefed on the study's purpose and were equally informed that the survey was voluntary and they could withdraw anytime they wanted. In total, five hundred and forty-six youth consented to participate in the study. Thus, those who completed the consent form were given the study's instrument to fill on the spot. They were urged to seek clarification on any perceived ambiguity. In all, five hundred and twenty-eight (528) copies of the questionnaire were appropriately filled and utilized for statistical analysis, while the remaining eighteen (18) copies were discarded for improper filling.

Measures:-

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire items were developed from relevant literature and designed to assess political distrust, the overall perception of government behavior, and intention to migrate on a five-point Linkert-type scale. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: A and B. Part A measures cognitive, affective, and behavioral assessment of the political system. Part B includes questions about the intention to migrate. Thus, the measure was subjective, and respondents must self-report their conception of the variables. However, a Cronbach Alpha 0.79 coefficient was recorded for the scale following a pilot study using participants outside the study population.

Result:-

A cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study. Data from the respondents were analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS, version 23). A simple linear regression was performed on the data. The result indicated that political distrust statistically significantly predicted illegal migration at $\beta = .912$, $p < .05$, with R^2 of .314. Thus, the adjusted square showed that political distrust explained about 31.4% of the variation in illegal youth migration.

Table 1:- Table showing the simple linear regression analysis for the effect of political distrust and response to CBN's credit facilities.

	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-1.77	.076		-23.31	.000
Political distrust	.912	.032	.912	26.05	.000
R^2	.314				

Discussion:-

The primary purpose of the present study was to determine the variation in illegal migration among youth in Anambra State based on political distrust. From the simple linear regression result, it was found that political distrust statistically significantly predicted illegal migration at $\beta = .912$, $p < .05$. More so, political distrust was found to account for 31.4% of the variance in youth's unlawful migration of Anambra State. Accordingly, the result supported the study's expectation that political distrust would predict illegal migration among the youth. This means that young people who perceive the political ecosystem as untrustworthy and incapable of fulfilling numerous promises and affecting their responsibilities are more likely to display potentialities of emigration. Equally, the finding indicates that those who intend to migrate but cannot legally process their papers would resort to an illegal journey. Indeed, the failure of the government and the political system to adequately create an enabling environment for her teeming youth instigates disbelief and the motivation to seek a better future in another setting. The present study presupposes that political distrust as a psychosocial variable reflects a significant determinant of the willingness to relocate. Thus, intention to migrate illegally combines behavioral adaptations elicited by evaluation and perception of the entire political landscape. The trend has severe implications for the mental and overall well-being of the youths.

Conclusion:-

The present study investigated political distrust as a scarcely explored correlate of illegal migration among youth in Anambra State. The regression analysis performed on the data indicated that political distrust is a significant predictor of young people's irregular relocation to other countries. More so, the result entails that political trust is a pathway to acquiring a mindset relative to emigration. The finding has implications for research and immigration policies. Although the study is challenged with some limitations, for example, self-report measures have been criticized for the issue of common variance. Further research should adopt multiple approaches for data collection to minimize bias reporting. Also, the sampling method poses a challenge for generalization. A more comprehensive sampling technique is required to build a generalizable outcome. Nonetheless, the study contributed to the literature by revealing political distrust as a factor contributing to the youth's intention to migrate illegally. Improving political performance is a straightforward and recognized approach to bettering political disbelief. Unfortunately, it is not feasible in present-day society. Distrust based on perceptions of unequal practices and unfair outcomes can be reversed if policy-makers and politicians promote shared notions of equality and fairness, even reinforcing the monitoring mechanisms to limit morally reprehensible conduct relative to youth's doubt in the system. Further research is needed to broaden our knowledge of other intervening variables in the relationships between political distrust and irregular migration.

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