

Family Patterns in The Context of International Migration: Evidence from Families of International Migrants in Lagos, Nigeria

Felicia A. D. Oyekanmi

Department of Sociology, University of Lagos
Lagos Nigeria

Kennedy Eborka

Department of Sociology, University of Lagos
Lagos Nigeria

Olusegun Temilola

Department of Sociology, University of Lagos
Lagos Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Migration is generally conceived of as the movement of people from one place to another involving change of usual residence. When the movement is from one country to another, it is international migration; when it is within the country, it is referred to as internal migration. The focus of this paper is international migration involving the movements of Nigerians to other countries. Migration tends to create a disruption in social relationships and networks that have existed over the years. It has been theorized that the longer the duration of stay by the migrating member, the more permanent will be the disruption of existing family pattern and relationship. Some studies on international migration in sub-Saharan Africa appear to concentrate more on the issues of “brain-drain” and social differentiation between migrants’ and non-migrants’ households. This paper examined the influence of international migration on family patterns. The study’s specific objectives were to investigate the relationship between international migration and the role of migrants in family’s decision-making process; attainment of desired family size; family headship; and childrearing among families of international migrants in Lagos, The study adopted the non-experimental research design. A sample size of six hundred respondents was drawn from six hundred households with families members living outside Nigeria. The study locations were Eti-Osa and Kosofe Local Government Areas in Lagos State. Our findings indicate that there is no relationship between duration of travel of spouses and the number of children born by the respondents. One could speculate that the desired number of children is usually born before the spouses stay away from this country. The absent family members are usually consulted before important family decisions are made because of the former’s financial strength or birth ranking/position compared to the respondents.

Keywords: Migration, Lagos, childrearing, integration, household, fertility.

INTRODUCTION

In demographic study, the basic components of population dynamics are fertility, mortality and migration. The attention of this paper is focused on international migration and its effect on family patterns and relations. Migration involves the movement of people from one place to another that involves permanent change of residence, Migration is different from birth and death because the migrant can move more than once in his/her lifetime unlike birth and death

(Oyekanmi, 2001). In-between the places of origin and destination, there may be intervening obstacles that may be physical or otherwise such as language barriers, immigration regulations in case of international movement. It is assumed that the individual movers must have considered several factors before moving: the pull factors must outweigh the push factors. The pull factors are those which attract a potential migrant to a particular place from the present place of residence. These pull factors include better employment opportunities, educational institutions, perceived social enhancement or upward mobility and those factors that could enhance the life of the potential migrant. The push factors include those things that repel the potential migrant from the current place of residence. These push factors could include lack of jobs, political upheaval, social unrest or conflict and religious persecution.

There is a difference between voluntary and involuntary migration. Involuntary migration, also called forced migration, may be as a result of acute social unrest, war, ecological disaster, perceive persecution for any reason, and so on. Where people are forced to migrate, such individuals are referred to as internally displaced persons (IDPs) if their movements do not cross a national boundary. They are, however, called refugees wherever they have sought refuge after crossing a national boundary.

In this study we looked at people who have moved voluntarily. If the migrant has relocated to a place within the national boundary of the country, in this case, Nigeria then the movement is described as internal migration. On the other hand, if the movement involved the crossing of a national boundary it is defined as international migration. Our study covered the family members of people who have migrated out of Nigeria to other countries.

It must be mentioned that the occurrence of migration notwithstanding, most migrants continue to be involved in the affairs of their home communities especially in the welfare of their families. The link between migration and family pattern is measured in various ways which include fertility performance of married persons and involvement or otherwise of the migrant in the child rearing and decision making in the family.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Nigeria, like in the rest of Africa, family institutions are at the heart of society. The role of family groups is not limited to the sphere of biological reproduction and intergenerational solidarity. They also play crucial roles as production units, they are important mechanisms of social control, and they are central actors in religious matters, where the cult of the ancestors is acted out (Locoh, 1988). Even in the political arena references to African concept of the family are always in the background. Economic, social and demographic changes cannot be analyzed without reference to the family and its evolution. One can speculate whether the eminent place of the family in society is threatened by the ongoing migrations, particularly international migration. How do such movements of people from one country to other countries affect family formation through marriage and childbearing as well as family structure as the basis for the size and composition of residential units.

Family renewal occurs through new alliances established by marriage, and through the resulting offspring. Marriage depends on individual choice, but where the kinship group exerts effective control over its young, it depends even more on family norms and strategies. A couple's children are the business of the entire group, in contrast to modern societies where the nuclear family is confined to the father, the mother and their children. It may be delayed by acquisition of education/training for a livelihood, accumulation of bride wealth, or it may be hurried by the advent of a pregnancy, but entry into union is almost an inevitable prospect for Nigerians as for other Africans. Permanent celibacy remains exceptional, and deliberate

childless singlehood is shunned. Data from 2006 population and housing census of Nigeria indicated that 0.41% of male and 0.59% of females aged 50 years and above respectively had never married (NPC, 2009). The age differences at first marriage between male and female often imply that males are heads of households/ families. However, with increase in migration of able bodied males mostly from the rural to the urban areas in search of paid jobs and migration out of Nigeria to foreign countries in search of greener pastures females are increasingly becoming de facto heads of households.

Thus women are increasingly assuming daily feeding of the children who live with them as well as catering for the needs of relatives and non-relatives, including those of extended family members who would otherwise have been the responsibility of their husbands. In households where the international migrant is the female then her spouse gets to bear the brunt of sustaining the children and other family members. Where the marriage is polygamous, then the nexus activities shared by the spouses who remain in situ after the migrant has gone may also indicate dynamism of coping strategies in the family. Studies indicate that when older children or women migrate and returned with more money than their fathers and husbands, they tend to upset existing traditional social hierarchies thereby altering the pattern of headship in the family (Tapino, 1981; Attoh, 2013).

OBJECTIVE

This paper is an attempt to examine the relationship between international migration and family patterns. The study's specific objectives are to investigate the relationship between international migration and the role of migrants in family's decision-making process; interrogate the nexus between international migration and attainment of desired family size; investigate whether international migration affects family headship; and examine the relationship between the people in diaspora and members of their families in Lagos, Nigeria.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

The new economic labour migration theory (NELM) states that international migration is a part of household strategy which aims at coping with prevailing negative economic challenges. Since the 1980s, and more recently after 2008, more people are migrating out of Nigeria and other sub-Saharan African countries in search of economic betterment into the Maghreb region and every other continent of the world. However, another theory that had been postulated on the effect of migration on family structure implies that the longer the absence of the migrant from the marital home the greater its adverse effect on the upbringing of the offspring of the family. Large numbers of children have grown up without parental influence as a result of emigration of either one or both parents. Moreover, the cohesion or solidarity that should obtain in the family would be adversely affected. Even with increased communication linkages through the internet and IT technology (emails, Skype, IMO, and other social media, etc) these interpersonal interaction cannot make up for the long physical distance.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses would be tested in the study: (i) International migration weakens the decision making ability of the family members left behind by the international migrants; (ii) Female headship of households is enhanced by international migration; and (iii) The longer the duration of stay of the marital partner outside the country the lower the number of children born alive by the spouse

METHODS

Field work

The research method adopted in the study was non-experimental, involving a cross sectional survey (household survey), key informant interviews and focus group discussion.. Lagos state was clustered into two geographical areas of Mainland and Island and one local government area was selected from each of the clustered areas through the aid of probability sampling .The survey was carried out in Kosofe and Eti Osa LGAs of Lagos State to represent the Mainland and Island clusters respectively.

According to the Lagos State 2010 Household Survey, the population of Kosofe was 1,060,110 while that of Eti-Osa was 1,115,578 (LBS,2010) Projections were made to estimate the population of the two LGAs for 2015. Statistical formula was then used to get a sampling fraction for the number of households to be sampled. A sample of 600 households was targeted (292 in Kosofe and 308 in Eti-Osa proportional to their estimated population) to collect quantitative data through questionnaires administered. . Eligibility criterion has to do with households with family members living outside the country. Questionnaires were administered to one person per selected household. In addition the study planned to carry out 20 key in-depth interviews (KII) with identified stakeholders in the areas and conduct 8 focus group discussions (FGDs) to obtain qualitative data.

The field work took place between April and August 2016. The project was funded by the Central Research Committee of the University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria. Data for this paper are extracted from part of those generated there from.

RESULTS

Analysis of Data/Findings

The study gathered both quantitative and qualitative data from 599 respondents through questionnaires completed, 18 key in-depth interviews and 4 focus group discussions. For quantitative data, descriptive and inferential statistical analysis was adopted. For qualitative data, the study made use of content analysis and verbatim transcriptions.

The socio-economic characteristics of the respondents showed that 308 (51.42%) of the respondents were resident in Eti-Osa LGA and 291 (48.58%) were in Kosofe Local Government Area. In Kosofe LGA, the respondents were resident in Ketu, Maryland, Ojota and Mile 12 communities. Their counterparts in Eti-Osa LGA were residents of Obalende, Ikoyi, Victoria Island, Lekki Phase 1 and Lekki Peninsula. About one-quarter (25.2%) of the respondents resided in rural areas and the-quarters (74.8%) lived in urban areas as shown in Table 1. This is unlike the usual perception of Lagos State as being almost entirely urban. People living in communities without gutters for water drainage, tarred /paved roads, modern health facilities and electricity from the national grid are most likely to report themselves as living in rural areas.

Information on sex of the respondents indicated that about three-fifths (62.1%) of the respondents were male while two-fifths (37.9%) were female.

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics

Location of the respondents by LGA	Number	Percent
Eti -Osa	308	51.4
Kosofe	291	48.6
Types of Location		
Rural	151	25.2
Urban	448	74.8
Sex		
Male	372	62.1
Female	227	37.9
Age (in years)		
15-19	16	2.7
20-24	39	6.5
25-29	69	11.5
30-34	93	15.5
35-39	105	17.5
40-44	97	16.2
45-49	75	12.5
50 +	88	14.7
Marital Status		
Single	176	29.4
Married	403	67.3
Separated	7	1.2
Divorced	3	.5
Widowed	10	1.7
Religion Affiliation		
Christianity	405	67.6
Islam	185	30.9
Traditional Religion	2	.3
None	3	.5
No Response	4	.7
Education		
None	2	.3
Primary	22	1.7
Secondary	282	47.4
Tertiary	289	48.6
Employment Status		
Student	41	6.8
Apprentice	13	2.2
Self-Employed	324	54.1
Employee	172	28.7
Employer	13	2.2
Unemployed	13	2.2
Retired	12	2.0
No Response	11	1.8
Total	599	100.0

Source: Oyekanmi; Temilola and Eborika field work 2016.

In other words, more males than females had relatives and other family members who were international migrants residing outside Nigeria at the time of the survey. The ages of the respondents indicated a youthful structure with about 85.6% of them being under 50 years of age. In fact, one-fifth of them (20.7%) was under 30 years of age; i.e. 15-29 years old. This reflects the youthful age structure of not just Lagos State but of the country as indicated in the figures from the national censuses of Nigeria. Other characteristics of the respondents show that 67.3% of the respondents were married while 29.4% were single. Data on the religious affiliation of the respondents showed that 67% of them were Christians, 30.9% professed Islam and 0.3% followed Traditional Religion.

Data on the highest level of education completed showed that 48.6% of them had tertiary, 47.4% had secondary and 1.7% had completed primary education. In a way, this is expected given the youthful age of the people and the cosmopolitan nature of Lagos whereby people keep moving into the metropolis in search of gainful economic pursuits as others have migrated out in search of even greater opportunities. The consideration of the employment status of our respondents showed that half (54.1%) of them were self-employed, another 28.7% were employees and only 2.2% were employers. It is noteworthy that only 2.2% of the respondents were unemployed. Another 9% of the respondents were students and apprentices learning new skills. The main jobs done by the respondents varied over a wide range and included accounting, banking, baking, chemical engineering, computer engineering, construction, event management, entertainment, fashion designing, civil service and oil and gas merchandising.

A look at the nationality of the respondents showed that 99.2% of them are Nigerians and 0.5% are non-Nigerians as shown in Table 1.2. Furthermore, two-fifths of them (39.2%) have ever travelled out of Nigeria while the rest (60.8%) have never travelled out of the country. By contrast, 97.2% of the respondents said that they have a member of their family staying outside the country. The respondents said that such absent family members were their spouse (9.7%), uncle/aunt (31.2%), siblings (40.9%), children (4.8%), parent (2.5%) and others (7.6%). The family members had travelled out of the country for periods ranging from 1 to 21 years for the 142 respondents who gave numerical responses about duration of absence. The international migrants had stayed abroad for an average of 1.97 years

Table 1.2: Relationship to International Migrant

Nationality		
Nigerian	594	99.2
Non- Nigerian	3	.5
No Response	2	.3
Have you ever traveled out of Nigeria?		
Yes	235	39.2
No	364	60.8
Do you have any members of your family currently staying outside the country?		
Yes	582	97.2
No	13	2.2
No Response	4	.6
If yes, relationship of the person to you?		
spouse	58	9.7
uncle/Aunt	187	31.2
siblings	245	40.9
children	48	4.8
parent	15	2.5
other (cousin, brother, in-law, mother-in-law)	46	7.6

Source: Oyekanmi; Temilola and Eborka field work 2016.

As shown in Table 2, enquiry about headship of their households indicated that 295 (49.2%) respondents declared themselves as heads and 169 (28.2%) stated that their husbands were the heads; In addition another 18.4% said that other people not specified were the head of their respective household. Cross tabulation of sex of respondents by headship of household status showed that 78.3% of the male and 11.1% of the female described themselves as the head (see Table 3.1). The statistical calculations in Table 3.1 showed $X^2 = 341.738$ and $p=0.00$ which is less than 0.05. Hence there is a relationship between sex and headship of household. Hypothesis Two is accepted. Further discussion on who is regarded as head of households showed that these were defined as a man, anyone that takes responsibility, the breadwinner, husband, brother, brother-in-law, older brother, father, father-in-law, grandfather and usually the man. These responses reinforce the dominance of patriarchy in the mainly Yoruba culture found in Lagos state, and in southwest Nigeria.

Table 2: Demographic information of respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percent
who is the head of this household		
Self	295	49.2
Husband	169	28.2
Others	98	18.4
No Response	37	6.2
How many children ever born alive by you		
1		
2		
3	52	8.7
4	133	22.2
5 - 8	122	20.4
No Response	72	12.0
	38	6.3
	182	30.4
Did the fact that the member of your household who travelled out of the country affect the number of children you want to have.		
Yes		
No		
No Response		
Is the person consulted during important family decision making		
Always consulted		
Sometimes consulted	33	5.6
Never consulted	256	42.7
Others	310	51.8
No Response		
Total:		
	189	31.55
	207	34.55
	43	7.2
	152	25.4
	8	1.3
	599	100

Source: Oyekanmi; Temilola and Eborka field work 2016.

The roles played by the person who travelled out of the country include remittance of money to children especially for school fees, sending advice on issues and financial support for siblings. However, the prevailing global economic slowdown even of the developed countries has led to a reduction in the amount of monies remitted home by international migrants.

The fertility performance of the respondents showed that they had ever born alive an average of 2.48 children. The data further indicated that 52 respondents had ever born one child alive, while 133 people had born 2 children alive. On the other hand 38 people had ever born between 5 and 8 children alive and these represent individuals who have given birth to more children than those recommended by the Nigerian population policy of 1988 (FMoH, 1988). An attempt to gauge the perceived effect of the absent family member on reproduction showed that 33 (5.6%) said the fact that the member of their households travelled out of the country affected the number of children that they want to have. However, 256 people (42.7%) said the absence had no effect on their desired fertility.

An assessment of the extent of involvement of the absent family members in the affairs of the family showed that 189 (31.0%) respondents said that the persons were always consulted. A slightly larger number of people, 207 (34.0%) said the persons were sometimes consulted while 43 (7.2%) stated that the persons were never consulted.

A look at the relationship between frequency of interaction of the family members with those outside the country and fertility performance showed that among the people who interacted often with those in diasporas 75.8% had born 1-3 children , 22.7% of them had born 4-6 children and 1.4% had ever born 7-8 children alive. As shown in Table 3 the percentage of respondents who had born 1-3 children declined as the level of interaction with the absent family members reduced from often, to sometimes to rarely to never. On the other hand among people who had ever born 4-6 children the percentage increased as the level of interaction declined. Using the Pearson Chi Square statistical test at $p=0.05$ level of significance, the calculated p value was .670. This indicates that there is no relationship between frequency of interaction with international migrants and fertility size.

Table 3: How often do family members in Nigeria interact with those outside the country?

		Number of Children			Total	
		1-3	4-6	7-8		
How often do family members in Nigeria interact with those outside the country?	Often	Number	157	47	3	207
		%	75.8%	22.7%	1.4%	100.0%
	Occasionally	Number	126	45	3	174
		%	72.4%	25.9%	1.7%	100.0%
	Rare	Number	15	8	0	23
		%	65.2%	34.8%	0.0%	100.0%
	Never again	Number	5	4	0	9
		%	55.6%	44.4%	0.0%	100.0%
	Total:	Number	303	104	6	413
		%	73.4%	25.2%	1.5%	100.0%

Source: Oyekanmi: Temilola and Eborka field work 2016.

The investigation of the relationship between headship of household and consultation with absent member of the family in important decision making revealed that among the respondents who perceived themselves as the head of the household 31.8% said they always consulted with the absentee member on decision making, 37.7% sometimes consulted and 5.9% never consulted as shown in Table 4. Among the respondents who said their husbands were the head of the household, 37.5% said that they always consulted, 33.9% sometimes consulted and 6.0% never consulted. Using the Pearson Chi-Square statistical test at $p = .005$ level of significance the data indicated that there is no relationship between household headship and consultation with international migrants on decision making. (calculated $p = .001$).

Table 3.1: Sex and household headship

Sex of Respondent	Who is the head of this household			Total
	Self	Husband	Others	
Male	271	9	66	346
	78.3%	2.6%	19.1%	100.0%
Female	24	160	32	216
	11.1%	74.1%	14.8%	100.0%
Total	295	169	98	562
	52.5%	30.1%	17.4%	100.0%

$\chi^2 = 341.738$; $df = 2$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000$

Source: Oyekanmi; Temilola and Eborka field work 2016.

Cross-tabulation of how often the family members interact with absent family member and the level of consultation with the person during important family decision making showed that among the people who said that they often interact with those outside the country 50.2% always consulted, 19.0% sometimes consulted, and 2.4% never consulted with the international migrant (Table 5). Among the people who interacted occasionally with the person outside the country only 16.7% said they always consulted, while more than half (57.5%) sometimes consulted and 6.7% never consulted. As expected among those who rarely interacted with their family members who are resident outside Nigeria, 5.1% always consulted, 23.1% sometimes consulted and 33.3% never consulted with such people during important family decision making. In fact one third of such category of people does consult with other people (38.5%) on their important decision making. Finally among the respondents who said they never interacted with members of their family who are international migrants 21.4% sometimes consulted probably by proxy through other family members, 42.9% never consulted while 35.7% consulted with others on important issues. It is noted that among the people who reported that they always consulted with absentee family members on important family decision making, the percentages dropped sharply as the level of interaction declined from often to occasionally to rarely and to never. Pearson Chi-Square statistical test on the data at $p = .005$ level of significance showed that there is a relationship between frequency of interaction with the international migrants and their involvement in important family decision making (calculated $p = .000$). Hence we accept hypothesis 1 which states that international migration weakens the decision making ability of persons left behind by the international migrants.

Table 4: Who is the head of this household? Is the person consulted during important family decision making?

			Is the person consulted during important decision making				Total
			Always consulted	Sometimes consulted	Never consulted	others	
Who is the head of this household	Self	Number	92	109	17	17	289
		%	31.8%	37.7%	5.9%	24.6%	100.0%
	Husband	Number	63	57	10	38	168
		%	37.5%	33.9%	6.0%	22.6%	100.0%
	Others	Number	20	26	11	41	98
		%	20.4%	26.5%	11.2%	41.8%	100.0%
Total:	Number	175	192	38	150	555	
	%	31.5%	34.6%	6.8%	27.0%	100.0%	

Source: Oyekanmi; Temilola and Eborka field work 2016.

Table 5: How often do family members in Nigeria interact with those outside the country?

Level of interaction	Is the person consulted during important family decision making				Total
	Always consulted	Sometimes consulted	Never consulted	Others	
Often	145	55	7	82	289
	50.2%	19.0%	2.4%	28.4%	100.0%
Occasionally	40	138	16	46	240
	16.7%	57.5%	6.7%	19.2%	100.0%
Rarely	2	9	13	15	39
	5.1%	23.1%	33.3%	38.5%	100.0%
Never again	0	3	6	5	14
	0.0%	21.4%	42.9%	35.7%	100.0%
Total	187	205	42	148	582
	32.1%	35.2%	7.2%	25.4%	100.0%

$\chi^2 = 196.890$; $df = 9$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000$

Source: Oyekanmi; Temilola and Eborka field work 2016.

In Table 6 a consideration of the duration of travel outside the country and number of children ever born by the spouse showed that among the people whose spouses had travelled out for less than one year 79.3% had born 1-3 children and 19.6% had ever born 4-6 children. For spouses who had travelled out of the country for 1-5 years, 84.8% of the respondents had ever born 1-3 children alive and 15.2% had born 4-6 children. With respect to respondents whose spouses had travelled out for more than 5 years 87.5% had ever born 1-3 children and 12.5% had born 4-6 children.. The Pearson Chi-Square statistical test at $p = .005$, indicated that there

is no relationship between spouses' duration of stay outside the country and the fertility performance of the respondents (the calculated $p = .912$). Thus hypothesis 3 is rejected.

DISCUSSION

Our findings indicate that there is a relationship between the frequency of interaction with family members who are international migrants and important family decision making. Thus family members left behind in Nigeria tend to consult with the absentee members for reasons which may include financial assistance as well as deferment to seniority in age or rank order among siblings. In addition, lack of financial independence could limit the ability of the family members who are left behind in Nigeria to take important decisions especially if they are not the de facto head of households. There is no relationship between duration of travel of spouses and the number of children born by the respondents. One could speculate that the desired number of children is usually born before the spouses stay away from this country. This is attested to by the fact that while ECOWAS countries specify that a non citizen can only stay for a maximum of 90 days at a time without a work permit in a member nation; the western nations specify six months maximum stay at a time until work permit or permanent residence is granted to the individual. Hence in the first few years of movement by the international migrant out of Nigeria the usual practice takes the form of a circulatory movement back and forth between Nigeria and the host nation. This gives ample chance for coital interaction with spouses that can result in childbearing. It is conceivable that the upbringing of offspring might be affected by the absence of one or both parents and it should be the subject of further research in future.

Irrespective of the duration of absence of international migrants from their country, they still are being consulted for important family decision making in 65% of the occasions.. This could be because of strong family ties embedded in the culture of the Yoruba and other ethnic groups in Nigeria. However, whether such consultations are utilized in final actions might be further investigated.

Table 6: Duration of Travel × Number of Children

	Number of Children			Total
	1-3	4-6	More than 6	
Less than 1 year	73 79.3%	18 19.6%	1 1.1%	92 100.0%
1-5 years	28 84.8%	5 15.2%	0 0.0%	33 100.0%
More than 5 years	7 87.5%	1 12.5%	0 0.0%	8 100.0%
Total	108 81.2%	24 18.0%	1 0.8%	133 100.0%
$\chi^2 = .985$; $df = 4$; $p\text{-value} = 0.912$				

Source: Oyekanmi; Temilola and Eborka field work 2016.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study of international migration reveals interesting relations between the individual migrants and their family members as well as their communities at the micro level.

International migration tends to have effect on such relationships because of the physical and emotional distances involved. The status of the person that assumes headship of the household, the frequency of interaction between the migrant and the family members left behind in Lagos are affected by the family patterns. Moreover, in cases where females become the de facto heads of households the women hardly see themselves in that light because of the cultural dictates of patriarchy.

This paper recommends more in-depth study of the roles performed by members of the families left by the international migrants with a view to unraveling their coping strategies.

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