

# **The *Japa* Phenomenon: How Socio-Economic Realities Shapes Migration Mentality among University of Ilorin Undergraduates**

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## **Abstract**

In Nigeria today, the phenomenon of migration, particularly the *Japa* trend, which means to escape or flee from danger or unpleasant economic situations has now become more prominent. *Japa*, in the context of migration, suggests that Nigeria is not habitable and that emigration from Nigeria is an escape from misery and economic hardship. The implications of this migration trend are far-reaching and pose significant challenges to Nigeria's socio-economic fabric. This study explores the socio-economic realities that may shape the *Japa* mentality among Nigerian youths with a specific focus on undergraduates at the University of Ilorin, Kwara state. Using a survey research design, data were collected from 512 undergraduate male and female at all levels selected from various faculties within the University of Ilorin. The study tested four hypotheses examining whether low-income orientation, perception of infrastructural development, perceived insecurity, and perceived lack of job opportunities significantly predict migration mentality among undergraduates. Simple regression analysis was employed to examine the relationship between these socio-economic realities and the desire to migrate. Key findings revealed significant relationship between low-income orientation, perception of infrastructural development, perceived insecurity, and perceived lack of job opportunities with the desire to migrate. The study highlights how prevailing socio-economic conditions in Nigeria influence youths' aspirations to emigrate in search of perceived better prospects. The study then recommends for youth entrepreneurship and

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skill development as sustainable alternatives to reduce migration pressure and potential brain drain.

### **Keywords**

Youths migration, socio-economic, *Japa* mentality, income, insecurities. brain drain

### **Introduction**

Human migration has been a persistent feature of human history, influenced by various social and economic factors. Historically, people migrated in search of more suitable environments for survival, whether seeking fertile land for agriculture or better pastures for livestock in agrarian societies. With the advent of industrialisation, migration patterns shifted towards urbanisation, as individuals moved from rural areas to urban centers in pursuit of employment opportunities, educational advancement, and improved living standards for their families (de Haas et al., 2019; Massey et al., 1993). These migration trends, both past and present, have often influenced the social development of both countries of origin and destination. Data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) indicates that the estimated number of international migrants has risen significantly, from 150 million in 2000 to 281 million in 2024 (IOM, 2024). Migration dynamics also vary significantly across regions. While migration within and from developing countries is often characterised by the pursuit of economic stability and safety, migration in more developed contexts may involve career mobility, lifestyle changes, or educational goals (UN DESA, 2023). In recent decades, globalisation and advancements in communication and transportation technologies have further facilitated both internal and international migration, making it easier for individuals to connect with diaspora communities and navigate new environments (IOM, 2022; Castles et al., 2014).

In contemporary Nigeria, the phenomenon of migration, particularly the "*Japa*" trend, which means to escape or flee from danger or unpleasant economic situations has now become more prominent (Alabi & Olajide, 2023). *Japa*, in the context of migration, suggests that Nigeria is not habitable and that emigration from Nigeria is an escape from misery and economic hardship (Liu, 2024). The mass movement of Nigerians to foreign nations is evident in a study by the African Polling Institute (2020) which found that the major destination countries for Nigerian migrants are the US and the UK, with Canada attracting more Nigerians in recent years. This growing trend is not spontaneous; rather, it is influenced by a combination of socio-economic factors, including high unemployment rates, insecurity, poor healthcare, and a lack of educational and professional opportunities (Adepoju, 2022). The implications of this migration trend are far-reaching and pose significant challenges to Nigeria's socio-economic fabric, particularly in sectors such as healthcare, education, and technology. The exodus of skilled professionals from Nigeria, often referred to

as "brain drain," has exacerbated workforce shortages, particularly in critical sectors like healthcare, where a significant percentage of medical professionals have left the country in search of better opportunities abroad (Ebeye et al., 2023).

Not only are people migrating from Nigeria to other part of the world, they also often face numerous challenges in host countries, including cultural barriers, social isolation, and economic hardships, as they adjust to new environments with different social norms, languages, and social systems (de Haan, 2020). Additionally, there are instances of discrimination and xenophobic attacks, as seen in the 2015 xenophobic violence against Nigerians in South Africa (Matambo, 2021). Despite these challenges, the allure of better socio-economic prospects continues to drive Nigerian youths towards emigration. Scholars have extensively studied the causes and consequences of migration in Nigeria and it could be deduced from these studies that the socio-economic push and pull factors, such as poverty, political instability, and the quest for better living conditions, are pivotal in understanding the migration patterns and dynamics in Nigeria (Adepoju, 2022; Osayemwenre et al., 2023; Duru, 2021; Perpetua et al., 2018; Nwosu et al., 2022; Ebimgbo et al., 2022). These studies, while illuminating, primarily focus on the broader migration trends without an in-depth focus on youth migration, particularly within the university settings.

This study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on migration by focusing on the socio-economic realities that could shape the "*Japa*" mentality among contemporary Nigerian youths, with specific reference to undergraduates at the University of Ilorin. While previous studies have examined migration from a macro-level perspective, this study introduces a micro-level analysis by investigating youth migration perceptions in a university setting, offering new insights into the possibility of how socio-economic realities could influence migration decisions among university undergraduates. This study then provides a nuanced understanding of how socio-economic realities like low-income orientation, orientation about functional infrastructure, conception of insecurities and lack of job opportunities may shape the *Japa* mentality, particularly among undergraduates who are yet to embark on the journey. In regards to the above, the following research hypotheses has been formulated:

- H<sub>01</sub>:** Low-income orientation does not significantly shape migration mentality.
- H<sub>02</sub>:** Perception of infrastructural development is not a significant predictor of migration mentality.
- H<sub>03</sub>:** Perceived insecurity does not significantly influence migration mentality.
- H<sub>04</sub>:** Perceived limited job opportunities do not significantly contribute to migration mentality.

## Brief Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Although the historical emergence of scholarly attention on youth migration is still widely debated, literature indicates that migration as a social and economic phenomenon has existed for centuries, often motivated by the search for better living conditions, economic opportunities, education, safety, and freedom (Adepoju, 2000; Castles & Miller, 2009; De Haas, 2010). Over time, the motives for migration have evolved in response to global socio-economic changes, especially in developing countries. Scholars such as Massey et al. (1993) and Faist (2000) observe that migration from inception are shaped by both structural and individual-level factors, including poverty, unemployment, education, and global inequalities.

The emergence of the *Japa* phenomenon in Nigeria a colloquial term derived from the Yoruba language meaning “to escape” or “to flee” reflects this historical trajectory. The term has become a socio-cultural label for the recent wave of young Nigerians seeking to emigrate abroad, often in search of better socio-economic and educational opportunities (Oloyede, 2022). As Okunade and Ogunnubi (2021) observe, the *Japa* trend is not merely a demographic movement but a socio-psychological and economic response to perceived hopelessness in the domestic socio-political environment. Factors such as high youth unemployment, insecurity, poor governance, and deteriorating educational standards have been repeatedly cited as push factors (Afolayan et al., 2008; Adeola, 2021; Olanrewaju, 2023).

While much of the literature on migration in Nigeria focuses on general patterns of emigration and remittances (Olayiwola, 2019; Nwajiuba, 2005; Okome, 2020), fewer studies have specifically examined the *Japa* phenomenon as a distinct youth-oriented social construct, particularly within university settings. The university environment represents a critical socio-psychological space where young adults shape their worldviews and aspirations. For instance, Ekanade (2022) suggests that the rising interest in migration among university undergraduates is strongly linked to their perceptions of limited socio-economic mobility and the declining value of higher education as a tool for national advancement especially in Nigeria. Similarly, Ojo and Olanrewaju (2023) found that undergraduate students often view migration as a means of achieving self-actualization and global competitiveness, rather than merely an escape from economic hardship.

From the foregoing, it may be inferred that the *Japa* movement among Nigerian youths particularly university students merge from a complex interplay between structural economic realities and individual aspirations. The declining confidence in social institutions, coupled with the allure of better opportunities abroad, reinforces the perception that migration offers both survival and self-fulfillment pathways (Adepoju, 2000; Oloyede, 2022). Drawing from existing literature and anecdotal evidence, this study examines how socio-economic conditions influence the migration mentality of undergraduates in the University

of Ilorin, with specific attention to their motivations, perceptions, and attitudes toward migration.

Although a number of studies have discussed migration intentions among Nigerian youths, the *Japa* discourse remains relatively under-theorized in university settings. Most available studies provide descriptive accounts of its manifestations without sufficient theoretical grounding (Ojo, 2023). Nevertheless, some theoretical perspectives offer useful insights into why migration intentions develop. Early migration theories such as Ravenstein's (1885) Laws of Migration introduced the idea that migration results from a combination of "push" and "pull" factors, which was later elaborated upon by Lee (1966) in his Push-Pull Theory. The theory posits that individuals migrate because they are "pushed" by adverse conditions in their home country (e.g., unemployment, insecurity, poor living standards) and "pulled" by perceived opportunities abroad (e.g., education, higher wages, stability).

Applying the push-pull model to the *Japa* phenomenon helps explain why many Nigerian undergraduates develop migration aspirations. Push factors include economic hardship, poor educational infrastructure, unemployment, and insecurity, while pull factors include better education systems, job opportunities, social welfare, and the perception of meritocracy in destination countries (Adeola, 2021; Oloyede, 2022). Uysal and Hagan (1993), and Yoon and Uysal (2005) assert that push factors are often internal and psychological, reflecting dissatisfaction and aspiration, while pull factors are external and situational, reflecting attraction to perceived prosperity elsewhere.

Beyond the push-pull framework, more recent perspectives such as the Aspirations Capabilities Framework developed by De Haas (2014) offer a more nuanced understanding of youth migration intentions. This theory argues that migration decisions result not merely from poverty but from the expansion of aspirations and capabilities. In this context, university students, being relatively educated and exposed to global media and digital interactions, develop migration aspirations that reflect both the desire for upward mobility and the perceived capacity to achieve it abroad.

Furthermore, self-fulfillment and eudaimonic well-being theories (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ritpanitchajchaval, 2023) provide complementary insights. They suggest that migration, for many young people, is not merely an economic strategy but a pursuit of psychological well-being and self-realisation. For the average University of Ilorin undergraduate, the decision to *Japa* may embody the quest for dignity, purpose, and fulfillment in a system perceived as structurally unjust.

In summary, while the push-pull and aspirations capabilities frameworks provide foundational explanations for migration motivations, the concept of *Japa* extends beyond conventional economic rationality to include symbolic and

existential dimensions. Thus, migration mentality among Nigerian university students can be viewed as a product of both external socio-economic forces and internal psychological drives for achievement and fulfillment in a globalised world.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design, Population of Study, and Sample Size**

For the purpose of this study, a quantitative survey research design was employed. This approach is suitable for study of this nature since the aim of survey design is to quantify attitudes, behaviours, and patterns within a specific population and is effective in gathering large amounts of data across a broad range of variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Given the formulated hypotheses of this study which is to explore the socio-economic realities underpinning the *Japa* mentality among undergraduates, survey research provides a cost-effective and efficient means to collect primary data that can be statistically analysed to establish generalisable findings.

The population of the study consists of undergraduate students across the 16 faculties of the University of Ilorin, located in Kwara State, Nigeria. According to official records obtained from the university hand book, the total number of registered undergraduate students for the 2024/2025 academic session is 49,153 (Unilorin Student Handbook, 2024). The choice of this population is appropriate, as undergraduates represent a significant demographic within Nigeria's youth population a group increasingly associated with aspirations to migrate in search of better socio-economic opportunities abroad.

A multi-stage sampling technique was utilised to systematically select respondents from the target population. This technique was adopted to ensure representativeness while managing logistical constraints such as time, accessibility, and resource limitations (Babbie, 2020; Palinkas et al., 2015). The first stage involves the use of stratified sampling, which groups the entire undergraduate population into 16 strata, based on faculty affiliation. Stratification ensures that all faculties are adequately represented in the sampling process, thus improving the accuracy and generalizability of the findings (Etikan & Bala, 2017). In the second stage, purposive sampling was applied to select four faculties with the highest student populations namely, faculty of Education, Agriculture, Management Sciences, and Arts. This approach is justified by the need to focus on faculties where the migration mentality might be more pronounced due to high enrollment figures and exposure to disciplines related to social, economic and educational conditions. By deliberately selecting faculties with larger student populations, the study enhances the likelihood of capturing diverse socio-economic perspectives from the study respondents

In the final stage, simple random sampling was employed to select individual respondents from each of the four faculties. Within each faculty, 2% of the total student population was sampled. This results in a final sample size

of 512 undergraduate respondents. The use of simple random sampling at this stage eliminates selection bias and ensures that every student within the chosen faculties has an equal chance of being selected, which enhances the internal validity of the study (Fink, 2017). The sample size determination balances statistical representativeness with practical considerations. A sample size of over 500 is considered adequate for quantitative social research when working with large populations, and it allows for meaningful subgroup analysis while maintaining statistical power (Schreier, 2018). Furthermore, the sample size enables the application of inferential statistical techniques, such as regression analysis, to explore relationships among key variables. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the population and sample selected for the study.

**Table 1: Breakdown of Chosen Faculty with the sample selected**

<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>2%Sample Size</b>
Education	11,901	238
Agriculture	5,138	102
Arts	4756	95
Management Science	3856	77
<b>Total</b>	<b>25,651</b>	<b>512</b>

**Source:** Researcher's Fieldwork (2025)

### **Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

Data collection for this study was carried out using a structured questionnaire, which was designed to obtain relevant quantitative data in alignment with the formulated hypotheses. The use of a structured questionnaire is justified by its ability to ensure consistency, comparability, and objectivity in responses across a large sample size (Fink, 2017). Prior to full deployment, the questionnaire was pre-tested (pilot-tested) with a small subset of the target population to ensure clarity, relevance, and internal consistency of the items. Data collected was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 30. To test the study's hypotheses and examine the strength and direction of the relationship between socio-economic orientations and migration mentality, a simple regression analysis was conducted.

### **Ethical Considerations**

In this research, participation was voluntary as the research is not a do or die exercise i.e., the respondents were not forced to take part in the research. The researchers sought the consent of the participants and make them understand that they have the choice of either participating or not in the research exercise, they

were briefed on the research purpose while assuring them of utmost confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. They were also informed and reminded of their rights to withdraw from the study if no longer interested.

## Results

### Testing the Study Hypotheses

**Table 2: Low-income orientation does not significantly shape migration mentality.**

Model	Coefficient	Standard Error	T-Statistics	P-value
Constant	2.456	.251	9.793	.000
Low-income orientation and migration mentality	.312	.070	4.428	.000
R Square: 0.073 Adjusted R Square: 0.070 F-Statistics: 19.611	R: 0.271 No. of observation: 512			

SPSS Outputs

### Interpretation of Findings

The regression analysis was carried out to examine the relationship between low-income orientation and the prevalence of migration mentality among university of Ilorin undergraduates. Using a simple linear regression model, the analysis aimed to determine the extent to which students' perceptions of their low-income status could predict their inclination toward migration, popularly referred to as the *Japa* mentality. The results reveal a statistically significant model with an R Square value of 0.073, indicating that approximately 7.3% of the variation in migration mentality can be explained by the respondents' low-income orientation. Although this percentage may appear relatively low, it is nonetheless meaningful and statistically significant, as confirmed by the F-statistic of 19.611 and a p-value of 0.000.

The regression coefficient for the predictor variable, low-income orientation, is 0.312 with a standard error of 0.070. The t-statistic of 4.428 and the p-value of 0.000 suggest a statistically significant and positive relationship between low-income orientation and migration mentality. This means that for every one-unit increase in low-income orientation, the migration mentality score increases by approximately 0.312 units, all else being equal. The constant value in the model is 2.456, which represents the expected value of migration mentality when low-income orientation is zero. Though less meaningful on its own, it provides the necessary intercept for constructing the predictive equation.

The correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.271$ ) further shows a positive, albeit weak, linear relationship between low-income orientation and migration mentality. This suggests that as students perceive themselves to be from lower-income backgrounds, their desire or intention to migrate increases proportionally. This

pattern reinforces the notion that economic insecurity plays a significant role in shaping young people’s migration aspirations.

These result of the hypothesis above is consistent with existing literature on youth migration, particularly from developing countries. According to de Haas (2010), migration behaviour is frequently driven not by absolute poverty but by perceived economic marginalisation and lack of mobility. Adepoju (2005) also highlights that socio-economic hardship, especially unemployment and underemployment among educated youth, serves as a significant push factor in the West African context. Bakewell (2008) adds that the lack of economic opportunities at home often leads to a form of aspirational migration where youth see emigration as the only viable path to social and economic advancement.

Within the Nigerian context, the phenomenon widely referred to as the “Japa syndrome” captures this growing sentiment among young people who view migration as a necessary escape from the country’s harsh socio-economic realities. Akinrinade and Ogen (2011) emphasise that this trend is rooted in widespread economic frustration and a declining trust in the state’s ability to provide for its citizens. Thus, the statistically significant influence of low-income orientation on migration mentality revealed in this analysis offers empirical support for these theoretical claims and situates the findings within the broader discourse on migration and development. This regression model has provided quantitative validation for the hypothesis that low-income socio-economic orientation significantly influences students’ migration mentality. While the model does not account for all the factors influencing migration decisions, it affirms that economic hardship is a key driver.

**Table 3: Perception of infrastructural development is not a significant predictor of migration mentality**

Model	Coefficient	Standard Error	T-Statistics	P-value
Constant	2.301	.204	11.296	.000
Perception of infrastructural development and migration mentality	.359	.057	6.266	.000
R Square: 0 .137 Adjusted R Square: 0.133 F-Statistics: 39.265	R: 0.370 No. of observation: 512			

SPSS Outputs

### Interpretation of Findings

Inferring from the above, this analysis aimed to determine whether negative perceptions of infrastructural development contribute significantly to students’ desire to seek opportunities abroad. The results indicate a statistically significant

model with an R Square value of 0.137, which means that approximately 13.7% of the variation in migration mentality can be explained by the respondents' negative perception of infrastructural development. The adjusted R Square of 0.133 slightly adjusts for the number of predictors and confirms the model's explanatory power. Although the R Square is moderate, it indicates a stronger relationship compared to the earlier model on low-income orientation.

The F-statistic value of 39.265 with a p-value of 0.000 confirms the overall significance of the regression model. This suggests that the predictor variable perception of infrastructural development meaningfully explains the variance observed in migration mentality among the respondents. Furthermore, the correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.370$ ) points to a moderate positive relationship between students' perception of infrastructure and their migration orientation. This implies that as the perception of poor infrastructural development increases, so does the likelihood that students will develop a stronger inclination toward migration.

The unstandardised regression coefficient for perception of infrastructural development is 0.359, with a standard error of 0.057. The t-statistic of 6.266 and p-value of 0.000 show that the variable is highly significant at the 0.05 level. This indicates that for every one-unit increase in negative perception of infrastructural development, the migration mentality score increases by 0.359 units, holding other factors constant. The constant value of 2.301 serves as the baseline score for migration mentality when the perception score is zero.

This result aligns with a growing body of literature suggesting that the quality and availability of infrastructure such as transportation systems, electricity, water supply, and healthcare facilities are central to individuals' satisfaction with their environment and long-term residency decisions. As Todaro and Smith (2015) argue, inadequate infrastructure contributes to the "urban push" phenomenon, where individuals leave not just rural areas but even cities in developing countries due to frustration over poor public services and amenities. Similarly, Ajaero and Onokala (2013) highlight that infrastructural decay is one of the most frequently cited reasons why Nigerian youth consider migration as a viable escape strategy. The findings also reinforce the view expressed by de Haas (2010) that development, or lack thereof, influences not only the ability but also the aspiration to migrate. Infrastructural underdevelopment can signal systemic governance failure, creating an environment in which young people feel compelled to look beyond national borders for better living conditions and socioeconomic stability.

Within the Nigerian context, persistent issues such as poor road networks, erratic electricity supply, water scarcity, and underfunded public facilities contribute significantly to the overall perception of stagnation and hopelessness among the youth. These inadequacies not only lower the quality of life but also hinder academic, professional, and entrepreneurial pursuits, thereby intensifying migration intentions. As shown in this study, students who perceive their infrastructural environment negatively are significantly more likely to harbor a

strong migration mentality. In conclusion, the regression analysis demonstrates that perception of infrastructural development is a significant predictor of migration mentality among Nigerian undergraduates. This underscores the critical need for infrastructural reforms as a strategy to mitigate youth migration pressures.

**Table 4: Perceived Insecurity does not Significantly Influence Migration Mentality**

Model	Coefficient	Standard Error	T-Statistics	P-value
Constant	2.586	.268	9.634	.000
Perceived insecurity and migration mentality	.273	.075	3.637	.012
R Square: 0 .051 Adjusted R Square: 0.047 F-Statistics: 13.227	R: 0.225 No. of observation: 512			

SPSS Outputs

***Interpretation of Findings***

The above analysis was premised on the hypothesis that insecurity within the national context manifested through rising violence, terrorism, kidnapping, and general unrest contributes to a growing desire among young people to migrate in search of safety and stability. The results reveal a statistically significant model, albeit with a lower explanatory power than the previous models. The R Square value of 0.051 indicates that about 5.1% of the variation in migration mentality can be explained by perceived insecurity. The adjusted R Square of 0.047 suggests that after accounting for potential sample size bias, the model still holds a modest degree of explanatory strength.

The F-statistic of 13.227, accompanied by a p-value of 0.012, confirms that the regression model is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. While this F-value is lower compared to previous models, it still implies that the relationship between perceived insecurity and migration mentality is not due to random chance. The correlation coefficient (R = 0.225) indicates a positive but weak relationship, suggesting that as perceptions of insecurity increase, so too does the likelihood of respondents expressing a desire to migrate. The regression coefficient for perceived insecurity is 0.273, with a standard error of 0.075. The resulting t-statistic of 3.637 and the p-value of 0.012 confirm the statistical significance of this predictor variable. Interpreted practically, this means that for every one-unit increase in perceived insecurity, the migration mentality score increases by 0.273 units. The constant value of 2.586 represents the baseline level of migration mentality when perceived insecurity is not a factor.

This outcome aligns with existing scholarship on the influence of insecurity on youth migration decisions. According to Castles et al. (2014), insecurity whether due to violent conflict, political instability, or systemic crime serves as a powerful “push factor” in migration decisions, particularly in regions where state institutions fail to guarantee safety and protection. In Nigeria, the pervasive nature of insecurity, including terrorism in the northeast, banditry in the northwest, and kidnapping in other parts of the country, has been widely documented as a catalyst for youth disillusionment and outward migration aspirations (Ikelegbe, 2010; Edeh, 2021). More specifically, Uche et al. (2020) argue that youth who perceive their environment as unsafe are more inclined to migrate either internally or internationally in pursuit of physical security, psychological well-being, and future prospects. This result of the above analysis empirically reinforces this point, demonstrating that perceived insecurity is a significant, though not dominant, predictor of migration mentality among university students.

In summary, the regression results show that perceived insecurity significantly influences migration mentality, though the strength of the relationship is comparatively weaker than socio-economic and infrastructural predictors. Nonetheless, the findings are critical in highlighting the need for holistic national strategies that address both economic and security-based dimensions of migration pressure.

**Table 5: Perceived Limited Job Opportunities do not Significantly Contribute to Migration Mentality**

Model	Coefficient	Standard Error	T-Statistics	P-value
Constant	2.151	.206	10.452	.000
Perceived limited job opportunities and migration mentality	.403	.058	6.941	.009
R Square: 0.163 Adjusted R Square: 0.159 F-Statistics: 48.176	R: 0.403 No. of observation: 512			

SPSS Outputs

### *Interpretation of Findings*

The above analysis sought to determine whether the perception of limited job opportunities within the country contributes significantly to young people's desire to migrate particularly university undergraduates. The regression output reveals a statistically significant model, with an R Square value of 0.163, suggesting that 16.3% of the variation in migration mentality is accounted for by perceived limited job opportunities. The adjusted R Square of 0.159 confirms that this predictor maintains strong explanatory power even after adjusting for sampling variation.

The model's overall significance is further confirmed by an F-statistic of 48.176 and a p-value of 0.009, both of which indicate a statistically reliable

relationship between the independent variable (perceived limited job opportunities) and the dependent variable (migration mentality). Additionally, the correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.403$ ) shows a moderate positive relationship, indicating that a rise in the perception of limited employment opportunities is associated with an increased tendency toward migration among the respondents. The unstandardized regression coefficient of 0.403 (with a standard error of 0.058) implies that for every one-unit increase in the perception of limited job opportunities, the migration mentality score increases by 0.403 units. The corresponding t-statistic of 6.941 and p-value of 0.009 confirm that this relationship is highly statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The constant value of 2.151 represents the expected migration mentality when the perception of job limitations is absent.

These findings are corroborated by prior studies emphasising employment challenges as a central determinant of youth migration intentions in developing contexts. de Haas (2010) explains that migration decisions are often shaped not by absolute poverty but by unmet expectations and frustrations arising from limited socioeconomic mobility. In similar terms, Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010) argue that in Nigeria, the disconnect between educational output and labor market absorption exacerbated by structural unemployment has led many youths to view migration as a more viable life path. The high coefficient in this model reflects this reality, indicating that employment insecurity is among the strongest predictors of migration mentality uncovered in this study.

Moreover, the results align with the broader push-pull theory of migration, which identifies unemployment or underemployment as powerful push factors propelling individuals from low-opportunity regions toward areas perceived to offer better prospects. This interpretation is further supported by Okafor (2011), who contends that the rising unemployment rate in Nigeria, especially among graduates, plays a critical role in youth discouragement and their decision to seek employment abroad. In conclusion, this analysis establishes that perceived limited job opportunities are a statistically significant and strong predictor of migration mentality among Nigerian undergraduates. Compared to other predictors examined in this study, job opportunity perception shows the highest level of explanatory power. This underscores the urgent need for government and policy actors to tackle graduate unemployment, create inclusive job opportunities, and foster a supportive entrepreneurial environment to reduce the migration drive among the youth.

## **Discussion of Findings**

Inferring from the results of the simple regression analyses conducted in this study, all four null hypotheses were rejected in favour of the alternate

hypotheses. This indicates that each of the socio-economic realities tested namely, low-income orientation, perception of infrastructural development, perception of insecurity, and perception of limited job opportunities had a statistically significant effect on the migration mentality of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin. These findings affirm that socio-economic realities play a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes and intentions toward migration.

The first hypothesis examined the relationship between low-income orientation and migration mentality. The analysis revealed a significant positive relationship ( $\beta = 0.312, p < 0.001$ ), indicating that undergraduates who anticipate low earnings after graduation or who is in a low-income household are more likely to consider migration as a means of achieving better economic outcomes. This implies that if students believe they will earn insufficient income to sustain themselves and support their families in Nigeria, they are more inclined to develop a migration mentality. This result supports the findings of Duru (2021), who highlighted that the comparatively low wages in Nigeria are a major driver of youth migration. Similarly, Rufai et al. (2019) emphasized that migration among Nigerians is largely linked to poor household income and economic instability, factors that continue to perpetuate poverty and fuel the desire to seek better opportunities abroad.

The second hypothesis tested whether undergraduates' perception of infrastructural development has an influence on their migration mentality. The results ( $\beta = 0.359, p < 0.001$ ) showed a significant relationship, suggesting that the perception of poor or inadequate infrastructure such as electricity, roads, water supply and healthcare contributes to the desire to migrate. If students perceive Nigerian infrastructure as non-functional or insufficient, they are more likely to aspire to relocate to countries with more reliable and accessible public services. This finding corroborates the conclusions drawn by Perpetua et al. (2019), who reported that poor infrastructural development, alongside unemployment, has become a strong motivation for migration among Nigerians in recent years. The implication here is that national development efforts aimed at improving public infrastructure may help to reduce the youth migration drive.

The third hypothesis investigated the effect of undergraduates' conception of insecurity on their migration mentality. A significant relationship was found ( $\beta = 0.273, p = 0.012$ ), implying that students' perception of widespread insecurity in Nigeria such as terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, and armed robbery substantially influences their intentions to migrate. Students who believe that their lives and properties are not safe in the country are more likely to seek alternatives in more secure and politically stable environments abroad. This result is consistent with the work of Nwosu et al. (2022), who emphasised that rising insecurity and persistent poverty in Nigeria are key drivers of migration. The finding also aligns with the theoretical perspective of Castles et al. (2014), who categorise insecurity as a major "push factor" in migration decisions globally.

The fourth hypothesis assessed the relationship between the perception of limited job opportunities and migration mentality. The analysis showed a strong and significant positive relationship ( $\beta = 0.403$ ,  $p = 0.009$ ), revealing that the belief among students that job opportunities are scarce in Nigeria significantly contributes to their desire to migrate. This indicates that undergraduates who doubt their chances of securing meaningful employment after graduation are more prone to consider relocating abroad in pursuit of better job prospects. This finding reflects the assertions of Awire (2017), who reported that limited career opportunities, especially among medical professionals in Nigeria, are among the primary drivers of professional migration. Likewise, Oluyomi et al. (2014) found that many Nigerian youths consider international migration when domestic job opportunities fail to meet their career aspirations. These findings are further supported by Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010), who underscore the impact of unemployment and underemployment on youth migration, and de Haas (2010), who notes that unmet economic expectations are key motivators in migration behavior.

Arising from the above, the results from all four hypotheses confirm that prevailing socio-economic realities in Nigeria today significantly influence migration mentality among university undergraduates. These realities not only reflect students' assessment of their present environment but also shape their expectations and decisions regarding their future.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The findings of this study clearly reveal that socio-economic realities play a critical role in shaping the migration mentality of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin. The consistent rejection of all null hypotheses indicates that variables such as low-income orientation, perceived infrastructural development, perceived insecurity, and limited job opportunities significantly influence students' intentions to migrate. Each of these factors reflects the respondents' assessment of their socio-economic environment and their anticipated quality of life after graduation. The data underscores that migration mentality is not arbitrary but is deeply rooted in rational evaluations of livelihood prospects and societal conditions. The positive and statistically significant relationships between the tested variables and migration mentality suggest that undergraduates' decisions to consider migration are largely motivated by a desire for improved living standards, economic security, and personal safety. While this conclusion aligns with existing literature, the novelty of this study lies in its unique unit of analysis university undergraduates who have not yet migrated but are actively forming migration intentions. Unlike previous research that often focuses on migrants or returnees, this study provides empirical insight

into the pre-migration stage, capturing how socio-economic realities shape intentions before action is taken. This offers a valuable contribution to understanding migration as a forward-looking, perception-driven process. In regards to the above, some important recommendations were made specifically based on the results of the hypotheses. These recommendations include the following;

Nigerian government should prioritise job creation which can go a long way to mitigate prevalent migration mentality among youths. To achieve this, governments should prioritise the implementation of policies and incentives that attract both domestic and foreign investment. By fostering a favorable business environment and reducing bureaucratic obstacles, they can lure investors and stimulate economic growth. Furthermore, governments should particularly focus on nurturing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), because they can be vital sources of employment.

Prioritising infrastructure development is important for ensuring economic growth, job creation, and curbing migration mentality among youths. Nigerian government should allocate resources and efforts towards building and maintaining essential infrastructure, such as roads, electricity, and technology. Good transportation networks, including well-maintained roads, that not only facilitate the movement of goods but also connect rural areas to urban centers, expanding access to business investment.

The Nigerian government should enhance security measures which is a fundamental step in mitigating migration mentality among youths, because a safe and stable environment is essential for economic growth and job retention as well as security of lives and properties. A secure environment not only protects individuals and their property but also fosters the conditions necessary for economic activities to flourish. When people feel safe, businesses can operate without disruption, investment confidence increases, and job opportunities expand. Likewise, Nigerian youths should prioritize skills development and vocational training which is important for improving their employability prospects and reducing the motivation to migrate in search of better opportunities.

Nigerian youths should also consider entrepreneurship which offers a promising avenue for youths to contribute to their country's economic growth while reducing the allure of migration in search of employment opportunities. Nigerian governments should also provide support, funding, and mentorship programmes tailored for young entrepreneurs. These initiatives can help aspiring business owners navigate the challenges of starting and growing a company, from securing initial capital to developing business plans and marketing strategies.

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