



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## International Migration and the Living Standard of People of Edo, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

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This study evaluates the effect of international migration on the living standard of the Bini people of Edo State, Nigeria. Using a convenience sampling technique, a total of 401 respondents were selected from the seven (7) local government areas that constitute the Edo South senatorial district, where the Bini people are located. The study adopted a survey research design, using qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. Structured questionnaires and focused group interviews served as the research instruments. Data were analysed using thematic and regression analysis. Linear regression was engaged with the aid of IBM SPSS Statistics V21.0, using themes relevant to the research. It finds that remittances from migration have improved the living standard of the Bini people and recommends that policies be made and directed at remittance-receiving households to improve the utilisation of remittances for the greater benefit of the people and State.

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## INTRODUCTION

The issue of international migration continues to be global, as the worldwide movement of people has increased faster than ever before. The explosion of mobility has seen millions of people of all ages and genders migrate to diverse countries, seeking better opportunities than they had previously in their places of origin to better their lives and those of their households. Human migration is closely linked with global transformation processes, including developments and conflicts in places of origin and destination (Castles, 2019). These developments have various diverse effects on migrants, the migrants' households, and the migrants' communities, pushing them from their home countries and pulling them to their destinations in search of greater opportunities (Chukwudi, Osimen, Dele-Dada, Ahmed, 2024).

In recent years, the transformation in global migration in terms of its numbers and reach political significance, and impact, matched by growing media interest around the world, has led to discussions and arguments on the effects of international migration, especially on the place of destination and the fate of illegal migrants, which have been shaping public opinion, which is perceived to be a core topic in current international political debates (de Haas, 2021; Gberevbie et al., 2024). A study by Podesta (2019) states that the number of migrants from developing countries, particularly from developing countries, has increased over the past decade.

This surge in migration is due primarily to financial crises and displacements caused by unnatural disasters such as wars, civil unrest, poverty, poor nutrition, and underdevelopment, as well as the desire by individuals to mitigate against such occurrences and improve their conditions (Food and Agricultural Organisation, 2021). However, migrants do not just migrate for material gains but also for education and to gain new skills and social capital, though these are not as many as for the earlier stated reasons. Studies

have shown many benefits of international migration, including the potential for economic development and emancipation. Still, it poses several challenges for migrants, their families, and their communities at both the destination and origin (United Nations, 2019; Koczan, Peri, Pinat, & Rozhkov, 2021; Gberville & Oni, 2021).

In this study, the Bini people were chosen as the context because they tended to migrate. Bini people are a major group migrating abroad from Edo State, Nigeria. The State has the highest concentration of Nigerian immigrants abroad, especially in the European Union. The majority of these migrations, however, are unauthorised; Benin City is considered one of Nigeria's major emigration and remittance centres (Aghedo, 2023; Vermeulen, 2019; Adeniyi, 2021; Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2020). According to UNHCR's high commissioner in Nigeria, Amah Assiama-Hillgartner (Emenyonu, 2019), 70% of undocumented migrants from Nigeria originate in Edo State. As a result of Benin City's significant role in international migration, the International Organisation for Migration and other European nations have established migrant programmes and migrant resource centres in the city (Houttuin & Haaij, 2018; IOM, 2017; Beber & Scacco, 2020; Shaidrova, 2023). According to SEEFAR (2021), migration has been a problem in Edo State for decades, with 62% of Nigerians interviewed en route to Europe originating from the State. It is estimated that every fourth household in Edo State has at least one member who has left Nigeria to reach Europe (Beber & Scacco, 2020). According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), 4,000 of the 4,316 Nigerians repatriated from Libya in 2017 came from Edo State (SEEFAR, 2021; Ochoga, 2018; IOM, 2017).

A relatively abundant body of works exists on international and Edo State, yet gaps persist. Studies such as Oboh & Sirike (2017) dealt with the impact of income generation and poverty reduction in Orhionmwon Local Government Area (LGA) of the State. Akhigbe and Effevottu (2023) focused on irregular migration's economic and social impacts on families in Benin City. Another study by Alenkhe & Longe (2019) focused on the extent to which migrants have, through remittances, brought any benefit to their families and society in general in Ikpoba-Okha LGA. These studies focused on fewer LGAs in the Edo South Senatorial District.

Consequently, there is a need for studies on the effects of international migration on the living standard of the Bini people of Edo State, Nigeria. In addition, the present study aims to achieve more as it covers the seven LGAs in Edo's south senatorial district of the State. This helps get a more comprehensive assessment of international migration activities among the Bini people. Therefore, the overall purpose of this study is to assess the effects of international migration on the living standard of the Bini people of Edo State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to ascertain if there has been an improvement or otherwise in the living standard of migrants' households and what the changes are.

## **1) THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Neo-Classical Theory**

There is no doubt that the neo-classical theory is one of the oldest and most general theories of international migration. Originally, it was proposed to explain labour migration in economic evolution (Pi & Zhang, 2018). In essence, the neoclassical theory posits that wage disparities and employment conditions between nations influence variations in labour demand and supply. In Ravenstein's (1885 and 1889) view, economic development is the primary driving force behind migration. It has been argued that labour moves from areas with labour surpluses to those with labour shortages (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2020).

The theory was first formulated by Sjaastad (1962), and scholars such as Todaro (1969), Harris, and Todaro (1970) have since championed it. The theory emphasises the labour market dimension of migration. The study establishes a correlation between migration-induced population changes and wage and employment conditions in the countries of origin and destination. Migrants are primarily motivated by differences in wages and access to employment, according to this theory (Mitze & Reinkowski, 2010; de

Haas, 2021). As a result, it predicts that the level of transnational movement is strongly and directly correlated with global inequality between countries.

According to Neoclassical Economic Theory (macro), differences in wages between countries are the primary cause of migration. This study demonstrates that transnational movements are significantly correlated with the extent of inequality between countries. Generally, people relocate to a place that offers more opportunities and a higher standard of living, where their skills are more highly compensated. The neoclassical (micro) theory provides further insight into the decision-making process. Individual immigrants are held responsible for their decision to migrate after carefully assessing the benefits and drawbacks of such migration and the options they have at home and abroad. In addition to evaluating the advantages of successful migration and comparing the weaknesses of remaining, it is important to consider the risks associated with travel, including the loss of one's current source of support, deportation, accidents, and even death, as well as a decline in friendships and relationships with family and friends. As a result of these tactical decisions, migrants seek better opportunities in a foreign country (Osimen, Fulani, Chidozie, & Dada, 2024).

The concept has numerous implications for international migration among the Bini people of Edo State. The primary reason for migrating from Benin was to work and gain money. According to the hypotheses, the Bini people moved to locations with larger economic opportunities and a greater demand for employment. Individuals or families decide whether to migrate. The latter is common among the Bini people, with families transferring land plots, residences, and household things to fund or send their children overseas.

Furthermore, Bini people receive loans to encourage migration, which necessitates remittances back home once a migrating family has settled in their new surroundings. The desire to extend a family's economic, social, and financial options is frequently a stronger motivator than income differentials. Immigrants are responsible for supporting their families back home as well as other aspiring migrants once they have arrived in the destination country, thereby establishing and maintaining a migration chain.

## **METHODS**

The study adopts the cross-sectional survey research design. The cross-sectional survey design enables the researcher to capture information based on data gathered for a specific point in time from a sample of people with varied characteristics and demographics known as variables. These variables include age, gender, income, education, and geographical location (Goodfellow, 2023; McNabb, 2012; Salter, 2023). The design is used because it aids the researcher in understanding the subject matter and exploring the depth, richness, and complexities inherent in the study. The findings help remove assumptions and replace them with actual data on the specific subject matter. This understanding is obtained by collecting information from the study population familiar with the subject matter, in this case, the Bini households, without manipulating the variables.

The population of the study comprises all the local government areas in the Edo South Senatorial District, where the Bini people are located, and it is also the place of origin for the Bini people. Edo South senatorial district comprises seven (7) local government areas with a cumulative population of 1,686,041, where the Bini people are more than 90% natives or indigenes. These seven local government areas were chosen because they are the places of origin of the Bini people. The local government areas are as follows; Egor (340,287), Ovia North East (155,344), Ovia South West (138,072), Ughunmwode (121, 749), Orhionmwon (183, 994), Oredo (374, 515) and Ikpoba-Okha (372, 080) (Edo State Government, 2022, Nigeria Population Commission, 2022). The populations are the households or families of migrants and returnees of Bini origin in the entire Edo South district. Even though the population has been mixed due to development and internal migration, most migrants' households are Bini people. They comprise most residents in the area (World Bank, 2015; Osimen et al., 2024).

The sampling size for this study is the members of the household of migrants amongst the Bini in the seven (7) local government areas of the Edo South senatorial district of Edo State. It comprises young and old, male and female members of the households. The targeted individuals are those who have been sponsoring migrants, are friends of migrants, receive remittances from migrants, or are simply family members of migrants. As a result, they have a good understanding of the topic. They can provide insightful and accurate first-hand information.

The Slovin (1960) sample size calculation formula is employed to determine the sample size of this study. This formula is used in research when it is impossible to sample an entire population, even though it is finite. It allows the researcher to sample the population with the desired degree of accuracy.

A smaller sample size out of 1,686,041 is required for workability, and Slovin provides the formula represented as follows:

$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$  Whereas;

$n$  = sample size (at 95% confidence level)

$N$  = total population

$e$  = error margin/ margin of error

The sample size will be calculated as follows: a confidence level of 95% and 5% error margin and the total population in the seven local government areas of Edo South senatorial district where the Bini people are located (1,686,041).

$$n = 1686041 / (1 + 1686041 * 0.05^2) \quad n = 1686041 / (1 + 1686041 * 0.0025) \quad n = 1686041 / (1 + 4215.1) \quad n = 1686041 / 4216.1 \quad n = 399.90 \text{ or approximately } 400$$

From this formula, the sampling size will be 400.

This study adopted the following sampling technique;

Convenience sampling: A non-probability sampling method where the sample is taken from a conveniently available pool of respondents or a group of people easy to contact or reach. This non-probability sampling technique distributed the structured questionnaire to population members.

The following calculation will be employed to determine the number of questionnaires to be deployed to each local government authority:  $LGA / \text{Total population} * \text{sampling size} / 1$ . For example,

$$\text{Egor LGA} = 340287 / 1686041 \times 400 / 1 = 80.73$$

$$\text{Ovia North East} = 155344 / 1686041 \times 400 / 1 = 36.85$$

$$\text{Ovia South West} = 138072 / 1686041 \times 400 / 1 = 32.76$$

$$\text{Uhunmwonde} = 121749 / 1686041 \times 400 / 1 = 28.88$$

$$\text{Orhionmwon} = 183994 / 1686041 \times 400 / 1 = 43.65$$

$$\text{Oredo} = 374515 / 1686041 \times 400 / 1 = 88.85$$

$$\text{Ikpoba-Okha} = 372080 / 1686041 \times 400 / 1 = 88.27 \text{ (399.99)}.$$

From this formula, the sampling size will be 400.

Qualitative and quantitative data were analysed and computed to achieve the research objective. The returned questionnaires were sorted out to check for errors and deal with the data obtained for coding and evaluation. Data collected from the questionnaire were collated, coded and imputed to the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics V21.0) for data analysis. A percentage and frequency analysis was used to present demographic data, such as gender, age, marital status, education, position, and service years. The study's hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression analyses. The impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable was assessed using inferential statistical and correlational analysis.

Linear regression was adopted to evaluate the relationship between the variables, whether positive (+) or negative (-). The correlation coefficient estimated by the linear regression was used to determine the depth of the relationship between the two variables that comprise the study's hypothesis; this will aid in determining the strength of the relationship, whether it is negligible (0.50-0.69), weak (0.10-0.29), moderate (0.300-0.49), substantial (0.50-0.69), or strong (0.70-1.00). Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data from the focus group discussion. This method identifies, analyses, and reports patterns or themes within data. Thematic analysis is noted for its effectiveness in various research questions and objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Thus, the discussions were thematically transcribed and analysed. Both quantitative and qualitative data analysed were triangulated accordingly.

## Hypothesis

International migration has not enhanced the living standard of the Bini people of Edo State.

## RESULTS

Participants in this study are the Bini people of Edo State from seven (7) local government areas (LGA). To ensure that no LGA was underrepresented, more questionnaires were administered beyond the calculated sample size (400). Below is a breakdown of the response rate, as shown in Table 1. The results of the survey are shown in Table 1. Four hundred and one (401) questionnaires were distributed, while three hundred and sixty-eight (368) were returned, representing 92% of the data collected. The response rate of 92% in Table 1 indicates that the sample adequately represented the seven local government areas.

### 2) Table 1. Breakdown of Response Rate

S/N	LGA	Copies Administered	Copies Used	% Retrieved
1	Egor	80	73	91%
2	Ikpoba Okha	89	79	89%
3	Oredo	89	81	91%
4	Orhionmwon	44	42	95%
5	Ovia North East	37	35	95%
6	Ovia South East	33	31	94%
7	Uhunmwode	29	27	93%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>92%</b>

### Biodata of Respondents

This section shows the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents in this study. The responses were analysed and presented using frequency and simple percentages, as shown in Table 2. The respondents' biodata requested are sex, age, marital status, employment status and academic qualifications.

**Table 2 Background Information of Respondents**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Sex	Male	213	57.9
	Female	155	42.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Age	30-39	171	46.5
	40-49	141	38.3
	50-59	51	13.9
	60 & above	5	1.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Marital Status	Single	155	42.1
	Married	188	51.1
	Divorced	19	5.2
	Separated	5	1.4
	Widowed	1	0.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Employment Status	Unemployed	63	17.1
	Self-employed	256	69.6
	Employed	47	12.8
	Retired	2	0.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Academic Qualification	No education	1	0.3
	Primary education	7	1.9
	Junior secondary school	28	7.6
	Senior secondary school	232	63.0
	Tertiary education	100	27.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Relatives Abroad?	Yes	368	100.0
	No	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Relatives' countries	Italy	64	17%
	USA	62	17%
	Other European Countries	76	21%
	France	19	5%

	Spain	27	7%
	Canada	28	8%
	Others	92	25%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 2 shows that 57.9% of the respondents are male. In comparison, 42.1% of the respondents are female, indicating more male participants than female respondents. The age distribution of the respondents shows that most respondents (46.5%) are between 30 and 39 years old. The table shows that 38.3% of the respondents are between 40 and 49, 13.9% are between 50 and 59, and the remaining 1.4% are above 60. Having the minimum age considered as 30 years of age is essential for the study to harvest facts/data from more mature and experienced Bini people.

Furthermore, the table shows that most of the survey respondents in the study, representing 51.1%, are married. Also, 42.1% of the respondents are single, 5.2% are divorced, 1.4% are separated, and the remaining 0.3% are widowed. The table also shows that most of the respondents, representing 69.6%, are self-employed. In comparison, 17.1% of the respondents are unemployed, 12.8% are employed, and the remaining 0.5% are retired, implying that most are self-employed. The predominant self-employment rate amongst the Bini people also speaks to their well-being status.

In addition, the table above also reveals the frequency distribution of the respondents' educational qualifications. Accordingly, it shows that most respondents, representing 63%, have at least a secondary school leaving certificate. In comparison, 0.3% of the respondents had no education, 1.9% had primary education, 7.6% had junior secondary school education, and 27.2% had tertiary education, showing that most respondents had senior secondary school education. The demographical distribution in responses is due to the willingness and availability of respondents to partake in the survey.

Finally, 100% of the respondents have relatives abroad, with most of their relatives (17.0%) in Italy, 17% in the United States of America, more than 21% in other European countries, 8.0% in Canada, 7% in Spain, 5% in France, 5% in Germany. Their other relatives are also in more than 25 countries in different parts of the world, many of whom have relatives in more than one or two countries at the time.

**H<sub>0</sub>: International migration has not enhanced the living standard of the Bini people of Edo State.**

**3) Table 3 Regression Result of Test of the Hypothesis**

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	0.759 <sup>a</sup>	0.576	0.575	0.56622		
ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	173.687	1	173.687	541.745	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	127.922	367	0.321		
	Total	301.609	368			

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.047	0.109		0.429	0.668
	International_Migration	0.865	0.037	0.759	23.275	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: living\_standard

With an R of 0.759, Table 3 indicates a strong and positive relationship between the two main variables. The model's overall performance is satisfactory based on the R-Square (R<sup>2</sup>) of 0.576. The independent variable (international migration of the Bini people) can be inferred to explain 57.6% of the dependent variable (living standard of the Bini people). As shown in the ANOVA section above, the p-value is 0.000, and the associated F-value is 541.741. This shows the test's significance, considering the p-value, which is less than the significance level (0.05). It can, therefore, be concluded that the result is statistically significant, as the independent variable (international migration of Bini people) reliably predicts the dependent variable (living standard of Bini people),  $f(1,367) = 541.741, p < 0.05$ .

In addition, the coefficient table indicates that an increase in international migration leads to an increase in the living standards of the Bini people. Significantly, the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. As a result, there is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, based on the table above, it can be concluded that international migration has contributed to improving the living conditions of the Bini people of Edo State.

#### 4) DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study's objective is to assess the effect of international migration on the living standard of the Bini people. International migration has a huge effect on access to quality education and healthcare, as well as a decrease in hard labour in places of origin. It also has effects on income generation (Yavuz & Bahadir, 2022). According to Lucas and Stark (2020), the effects of international migration include improved economic opportunities, higher living standards, access to education and healthcare, and social mobility for migrants and their families back home. Cuong and Linh (2018) corroborated this by maintaining that international migration could increase household income and improve migrant's household standard of living.

From the regression analysis, the study found that international migration has enhanced the living standard of the Bini people of Edo State ( $f(1,399) = 541.741, p < 0.05$ ). There is a general understanding among the Bini people that their relatives abroad help financially to enhance their quality of life, environment, life expectancy, social and personal safety, access to education and good health. The above notion is without prejudice to some feedback from respondents that remittances (cash and non-cash) from abroad have not aided the acquisition of luxurious living or satisfied some of the wants of the people left behind.

It was also noted that migrants contribute to community development by providing some aid in impact development embarked on by the government, especially when there is a delay. Thus, according to this study, international migration facilitates collaborations between the diasporas and the government of the state to promote infrastructural development in communities, thereby enhancing the standard of living of the people. The findings are consistent with other researchers who found that international migration enables philanthropic contributions and helps build developmental infrastructures such as health centres and schools in their communities of origin through their hometown associations (Ratha, 2021). Similarly, Benhamou and Cassin (2021) argued that migration is an enhancer of investment capital transfer and



speeds up the exposure or development of communities to enlightened, logical and democratic concepts, contemporary insight, and education.

This study finds that migrants send money to improve their families' living standards back home, even though the monies sent tend to be insufficient. This corroborates Zhunusova and Herrmann (2018) and Tsauri (2018) that remittances can be money or goods migrants send back to their home countries to support their families. These remittances can contribute significantly to household income and consumption, improving overall welfare. In some cases, remittances may even lift households out of poverty or provide them with opportunities for investment and economic development. In addition to reducing poverty and raising household income, remittances can improve access to housing, education, and healthcare. Griffith et al. (2023) noted that remittances are not only used as a means of survival but also enhance the social status of migrants' families. The findings of this study do not support this stance, as only a few people agree with this assertion, with the majority (45.1 per cent) maintaining that they do not command respect or have improved social status because they have relatives abroad.

## **5) CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study assessed the effect of international migration on the living standard of migrants' families at the place of origin within the context of the Bini people of Edo State, Nigeria. The findings of the field research provide clear indications that economic reasons such as poverty, low living standards, growing insecurity and lack of sustainable livelihoods were the reasons for migration and that migrants sought ways to improve their standard of living and their family back in Nigeria by sending money. The respondents across the field research in the seven LGAs where the Bini people originated overwhelmingly noted that international migration held immense benefits for their households.

Remittances received have been very beneficial in improving the living standard of families, providing economic security and moving them up the social ladder. Evidence suggests that migrants' households who receive remittances have higher incomes and more significant expenditure, as well as a lower likelihood of suffering from extreme poverty, compared to households that do not receive it. Many households received remittances from migrants, leading to a reduction in the likelihood of suffering from poverty and an improvement in their living standards. With the increase in income contributed by remittances, households are able to invest in various ventures such as starting a business, acquiring educational and vocational skills, and also meeting needs such as enhanced diet, good clothing, good shelter, general security and good healthcare.

This study has shown that international migration through remittances can lead to better living standards and poverty reduction. It therefore recommends that this type of remittance should be encouraged among the Bini people of Edo State. Policies to encourage better utilisation could be focused on heads and decision makers/takers of remittance-receiving households, and this can be done through capacity building and campaigns to create awareness of the more purposeful utilisation of remittances.

### **Data Availability Statement**

The datasets generated by the survey research and analysed during the current study are available within the article.

### **Author's Statement**

The authors confirm that the lead author, Ehiagwina Sunday Braitham, is responsible for the following: study conception and design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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