

TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF THE IMPACT OF BRAIN DRAIN AND MIGRATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN POST COVID-19 ERA FOR SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN NSUKKA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

Jovita Chinelo Ejimonye
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract

This study investigated teachers' perceptions of the impact of brain drain and migration on secondary schools in the post-COVID-19 era. A descriptive survey design was employed. The population of the study was made up of (1202) teachers. The sample size for this study comprised (120) secondary school teachers from Nsukka local government area, Enugu state. The major instrument used for data collection is a questionnaire titled: Questionnaire on Teachers' Perception on the Impact of Brain Drain and Migration on Secondary Schools in Nsukka Local Government in post Covid-19 Era (QOTPIBDAMS). The instrument was validated by three experts. Data were collected from 120 teachers using the structured questionnaire. The data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, with a benchmark of 2.50 above for acceptance and a 2.50 below the benchmark was rejected. The results revealed that brain drain, and migration has significantly affected the quality of education, teacher morale, and student performance in secondary schools. The study recommended that the government and educational authorities should implement policies to attract and retain qualified teachers, provide incentives, and improve working conditions to mitigate the effects of brain drain and migration in secondary schools.

Keywords: Teachers' perceptions, brain drain, migration, Post Covid-19, sustainable education

Introduction

The global brain drains in different sectors of the economy, especially in education, after the experience of covid-19 pandemic seems to affect negatively the growth of economy in both developed and developing countries. Many professionals migrated from developing countries to developed countries for a greener pasture while developing countries especially Nigeria have lost lots of experience and professional working class that supposed to improve the economy of the nations. The experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic seem to distort the Education system, especially in secondary schools in Nigeria, creating a vacuum in the numbers of secondary school teachers, which brings concerns to educators, stakeholders, parents and students. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 to date, Nigeria's education system has suffered unprecedented setbacks, and continuously experiencing the impact of COVID-19 after the long shutdown period of the schools as a result of the ravaging nature of the pandemic (Crawford, Butler-Henderson, Rudolph, & Glowatz, 2020). The pandemic has severely impacted Nigeria's education system, particularly in secondary schools. According to Adebayo, (2020), this threat has led to a brain drain in the teaching profession, with many experienced, skilled and qualified teachers migrating to other countries. The pandemic has led to a very significant increase in the number of Secondary School teachers migrating to other countries for a better opportunity and living conditions.

This in turn leads to brain drain and loss of skilled individuals as youth seek better educational opportunities abroad. Education is a vital component of a child's development, and secondary school education plays a very vital role in shaping their future. According (Siagian, & Artha, 2023), effective education relies heavily on the availability, quality, and efficiency of the teachers. The effectiveness and availability of qualified teachers help play a crucial role in the attainment of the Secondary Schools' objectives. Unfortunately, the increasing migration of teachers has become a very big challenge to Secondary schools as experienced teachers are migrating to other countries for more lucrative opportunities, thereby reducing the academic standard.

Migration is defined as the movement of people from one area of a country (or from one country) to another area of the same country (or to another country) to establish a new residence (IOM, 2011; ACP Observatory on Migration, 2011). It is defined as the permanent or semi-permanent relocation of an individual or group to a distant place of residence and employment; it involves the movement of people across countries and between continents (Akinyombo, 2023). It refers to the relocation of individuals or groups from one geographic area to another, often driven by the pursuit of improved circumstances, such as better economic opportunities, living conditions, or social environments. It involves transitioning from one environment to another, typically perceived as more advantageous or desirable (Smita, Varsha, 2015). According to Eise et al. (2018), highly educated and skilled individuals often migrate to developed nations because their services are appreciated and valued. This is encouraged by the Legislation and institutional factors that tend to favour the immigration of highly qualified individuals over those with less education. For this study, migration is the movement of Secondary school teachers from one country to another to find better jobs, education, or living conditions. The migration of teachers has become a significant concern in Nigeria, especially at the Secondary Schools level with many experienced and skilled teachers leaving the country in search of better opportunities abroad (Akinyemi, 2016). There was an increase in workload and stress on the path of the teachers as schools reopened after the COVID-19 pandemic, as they were faced with overcrowded classrooms due to the pandemic-related delays (Nwachukwu, 2020). They faced further challenges due to resource constraints, including scarcity of educational materials, inadequate facilities and outdated technologies (Adeyemi, 2019). Furthermore, insufficient support from governments and school administrators left teachers feeling undervalued and unprepared to manage the pandemic-related challenges (OECD, 2020). In other words, the pandemic accelerated teachers' migration and brain drain, creating a vacuum in the number of Secondary School teachers.

Brain drain is a subset of migration, as defined according to Alem (2016), as the migration of skilled professionals, including experts in technology, science, management, and administration from less developed nations to more advanced countries. To Stenman, as cited in Okwara (2023), brain drain can be defined as a large emigration of individuals with technical skills or knowledge from one country to another to enjoy better conditions of service and a better living environment. In the same vein, the brain-drain phenomenon explains the mass movement of experts and professionals from their home countries to developed nations for better employment engagement (Akinwale and George, 2022). According to Cambridge Dictionary (2016), brain drain is the process through which a significant percentage of exceptionally educated and competent people leave their native nation in quest of better living and employment

opportunities abroad. This brain drain has resulted in a significant shortage of qualified teachers, compromising the quality of education in Nigeria (Oyebade & Adebawale, 2017), especially at the Secondary School level. National Bureau of Statistics (2020) reported that the teaching profession in Nigeria has one of the highest rates of brain drain, with many teachers migrating to developed countries in search of better opportunities. Adeyemi (2019) argues that the brain drain in Nigeria is driven by push factors, including poor working conditions, low salaries, and lack of opportunities for professional development. Emphasizing these points, Oyeniran (2020) noted that the brain drain of teachers in Nigeria has resulted in a significant shortage of qualified teachers, compromising the quality of education in the country. This phenomenon is closely tied to teachers' perception of their profession and work environment.

This study was anchored on the theory of Human capital theory by Becker (1962) and the push and pull theory by Lee (1976). Human capital theory argues that individual workers have a set of skills or abilities which they can improve or accumulate through training and education. Teaching skills which were acquired by secondary school teachers are very important for sustainable education systems and effective instructions for easy transfer of knowledge to the students. Push and pull theory argues that there are numerous factors which act to drive away people from the area, to hold the people in the area or to attract the people to it. For this study, teachers have several reasons to migrate to other areas either for a greener pasture or to improve their standard of living. This study will be beneficial to teachers, researchers, government, and education stakeholders. The problem emanated that increasing migration of secondary school teachers in Nigeria has become a pressing concern for educational administrators, stakeholders, and the government, as it poses a significant threat to the quality of education, teacher availability, and student performance, ultimately compromising the country's human capital development and educational system. The current state of brain drains and migration has led to a shortage of qualified teachers, compromised education quality, and a decline in student performance. Notwithstanding efforts by the government and educational institutions to provide opportunities for seminars, programmes and provision of educational resources, the problem persists, with many teachers seeking better opportunities abroad. Previous efforts like government initiatives, educational institution initiatives, stakeholders-led initiatives, and policy reform have focused on addressing push factors such as poor working conditions, low salaries, and limited opportunities for professional growth. However, these efforts have been insufficient, and the problem remains unresolved. Research has been conducted on brain drain and migration in Nigeria, but to the knowledge of the researcher, no study has been conducted on the teachers' perception of the impact of brain drain and migration in secondary schools in Nsukka for sustainable education systems. Hence, there is need for the study.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What are the primary reasons secondary school teachers in Nsukka are migrating in post COVID-19 era?
2. To what extent does the migration of secondary school teachers affect the quality of education in Nsukka secondary Schools in post COVID-19 era?
3. To what extent do the remaining secondary school teachers in Nsukka perceive the effects of brain drain on their workload, and moral, and professional development opportunities in post COVID-19 era?

4. What strategies can be implemented to retain secondary school teachers in Nsukka and mitigate the negative impact of brain drain in Nigeria in post post-COVID-19 era?

Methods

Descriptive design was used for the study because it seeks to identify the characteristics of a defined population for specific variables and to establish the magnitude and direction of the relationship between two or more variables. The study was conducted in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State. The population of the study was 1,202 secondary school teachers which comprised 983 female teachers 188 male teachers and 31 principals whose gender was not specified. Multistage sampling techniques were used to select 120 respondents from 15 secondary schools in Nsukka local Government Area. Simple random sampling was used to select 15 schools in the first stage. In the second stage, simple random sampling was used to select 8 teachers from the 15 selected schools. A questionnaire on teachers' perception of the impact of brain drain and migration (QOTPIBDAMS) in Secondary Schools in Nsukka L.G.A., Enugu State in this post-COVID-19 era was developed which consisted of sections A and B and four clusters. The response mode adopted for the study is the 4-point rating scale of SA= Strongly Agree (4), A= Agree (3), D= Disagree (2), SD= Strongly Disagree (1). VHE= Very High Extent (4), HE= High Extent (3), LE= Low Extent (2), and VLE= Very Low Extent (1). The instrument was validated by three experts, two from the Department of Social Science Education and one from the measurement and evaluation unit of the Department of Science Education, all from the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka. They made corrections to the instrument which led to the final modification of the instrument before it was finally administered to the respondents. The reliability was done with Cronbach Alpha, and it resulted in 0.66 which showed that the instrument was reliable. Mean and standard deviation were used for the analysis. A decision rule of 2.50 and above was used.

Results

Table 1: The mean and standard deviation from the responses on the primary reasons secondary school teachers in Nsukka are migrating in this post-COVID-19

S/N	Item Statement	M	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1.	The lack of opportunities for professional growth or development has influenced my consideration of migration.	3.12	1.204	A	
2.	The political instability in Nigeria has made me consider migrating to another country	3.01	0.903	A	
3.	The inadequate funding of public schools has led to poor working conditions, making me consider migration.	3.38	0.98	A	

4.	The lack of recognition and appreciation for teachers' efforts in Nigeria has made me consider migrating to a country where teaching is more valued.	2.96	1.133	A
5.	The opportunity to acquire new skills or knowledge in a more developed education system has influenced my consideration of migration	2.93	1.196	A
6.	Poor welfare has influenced my migration intention	3.10	1.141	A
7.	The challenging school environment, including large class sizes and limited resources, has led me to consider migration.	3.04	0.982	A
8.	The perceived better quality of life, including healthcare and infrastructure, in other countries has attracted me to consider migration	2.73	1.130	A
9.	Low salary has made me consider migration	2.65	1.221	A
10	Personal health & safety in post covid-19 is a factor that influences my decision to migrate	2.68	1.100	A
11	Economic hardship has influenced my migration intention	2.72	1.224	A
Grand mean		2.94		

The data in Table 1 indicates that items 1 to 11, with mean scores of 3.12, 3.01, 3.38, 2.96, 2.93, 3.10, 3.04, 2.73, 2.65, 2.68, and 2.72, respectively, fall within the real limit of 2.50–3.49 with the grand mean of 2.94. This suggests that these factors are widely accepted as the primary reasons for the migration of secondary school teachers in Nsukka in the post-COVID-19 era.

Table 2: The mean and standard deviation from the responses on the extent the migration of secondary school teachers affects the quality of education in Nsukka secondary schools in this post-COVID-19 era

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1.	The migration of secondary school teachers has led to a shortage of qualified teachers in key subjects.	2.96	1.198	High Extent

2.	The departure of experienced teachers has compromised the quality of education in Nsukka	3.37	0.798	High Extent
3.	Teacher migration has disrupted continuity or consistency in curriculum implementation	3.38	0.841	High Extent
4.	Teachers' migration has reduced the availability of extracurricular activities	3.38	0.812	High Extent
5.	The loss of talented teachers has hindered innovation and progress in secondary schools	3.39	0.955	High Extent
6.	Brain drain has led to a decrease in student enrollment and retention rates	3.28	0.801	High Extent
7.	Secondary schools are struggling to replace the experienced teachers who have migrated.	2.95	1.028	High Extent
8.	Teachers' migration has affected the teacher-student ration	3.30	1.026	High Extent
9.	A significant loss of experienced teachers has negatively affected the quality of instructions & performance	2.93	0.847	High Extent
10	Teachers' migration has led to a noticeable impact on student's performance	2.63	1.223	High Extent
11	Teachers' migration has an impact on students' readiness	2.63	1.196	High Extent

Grand mean 3.11

The data analysis above in Table 2 shows that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11, with mean scores of 2.96, 3.37, 3.38, 3.38, 3.39, 3.28, 2.95, 3.30, 3.93, and 2.63, respectively, fall within the real limit of 2.50–3.49 with the grand mean of 3.11. This indicates a high extent of agreement that the migration of secondary school teachers has significantly affected the quality of education in Nsukka secondary schools in this post-COVID-19 era.

Table 3: The mean and standard deviation from the responses on the extent to which the remaining secondary school teachers in Nsukka perceived the effects of brain drain on their workload, moral and professional development opportunities in this post-COVID-19 era

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1.	The migration of teachers has led to increased workload	3.19	0.843	High Extent
2.	The increased workload has affected my teaching positively	2.42	0.784	Low Extent

3.	The increased workload has affected my teaching negatively	3.13	0.869	High Extent
4.	I managed to cover my syllabus adequately	3.38	0.926	High Extent
5.	Migration of teachers has positively impacted more responsibilities and growth opportunities	2.08	0.784	Low Extent
6.	Migration of teachers has positively affected the availability of professional development opportunities in my school	2.40	1.205	Low Extent
		2.77		
Grand mean				

Note: Decision rule: 3.50-4.00 = VHE, 2.50-3.49= HE, 1.50-2.49 = LE, 0.50-1.49 =VLE.

The data analysis above in Table 3 shows that items 1, 3, and 4, with mean scores of 3.19, 3.13, and 3.38, respectively, fall within the real limit of 2.50–3.49. This indicates that the extent to which the remaining secondary school teachers in Nsukka perceive the effects of brain drain on their workload, morale, and professional development opportunities in this post-COVID-19 era is high. Meanwhile, items 2, 5, and 6, with mean scores of 2.42, 2.08, and 2.40, respectively, fall within the real limit of 1.50-2.49, indicating a low extent of perception.

Table 4: The mean and standard deviation from the responses on the strategies to retain secondary school teachers in Nsukka and mitigate the negative impact of brain drain in Nigeria in this post-COVID-19 era

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1.	Improving working conditions would encourage me to stay	3.60	0.803	Agree
2.	Providing opportunities for professional development would reduce the desire to migrate.	3.15	0.729	Agree
3.	Increasing teacher salaries and benefits to match international standards would reduce brain drain	3.45	0.977	Agree
4.	Implementing policies to address political instability and insecurity would create a more conducive work environment	3.19	0.973	Agree
5.	Offering incentives such as housing and transportation would encourage teachers to stay	3.18	0.741	Agree
6.	Mentorship programs for new teachers would foster a supportive environment	2.91	1.045	Agree
7.	Providing support for teacher well-being and mental health would reduce stress and migration.	2.91	1.077	Agree

8.	Creating opportunities for career advancement would reduce migration	3.21	1.036	Agree
9.	Collaborative school leadership and decision-making would promote teacher engagement.	2.61	0.725	Agree
10.	Improving school infrastructure would reduce migration intention	3.16	0.889	Agree
11	Providing opportunities for training would reduce migration intention	3.13	0.751	Agree
12	Offering an education allowance would encourage teachers to stay	2.83	1.040	Agree
13	Creating opportunities for promotion would reduce migration	2.92	1.081	Agree
		3.10		

Grand mean

The data analysis above in Table 3 shows that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13, with mean scores of 3.60, 3.15, 3.45, 3.19, 3.18, 2.91, 2.91, 3.21, 2.61, 3.13, 2.83, and 2.92, respectively, fall within the real limit of 2.50–3.49 with the grand mean of 3.10. This indicates an acceptance that these strategies are effective in retaining secondary school teachers in Nsukka and mitigating the negative impact of brain drain in Nigeria in this post-COVID-19 era.

Discussion

The study revealed that secondary school teachers in Nsukka are migrating due to a lack of professional growth opportunities, political instability, inadequate funding of public schools, lack of recognition, better career opportunities abroad, challenging school environments, and economic hardships. These findings align with those of Okoye (2018), who found that teachers migrate due to poor working conditions and lack of career development in Nigeria. Similarly, Afolabi (2019) reported that economic instability and poor education policies significantly contribute to teacher migration. Nnamdi (2018) highlighted the role of political insecurity and weak institutional support in exacerbating the brain drain among educators. Furthermore, teacher migration significantly affects the quality of education, leading to a shortage of qualified teachers, disruption of curriculum implementation, increased student-teacher ratios, and declining student performance. Secondly, the study revealed that the extent the migration of secondary school teachers affects the quality of education in Nsukka secondary schools in this post covid-19 era is high. This agrees with the findings of Musa (2019) who found that the mass exodus of teachers leads to curriculum inconsistencies and reduced student engagement. Nwafor (2020) observed that schools experiencing teacher migration struggle to maintain extracurricular activities and mentorship programs. Eze (2019) emphasized that a lack of experienced teachers leads to declining student achievement and readiness. Omole and Asika (2021) reported that teacher migration results in an increased workload for remaining teachers, affecting teaching quality.

Moreover, the remaining secondary school teachers in Nsukka perceived a high extent the effects of brain drain on their worked load and moral. However, professional development opportunities due to migration were rated low. This is in support of Heffernan et al (2022) who

found that when teachers leave, the remaining staff experience increased workload and burnout. Obi and Ekong (2019) reported that schools with high teacher turnover struggle with staff morale and retention. Eze and Nwachukwu (2021) found that increased workload due to migration negatively affects teachers' job satisfaction. Ibrahim and Musa (2022) reported that teachers in understaffed schools find it difficult to maintain lesson quality. Okechukwu and Adeyemi (2023) highlighted that the lack of professional development opportunities due to migration reduces teaching efficiency. Strategies such as improving working conditions, increasing salaries, offering incentives, providing career advancement opportunities, and enhancing school infrastructure were identified. This finding agrees with the findings of Olumide (2018) who found that salary increases and better working environments reduce teacher attrition. Okonkwo and Eze (2019) emphasized the importance of mentorship programs in retaining teachers. Adebayo and Yusuf (2020) reported that housing and transportation incentives help keep teachers in the profession.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study concluded that teacher migration in Nsukka secondary schools is driven by poor working conditions, political instability, inadequate funding, lack of recognition, and economic hardships. Migration has significantly affected the quality of education by increasing student-teacher ratios, disrupting curriculum implementation, and lowering student performance which could lead to low turnout in the education system. Teachers who remain in the system experience heavier workloads and declining morale which could affect students' performance. However, strategies such as improving salaries, working conditions, and career development opportunities can mitigate the brain drain and retain teachers for sustainable education systems in the Nsukka education zone. This study recommends that despite the efforts of the government to improve the education system in Nigeria, the school administrators should implore an incentive to motivate teachers for sustainable education system. Secondly, the salary of secondary school teachers in Nsukka should be increased to motivate the remaining teachers. The policy implementation should be compulsory in servicing training from the ministry of education for all secondary school teachers to improve their professional knowledge and equally encourage them.

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