



## Research Article

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# A Review of the Implications of Brain Drain on Nigeria's Health and Educational Systems

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## Abstract

*The issue of brain drain is a global challenge facing particularly the developing countries of the world. One country that the numbers of professionals that are leaving the country on a regular basis especially from the health and educational system is Nigeria. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the implications of brain drain on the Nigeria's health and educational systems. This study argues that most developed countries often prefer educated and skilled labours from the developing countries especially from Nigeria. The data for this study was collected from secondary sources while content analysis was used to analyse the data collected. This study is situated within the context of the push-pull theory. The study agrees with the push and pull factors to be responsible for the increasing rate of migration in the health and educational systems in Nigeria. Furthermore, this study argues that the implications of brain drain on Nigeria's health and educational systems are enormous, as Nigeria will continue to suffer from decline labour force in both the health and educational system. Again, Nigeria will continue to suffer from declining economic growth and development because of the absence of the lost professionals in both the health and educational systems that would have contributed to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Lastly, this study recommended among other things that the Federal Government of Nigeria need to invest in the critical sector of the economy as it remains key to achieving long-term economic growth and development in the country.*

**Keywords:** Brain Drain, Health, Education, Developed Countries, Remittance

## 1. Introduction

Brain drain is one of the major challenges facing developing countries around the world in recent years. The frequency of it varies from nation to nation (Anekwe 2009). While it is extremely rare in the Western world, it is rampant in impoverished countries, particularly in Africa. This cannot be separated from the reality that rich countries have effective policies in place to address the issues causing brain drain in developing countries. Particularly attractive to human resources from developing nations are the well-kept high-tech facilities in industrialised nations.

It is important to note that brain drain affects and undermines the state ideology as both socialist and capitalist countries can be affected. Given that socialist countries like Cuba and Russia use their expertise, abilities, capabilities, and any assets they have available to them to make their

countries a better place for their entire citizenry, they would not have been exempt from the problem of brain drain. The theoretical framework is the opposite of capitalism, so it ought to stop brain drain from occurring. Nevertheless, the reality is the opposite, as some socialist nations are more affected by the brain drain issue than many capitalist ones (BBC News 2002; Goodman 2007).

In the literature of migration studies, several reasons have been adjudged to be responsible for brain drain. These factors can be situated within the push and pull paradigm. The push factors are considered to be factors that are internal to a country that necessitate the migration of its citizenry abroad such as low pay compensation, little educational options, unsatisfactory employment, political unpredictability, and understaffing are a few examples of these problems. While the pull factors are factors that are external to the citizens of a country but will entice them to migrate overseas. These factors include increased emolument, better working conditions and other fringe benefits among others (Saheed 2019, Chiamaka et al 2020).

Over the years, there is increasing number of Nigerians traveling abroad in search for greener pasture. The migrants are usually skilled professionals mostly in the health and educational systems in the country. Today, the exodus of Nigerian professional abroad is becoming a source of concern to the Nigerian government as there is increasing shortage of health and educational personals in the country. For instance, there is declining numbers of health professionals to meet the health needs of the nation. On the educational front, there is declining numbers of professors and PhD holders who are leaving the country in search of better work conditions.

It is pertinent to note that everywhere in the world, there is a demand for trained health workers and educators. Yet, greater incomes, access to sophisticated technology, better living circumstances, and more stable political environments in developed nations draw people from developing nations especially in Nigeria since the return of the country to democratic rule in 1999, when the expectations of Nigerians were high and that the democratic regimes will address the growing challenges facing the health and educational systems in the country. It is against this background this study seeks to examine the effects of brain drain on Nigeria's Health and Educational systems.

## **2. Conceptual and Theoretical Review on Brain Drain**

The concept of brain drain is used interchangeably with capital flight. Alem (2016) states that the British Royal Society first used the phrase "Brain Drain" to refer to the emigration of scientists, engineers, and other professionals beyond the United Kingdom to the United States of America.

According to the British Royal Society, scientists are leaving the country for North America (Shin 2002). Similar to this, according to UNESCO (2008), brain drain is a peculiar kind of international scientific interaction that is characterised by a movement in one direction and inexorably flows to industrialised nations (<http://www.sudaneseonline.com/cgi-bin/enews> 2008). These two organisations see brain drain as the departure of experts to industrialised nations like North America.

However, UNESCO broadens these scientists' travel destinations to include additional continents. However, it is clear that brain drain does not solely go in one direction. It is a global concern involving several countries (<http://www.answers.com/topic/braindrain>. 2008). David (2005) addresses the aforementioned problem. He defines brain drain as the exodus of skilled and brilliant people to other countries throughout the world. Conflicts, a lack of opportunities, health risks, and political squabbles brought on by poor leadership, all of which are common in the nations where these human assets originated, are to blame for the threat (David 2005). David has a really thorough point of view. It is not limited to only the human capital in the medical industry. Naturally, experts in other fields of study in life are also represented. It also covers a range of factors that contribute to the transfer of human capital from one nation to another. However, the attitude disregarded the generation of individuals who went overseas for training, gained the expertise required in their fields of specialisation, and settled there permanently.

The evidence gap present in David (2005)'s perspective was addressed by Johnson et al in 1998. They define "brain drain" as the cycle of students leaving the country to further their educations and returning home to accept a job. Ethiopian and Malaysian students who have studied abroad frequently engage in this type of circular migration. Due to the threat of brain drain, some students dislike returning to their home nations.

Johnson et al. (1998), on the other hand, are criticised for failing to take into account the transfer of skilled labour from one area of the economy or other sphere of human endeavour to another in an effort to get higher wages and other advantages either within the same nation or in another nation. This shortcoming is addressed in Encyclopaedia Britannica. Brain drain, according to the definition, is the "exodus of educated or professional individuals from one nation, economic sector, or field to another, typically in search of higher wages or better living conditions" (<http://www.sudaneseonline.com/cgi 2008:1>).

However, it is clear that workers shift from one occupation to another inside a nation in every country in the globe. Any human resource who believes another organisation would be a better fit for them transfers to that organisation when the opportunity arises. This has no detrimental effects on the development of such civilizations, but the widespread transfer of human capital from developing to developed nations does. Human brains preserve technologies, scientific ideas, and design techniques. The person who is involved is the only one who can access them. Such people take their minds, which may be utilised to advance their nations, with them when they leave. Thus, their countries continue to be undeveloped.

The brain drain, according to Alem (2016), is "the movement of technological, scientific, managerial, and bureaucratic individuals from less developed nations to North America and Europe or from the semi-advanced nations to the advanced countries." 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.

According to Chimanikire (2005), brain drain is the movement of a specialist group of people, such as medical professionals, engineers, scientists, and academia, from one nation to another, typically in quest of higher wages or a higher quality of living. The term "brian drain" refers to the exodus of the best-informed individuals and experience as a result of human capital moving to more advantageous environments, notably from developing to industrialised nations.

According to Eise et al. (2018), people with the greatest degrees of education or skill frequently migrate to industrialised nations because their services are appreciated. Legislation and institutional influences always promote this tendency because most nations seem to be more open to immigration from people who have a high degree of knowledge and training than from those lacking.

Eyerusalem (2016), posits that brain drain refers to the movement of medical experts in quest of improved living and working circumstances, greater pay, possession of advanced technology, and increasingly stable political environments in various areas of the world. The phrase "brain drain" refers to the widespread exodus of people with specialised skills or knowledge, frequently as a result of unfavourable prospects, political unrest, armed conflict, health problems, and risk aversion (Terry et al. 2017). A key feature of globalisation is the movement of highly trained employees from poor countries to developed ones, which has both advantages and disadvantages.

Brain drain, according to Stenman (2006), is the mass emigration of individuals with specialised abilities or expertise from one nation to another, frequently in quest of better economic prospects and a pleasant living. Man and his family are subject to these principles. The former offers a means of support, while the latter makes life simpler for him and his family.

Using the pool ordinary least squares approach, Adeyemi et al. (2018) look at the causes, effects, and implications of brain drain on the economic development of Africa with a particular emphasis on Ethiopia, Kenya, and Nigeria. Since the impacts of brain drain threaten to obstruct the continent's general progress, the state of affairs on the African continent is alarming, and the African authorities must act right now to address it. The study discovered a connection between remittance, economic

growth, and brain drain. In Ethiopia, Kenya, and Nigeria, however, there is a strong correlation between the improvement of human resources and economic growth. This study identifies information in terms of the time period covered by prior study based on the literature evaluation mentioned above. Hence, will make contributions to this research endeavour.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

This study is situated within the context of push-pull theory. In the majority of migration literature, the push-pull theory is the one that is most usually used to explain the concept of brain drain. Push factors, as described by Bach (2006), are things that happen inside the place of origin that cause migration. According to him, political instability, low educational standards, and economic hardship are the primary impetuses for immigration.

The main reasons that talented individuals migrate from developing to developed countries are persistent poverty and underdevelopment (Portes et al 1989). According to Buchan et al. (2003), in addition to the previously mentioned reasons, there are other reasons for the departure of individuals amid push factors, like a lack of a friendly atmosphere for studying and insufficient resources for professionals to practise. A secure and predicted work environment, a high standard of living, opportunities for career progress, greater money, employment versatility, and a predicted workload are all examples of pull factors, in contrast (Buchan et al., 2003). El-Khawaw (2004) argues that a further "pull" factor that promotes migration is the lack of employment in North America and Europe. He made the case that, as an illustration, the European Union has laws in place to make it easier for professionals from other countries to immigrate in order to assist the growth of its economy.

The theory mentioned earlier makes it clear that factors like a lack of a welcoming atmosphere for learning, an absence of specialised practise amenities, an inadequate standard of living, chances for advancement in careers, lower pay, job flexibility, and an ongoing the workload are to blame for the departure of Nigerian educators and health professionals. Therefore, enhancing human capital must be a top priority for the Nigerian government. Many African scientists and professionals are employed in industrialised nations. Asian nations, on the other hand, have developed plans to organise and use the diaspora for the improvement of their region. The leaders of Nigeria have not seized these chances. For the continent to achieve its own technological and scientific breakthrough, it is past time to utilise the immense technologies and scientific expertise to which Nigerian specialists are entitled outside of Nigeria. By focusing on their economics, African countries may gradually raise the standard of living for their citizens while addressing the primary problem plaguing the continent: poverty.

### **4. Effects of Brain Drain on Nigeria's Health and Educational Systems**

In the literature on migration studies, scholars have identified a number of factors responsible for brain drain in the literature. The causes of brain drain in Nigeria can be divided into push and pull factors. The push factors as those brought on by the Nigerian state (source of the brain drain) in the health and educational systems which is responsible for their leaving of the country. These factors include low pay, compensation, little educational options, unsatisfactory employment, political unpredictability, and understaffing are a few examples of these factors. While, the pull factors are those factors attributed to the destination nations. They are factors that entice and enable the flow of health professionals and educationists to those nations (Saheed 2019, Chiamaka et al 2020).

The push and pull factors were strongly supported by Omoluabi (2014) in his study who asserts that improved career prospects and technological advancements in developed nations, together with greater compensation, encourage talented professionals from health and educational systems in developing countries like Nigeria to move to countries like US, Britain, France and Canada just to mention a few. In addition to the above, other pull factors include job availability, professional

progression, a positive work environment, and autonomy among others.

Today, brain drain has detrimental repercussions especially on the host (source) nations. This is because, most developed nations often choose from among the finest in Nigeria health and educational systems based on their socioeconomic status and educational attainment. In reality, the exodus of Nigeria talent benefits industrialized countries much. For instance, Nigerian professionals from a variety of areas, particularly those in the health and education sectors, frequently emigrate to industrialized nations like the United States, Canada, Dubai, China, and the United Kingdom in search for better opportunities. Today, the developed nations have become the source or destination of Qualified Health Professionals and educationists, thereby undermining the effectiveness of the health and educational systems in developing nations.

Alabi (2015) argued that the United States of America benefited significantly from the influx of engineers, technologists, and other scientists who emigrated from Europe during the Second World War, and that it continues to benefit from the emigration of highly skilled people from countries like China, India, and many African countries, including Nigeria. According to Alabi (2015), a brain drain of competent and educated people has significantly reduced tax revenue in less developed countries like Nigeria. Unfortunately, the bulk of the workers who are now raising the GDPs of North America and Europe are mostly from poor countries, particularly Africa, even though emerging nations like Nigeria require competent and trained personnel to progress their economies.

Similar to this, Mba et al. (2012) and Todaro et al. (2006) stated that the unfortunate reality for the so-called "brain drain" disorder lies in the fact that the vast majority of technicians, scholars, physicians, scientists, and other experts who received substantial funding for their higher education in the developing world continue to work to raise the socioeconomic standing of those currently industrialised nations. Docquier et al (2006) found that 10.7% of Nigeria's educated population made their livelihood overseas. In his opinion, 46% and 86%, respectively, of immigrants from Nigeria to Europe and the US are highly educated. According to Clement et al (2007) 14% of medical professionals working abroad received their training in Nigeria, with 90% of those professionals studying in the UK and US. Between 2000 and 2006, the number of Nigerians studying abroad rose from 10,000 to 22,000 (Mba et al 2012).

Moreover, recent studies have shown that there are an estimate of 5,405 Nigerian-trained physicians and nurses employed by the National Health Service (NHS) in the United Kingdom. In a similar vein, the British Government's figures showed that Nigerian health professionals make up 4% of the 137,000 foreign employees from 202 different nations who work alongside British physicians and nurses (Shavel, 2019). Besides, Nigerians make up the majority of African migrants in the United States (Migration Policy Institute, 2016).

Boyo (2013) noted that countries like Canada and the United States benefit from filling labour shortages without having to pay for their education due to the ageing of their populations. One consequence of brain drain on socio-economic development in Nigeria is a decline in service quality, which affects both the economic advantages of remittances and the lack of trained labour in the country. Therefore, it can be argued that lack of educated workers in important fields including education, health, research, technology, and business is one of the tangible effects of brain drain.

Besides, Adepoju, et al (2008) assert that migrants are usually healthier, more educated, and more entrepreneurial, with adequate income to offset the expenses of travel. Again, Adepoju (2008) stated that the quality-of-service delivery to the public in this instance in Nigeria is directly and negatively impacted by the lack of competent employees. He argued that the loss of qualified academics and instructors in the educational sector had led to a decline in educational quality. He continued by saying that the issue has inhibited knowledge production as well. The epidemic of brain drain has resulted in subpar healthcare delivery services in the field of healthcare (Adepoju 2008).

Nigerian institutions had the worst impact of the brain drain pandemic between 1980 and 1990. It all started in the late 1970s and early 1980s when medical professionals left the Europe in search of better opportunities in the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia. Odunsi (1996) said that the disparity in the ratio of medical physicians and other health workers to patients is alarming,

supporting Adepoju (2008) observation. He stated that up to 1 to 41,000 people can be cared for by healthcare professionals in Nigeria.

According to a World Health Organization estimate from 2006, up to 20,000 highly qualified medical professionals leave Africa each year. The Structural Adjustment Plan (SAP), which General Babangida's administration adopted in the 1980s and which contributed significantly to the brain drain statistics, made the situation much worse. Several academics from Nigeria emigrated for Europe, North America, Asia, Australia, and the Middle East under the Babangida and Abacha administrations. More than 10,000 Nigerian academics are reportedly working in the USA alone.

According to Oni (2002), approximately 2,000 Nigerian physicians are expected to work in the USA despite the country's dire need for medical personnel. There are still some benefits that may be derived from the problem, despite the harm that brain drain does to the advancement of emerging nations. For instance, one advantage of brain drain to developing nations like Nigeria and other African countries is remittances.

Today, brain drain has constituted a major setback to the advancement of Nigeria as sizable number of Nigeria professionals often leave the country to the developed countries in search for better living conditions which they perceived are not available in the country. Nigerians have voiced their despair at the dire economic conditions in the nation and how there is nothing they can do but depart for "greener pastures." They list reasons for moving as include employment, uncertainty, and an overall sense of pessimism.

On the development front Kapur (2017), Naicker et al (2017), and Rapoport (2016) assert that the brain drain may actually be perceived as having a negative externality on the population still living in the source nation. This is because, for instance, skilled and unskilled labour are not perfectly substituted (Dutt, 2017; Peri, 2016). On the whole, this study is agreeing with previous studies such as Belot et al (2012); Dutt, (2017); Gibson et al (2012); Kalipeni, et al (2012) that emphasised the detrimental effects of brain drain in this context on Nigeria's health and educational systems.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The issue of brain drain has become a source of concern to developing countries especially in Nigeria in recent years going by the numbers of health and educational professionals exiting the country on a regular basis. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the implications of brain drain on the Nigeria's health and educational systems. It was argued in this study that the push and pull factors to be responsible for the increasing rate of migration in the health and educational systems in Nigeria. Furthermore, this study argues that the implications of brain drain on Nigeria's health and educational systems are enormous, as Nigeria will continue to suffer from decline labour force in both the health and educational system. Again, Nigeria will continue to suffer from declining economic growth and development as a result of the absence of the lost professionals in both the health and educational systems that would have contributed to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It is against this backdrop that this study makes the following suggestions. First, the Federal Government of Nigeria need to invest in the critical sector of the economy as it remains key to achieving long-term economic growth in the country. Second, Nigerian migrants and their families should be encouraged by the Nigerian government to invest their remittances in capital-accumulation initiatives that would beneficial to the economy by putting in place the suitable incentives and processes that will encourage them.

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