



# Dynamics of irregular migration: The Psycho-Philosophical irony in the global perception of equality

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## ABSTRACT

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This research aims to explore the dynamics of irregular migration as a psycho-philosophical irony in the quest for practical global equality. The research explores three fundamental issues in irregular migration bordering on the characteristics of migrants, the causes and motives of migrants, and the relationship of irregular migration with global perceptions of equality. Drawing on the Neo-Classical migration theory by Hicks (1932) and the Dual Labor Market theory by Ravenstein (1889), this study establishes that the unequal distribution of capital and labor at the macro level that leads to inequality in living conditions is a major factor of all migration. The study identifies that the characteristics and motives of migrants are identical to the problems associated with low socio-economic status which are the main drivers of migration. Furthermore, the study asserts that areas characterized by irregular migrants are consistent with the Human Capital Development Index (HCDI) classification that prioritizes living standard conditions across countries. As a benchmark, the HCDI supports the theoretical basis for high irregular migration in these regions triggered by the imbalance between countries at the lower end of the index and those at the top of the HCDI. It is suggested that the global policy on aid to poor countries should lean towards domestication of capacity building in such countries to improve living standards and employment and to mitigate the current global antithesis caused by terrorism and insecurity whose impact is unfavorable to world peace.

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## 1. Introduction

The validity of the ironical reality of supposed global search for equality is baffling in as much as the unevenness of nature's inertia remains constant as per non-uniform resource availability, distribution and management capability (Bendixsen, 2024). Among countries, the paradox is gruesome in the face of the sharp contrast in many practical aspects of life such as life expectancy; health outcomes, educational attainment, income earning power and other general econometric factors (Karlsen, 2021). These ironies are deep and pervasive globally; and sadly, several human efforts to subdue and contain the nuances of his environmental challenges which largely stem from

the variability of these prevailing inequalities have at best created man-made problems such as irregular migration (Koinova, 2024);(Grundler, 2024). As such, the global efforts have at best created arguably psycho-philosophical ironies as per the mindset of the peoples towards migration policies and the validity of policy arguments used to create the control in the system (Karlsen, 2021). It doesn't add up for instance, that billions of United States dollars are spent on aid to Africa and Asia at their indebtedness whereas they can utilized in capacity building than in direct consumption (Watkins, 2020). The former (resource capacity) is the crux of the global inequality and the motivation for most irregular migration (Triandafyllidou, 2020).

Inequalities in political power, economic and social structure pervade domestic and global life and further highlight the potency of these paradoxical realities (Simonsen, 2021). The rise in these inequalities has created many practical problems especially within the ambit of socio-distributive justice such as; disparity in income level, health management and quality of education with special emphasis to their attendant migration problems (Moreno Esparza, 2015). The reality of these paradoxes is constitutive of a development index according to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1999) and a threshold for global inequality which Saviolakis (2024) termed relatively lower and absolutely higher in resource distribution. This situation among others things viably remains an indispensable status quo accounting for the differences in the existing inequalities in human capabilities (Lyons, 1997). Without contradiction, these have profoundly affected both the debates among political philosophers about the 'currency' of distributive justice and the measure used by development specialists in steering the global policy towards: inalienable rights, practical equality, and global peace (Joseph, 2020).

In view that the aforesaid "currency", International Organization for Migration (IOM) emphasized that these inequalities have hitherto become the driving force for all migration interests as they particularly set the pace for the domestication of migration laws peculiar in each country (Ye, 2014). To strike a balance, there is unique role which is specifically played by country's immigration law which primarily among other things refuse entry to persons who are questionable and who constitute threats to the goals and aspirations of the intending host country (Chambers, 2020). There is a feeling therefore, that the implementation of these migrations laws largely constitutes the basis for irregular migration especially, where the routes seem frustrating and unavailable to genuine migrants (Könönen, 2020). In the views of the author, this is ironical especially when one compares the cost of human casualties and the cost policing the globe against for instance terrorism/insecurity and the spread of deadly communicable diseases as expended by IOM, UNDP, UN, WHO, and World bank etc. Without a genuine interest to effectively minimize the causes of both regular and irregular migration interests from the poorer nations, the global equality programmes under the various auspices of United Nations remain an irony (Triandafyllidou, 2020).

Regular migration for the citizens of poorer nations is usually characterized by high level frustrations and visa denial leading to source for alternatives in irregular migration (Furnham, 2019). Irregular migration is entry and residing in a country irregularly in violation of the terms of an entry visa/residence permit; or securing employment in the country irregularly irrespective of whether the migrant have the right to reside in the country or not (Megersa, 2024). Illegal entering of a country with false documents or without using at an official border crossing point are also within the ambit of irregular migration (Ganguly, 2020).

The paradox thus created in the opinion of the author, makes mockery of global effort to eradicated global threats caused by irregular migration. For instance there is a great contradiction according to Lemus-Way (2020) that the wealth of the developed nations is being used to impoverish the poorer nations; yet, there is stringent migration laws frustrating labour related migration of genuinely intending migrants from such poorer nations subjecting them to the risks of irregular entry. This instance, orchestrate discrimination and inequality which further fuels irregular migration. Insofar as global resources remain uneven, efforts to deepen distributive justice in areas such as inequalities in health, education and income should ideally focus on creating real capacities in those poor nations. Such capacity should be driven by comparative utilization of available resources in those poor nations aimed for instance, towards reducing the need for labour related migration, medical tourism and need for quality education. Only in the reality of creating such enabling capacity, can the global effort towards equality be efficacious in reducing the global threats of insecurity often created by irregular migration.

Without studying the real problems which motivate irregular migration, approaches towards proper policy administration to curtail it will remain ineffective. There is dearth of data and literature regarding empirical baseline information dedicated to scientifically understand the trend of the menace especially regarding the sociological and demographic factors associated with irregular migration. Where applicable, such relevant information has not served the purpose of directing a new focus for global action. There is hope that carrying out this study will practically enrich stakeholders' knowledge on migrant characteristics, causes of irregular migration and the driving motives.

There is also the problem of not approaching the problem with adequate victims' information such as motives, perceptions and experiences which are both personal and collective in attempting solution designs policy administrations. Policy administration ought to target the victims' motives and objectives and making realistic efforts not towards visa denials which encourage irregular migration but sincere efforts towards global policies to realistically and consistently aiding those nations to reduce the motivation for irregular migration.

The main objective of the study is to explore the dynamics of irregular migration using Anambra State, Nigeria as a case study. Specifically, the study will attempt to establish: (1) Irregular migrant characteristics, (2) Causes and motives of irregular migration, (3) Links between irregular migration and global inequality.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The Irregular migration is difficult to track as it occurs outside the regulatory norms of countries and usually with the aim of avoiding detection. Irregular migration according to International Organization for Migration (IOM) is movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving country (Pécoud, 2018). The causes may be traceable to the lopsidedness in the distribution of global wealth of nations which essentially created inequalities among nations. Some countries are developed, some others are developing while some are under-developed or classified as third world. Amidst the need for tourism and vacation, this situation primarily necessitates diffusion and drifting of people internationally (Fine, 2022). This background of inequality of nations has made International Organization for Migration (IOM) to contend that the reasons for migration especially those that are socio-economic and labour motivated remain: high cost of living, low standard of living, low purchasing and buying power, hyper inflation of goods and services, insecurity, poor medical infrastructure, lack of quality education and lack employment opportunity etc. (Bradley, 2023). Equally, International Labour Organization (ILO) emphasized that, economic and labour related motives top the migration chart of the world precipitating a varying range of problems (Ashutosh & Mountz, 2011).

The associated problems of migration (especially suffered by the receiving countries) gave States sovereign prerogative to determine the conditions of entry and stay of non-nationals in their territories. These are to be done with the knowledge and data required to make sound, evidence based and principled decisions which when violated attracts arrest, prosecution, repatriation and ban (Hirsch & Doig, 2018). The high rate of denial and refusal of entry and stay in accordance to the norms of the State principally created the problem of irregular migration (Ahouga, 2023).

Considering the growth of dangers in which many youths and adult persons have been subjected to in irregular migration and the near absence of proactive measures, awareness and education regarding these dangers; perhaps, it is timely for a devoted focus on identifying the real causes, motives, and consequences of irregular migration. This new focus will help in the understanding of the demographical and sociological factors of irregular migration and how the understanding thereof might serve global interest in policy making towards solving the real problem of inequality rather than its symptoms.

There is not a generally accepted theory that can explain international migration without limitations; however, this study will be anchored on the examination of Neo- Classical Theory Hicks 1932 in Pal (2018) and Dual Labour Market theory (Uys & Blaauw, 2006);(Piore, 2018).

### **The Neo- Classical Theory**

Neo-classical theory of migration was propounded by Hicks 1932 in Pal (2018), The theory assumes that the unbalanced distribution of capital and labour at the macro level causes inequality in living conditions is the leading factor of migration. The migrants move towards the places where employment, wages and other economic conditions are more favourable to them giving high chances of ending the differences in wages and living conditions between places. The neo-classical micro approach of migration (The Theory of the New Economics of Migration) considers not only the labour market but also the conditions of other markets forces such as the capital market or unemployment insurance market as reasons for migration.

Considering the ironies created by the inequalities of living condition which necessarily force those living in unfavourable areas to seek entry into countries of good living conditions, it may not be said that there is truly a global effort to tackle the causes rather than the symptoms. United Nation policies on the inequality and various empowerment programmes lack the sincerity to pursue a concrete substance in policy administration capable of improving on the living conditions of the third world as the major cause of migration. Improving on these conditions will directly reduce the need for migration and that of irregular migration. The billions of United State dollars which are used as humanitarian aid could possibly be utilized for instance, in the provision of basic infrastructures such as: education facilities, power infrastructure, good healthcare system and the rest. Capacity building in these directions represents a genuine move to even global threats of fuelled by irregular migration.

In addition, this theory also considers household strategy behind migration as the actual drive of migration is to change the source of income rather than maximize the income. This theory also emphasizes the importance of financial transfers of migration in the context of socio- cultural changes. Moreover, this theory also helps to understand why individuals of a particular community are potential migrants. It also observes that poor people are less inclined to migration compared to the rich due to the high costs of migration (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2003).

The strength of Neo-classical theory is that it supports the concept of irregular migration because literature evidence insists that irregular migration is usually motivated by socio-economic factors rather than health, religious, tourism factors. Hence, the theory is deemed suitable in establishing the cause of irregular migration. This support further gifts the current study the background to understand the motives behind the irregular migration crises and horrors of many

citizens have under went in the hands of traffickers and visa racketeers are economic oriented. Although, economic factors are good factors that trigger migration, the theory is weak because economic factors account but only a part of the reasons for migration since there other religious and political factors also trigger massive migration of people.

### **Dual Labour Market Theory**

Dual Labour Market theory was propounded by Ravenstein 1889 in Piore (2018), The theory proposes that redistribution of labour and the search of opportunity are the key economic movers of migration and perhaps the greatest thriving factor for irregular migration. This view was also shared by Adam Smith, father of economics, who viewed that labour migration is due to the imbalance in the labour market at different locations (Uys & Blaauw, 2006). According to this theory, the labour markets of industrialized countries have a dualistic structure - skilled workers (primary segment) and unskilled workers (secondary segment). The skilled workers are well- paid whereas the wages of unskilled workers in the secondary segment are low so that the local workers avoid secondary jobs. The employers do not pay higher wages to local workers to do the unpleasant jobs because they want to maintain wage differentials between the two segments of jobs. As a result of labour shortages at the bottom of the job hierarchy, employers are compelled to recruit the unskilled foreign workers, who do not plan to stay permanently, but accept the secondary job more easily since it pays them more income (Piore, 2018).

### **3. Method**

For the design, this study involved a qualitative design which according to Creswell (2003) in Wimmer and Dominick (2014) is one in which the researcher collects, analyses and integrates qualitative data in a single study or multiple studies in a sustained program of inquiry of primarily and secondary sources. Qualitative data obtained from the literature review were utilized in analyzing the facts available and their relationship with issues set to be addressed by the current study (Hellingman et al., 2023).

Type of Research, This research is categorized as qualitative research. The qualitative approach was chosen because the main objective is to deeply understand the dynamics of irregular migration as a psycho-philosophical irony in an effort to achieve global equality. This research focuses on exploring the phenomenon of irregular migration by exploring the underlying social, economic and cultural factors, and how this phenomenon reflects existing global inequalities (Aslam et al., 2020).

The method used in this research is a qualitative design. This design allows researchers to collect and analyze data in depth through a comprehensive literature review. This research integrates primary and secondary data to build a holistic understanding of irregular migration. This approach



also allows researchers to explore the relationship between migrant characteristics, causes of migration, and global perceptions of equality.

Furthermore, the subject of this research is irregular migrants, with a particular focus on a case study in Anambra State, Nigeria. The selection of this subject is based on the high level of irregular migration occurring in the region, which reflects the complex and diverse dynamics of migration. This research aims to identify the characteristics of irregular migrants, including demographics such as age, gender, education level, as well as the socio-economic background that drives them to undertake irregular migration. In addition, the data collection technique used was a comprehensive literature review. The researcher collected data from various relevant literature sources, including scientific articles, reports from international organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and policy documents related to migration. This literature review enabled us to understand the broad context of irregular migration and identify the main factors influencing the phenomenon.

Then there is the Data Analysis Technique, Data analysis in this research is carried out qualitatively. The researcher linked the data obtained from the literature review to the issues raised in the study, such as the characteristics of migrants, the causes of migration, and the relationship between irregular migration and global inequality. This analysis technique involves categorizing the data, identifying patterns, and interpreting the cause-and-effect relationship. In addition, the researcher also uses Neo-Classical migration theory and Dual Labor Market Theory as theoretical frameworks to strengthen the analysis and understand the economic factors underlying irregular migration (García-López, 2024).

Lastly, in the research method section, the researcher wrote Research Validity, the validity of this research is based on theoretical studies and the use of relevant theoretical frameworks. By adopting the Neo-Classical Migration Theory proposed by Hicks (1932) and the Dual Labor Market Theory by Ravenstein (1889), this study strengthens the theoretical foundation underlying the analysis of irregular migration. These theories help in understanding the unbalanced distribution of capital and labor at the macro level as the main factor driving migration. In addition, this study also uses empirical data from international agencies such as the ILO and IOM to validate the findings related to migrant characteristics and the motivations behind irregular migration. The use of data from trusted sources increases the credibility and validity of the research results, as the data has undergone a verification process and high quality standards. This research also ensures internal validity through data triangulation, by combining different sources of information and methods of analysis to ensure that the findings are consistent and reliable. In addition, the researcher also critically reflects on assumptions and biases that may affect data interpretation, so that the research results are more objective and accurate.

Overall, this research utilizes an in-depth qualitative approach to explore the dynamics of irregular migration in Nigeria, particularly in Anambra State. By combining qualitative design methods, a comprehensive literature review, and structured data analysis based on relevant migration theories, the research successfully provides deep insights into the factors driving irregular migration and how this phenomenon reflects wider global inequalities. The validity of the research is strengthened through the use of a strong theoretical framework and empirical data from reliable sources, ensuring that the findings are reliable and contribute significantly to the understanding of irregular migration issues in a global context.

#### **4. Result and Discussion**

The study explored the dynamics of irregular migration as a psycho-philosophical irony of global inequality. The study was predicated on the premise that rather than focus policy efforts on understanding the irregular migrant characteristics, causes and motives, global efforts to the problems of irregular migration cannot be said to be poised towards addressing the underlying factors.

##### **Irregular Migrant Characteristics**

On irregular migrant characteristics, critical issues which are to aid policy makers in understanding the nature of the irregular migrants may not have been given adequate attention and where they have; there is still not commensurate effort to holistically link it to migration outcomes instead of curbing the symptoms. There is a lot to be learned from the age; gender, religious inclinations, education level, socio-economic data, and crime records of the intending migrants. These demographic data may be pointers to the intended purpose of migration and may possible help policy makers and government to focus their efforts the associated problem for long term solution rather than a “quick fix”. Migrants’ characteristics may be relied upon heavily to predict migrant intentions and possible and expected range of conducts. Data from recent irregular migration crises in Nigeria such as the Libyan and Italian crises has revealed that the migrant characteristics is indicative of loss of active workforce as demographic data of repatriated migrants are predominantly young adult persons with basic education and within the age range of (19-30yrs) for male and (14-27yrs) for female

##### **Causes and Motives of Irregular Migration**

The most critical factor of irregular migration is ascertaining the causes and motives of irregular migration by intending migrants. In several instances, there is congruence that the prevalent causes of irregular migration include but not limited to the influences of peer pressures; lack of education/exposure, unemployment, get-rich-quick-syndrome, poverty/economic hardship and corruption (Isiugo-Abanihe, 2014; & IOM-Nigeria, 2014). The instance of these causes may provide



links in understanding on the motives of irregular migration among Nigerians as contrasted in Table 1.

**Table 1.** IRREGULAR MIGRATION AMONG NIGERIANS AS CONTRASTED

Causes	Motives
Peer Pressure	Self-assertion
Lack education	Unaware of dangers
Unemployment	To gain livelihood through paid job
Get-rich-quick-syndrome	To explore opportunities to become rich with less stress, much easier and faster without much details of hardwork
Poverty/economic hardship	To ensure provision for family
Corruption	To circumvent the law and avoid fees and restrictions

SOURCE: RESEARCHER PROCESSED (2024)

### **Irregular Migration and Global Inequality**

There is evidence from Anand and Segal (2017), Roope, (2015) and IOM-Nigeria (2014) that the causes of irregular migration as highlighted in Table 1 is predominantly prevalent in the third world with all its attendant problems. For instance, the Nigeria-Libyan humanitarian migration crises in the post Ghadafi era is indicative that the outline causes were positive in the case of the thousands of Nigerians who have entered the country illegally. The situation as it was then was equally underpins the validity of the framework of the current study which identified two factors: living conditions and labour mobility as the major cause and push of migration which may be substituted by irregular migration the genuine entry was threatened and deniable.

Thus, considering the typical situation such as the Libyan case and Malaysian topology which have hitherto raised the involvement of more Nigerians in irregular migration and visa racketeering; it is substantiated that greater number of such irregular migration are born out of need to improve living conditions and need to employment. In this light, the evidence of repatriated victims is valid to further establish that the more the irregular migration, the more the global inequality is accentuated. To the best knowledge of the author, global campaign on resource inequality and helping poorer nations is at best a political tool and paradoxical reality if one considers that at least the current surge in irregular migration is attributable to socio-economic inequality. These instances are ripe in even in the number of asylum seekers into developed nations. It is therefore not difficult to infer that the global synergy to eradicate poverty under the various auspices of United Nations agencies is a charade at its best. This is further brought to reality with inflation rates, cost of living and deterioration of critical infrastructure; the inability for the citizenry to sail through the mention turbulent indices, is the major cause for most migration intentions especially among the youth population. Where this migration intent is frustrated, there is usually higher rate of irregular migration and visa racketeering sometimes at the expense of risking one's life and savings. Push and Pull Factors - Fundamentally when one considers the causes

of irregular migration, it is clear that socio-economic factors constitute the push factors such as: poverty, poor education, employment and need to change one's fortune. These push factors when they combine with the pull factors of migration like: abundance employment opportunities in the destination country, promising improved standard of living and enthralling city life; there is greater chances irregular migration will become the alternative to high cost of visa processing and visa denial or refusal. Therefore the push factors readily create a sense of inequality in between those who can obtain regular entry and those cannot who resort to irregular or illegal entry however it might be.

*Human Capital Development Index* - To further elucidate on the evidence that inequality in human capital development is responsible for the associated problems of migration drift including the problem of irregular migration; data measurement criteria on aspects of inequality which connote irregular migration is also required. A look at the human capital development index 2017 revealed that among the 50 leading nations from Norway through to Ireland, it is crystal clear that the middle income and low income countries which fall short in human capital development will obviously seek to move towards high developed regions. Frustrations occasioned by enforcement of migration laws also orchestrate visa denials the major reason for irregular migration. Human capital development index is a holistic measurement which covers all facets of life from life expectancy to literacy level. To genuinely balance human inequality, there is need for global policy aimed at balancing this index at least in the perspective which creates basic opportunities and necessary infrastructure required for job creation.

### **Implication of the Study**

The instances of gruesome consequences of irregular migration are still fresh among Nigerians with their nasty experiences so elaborate to be ignored. These experiences are also the same among many other nationals. These experiences as much as they ruined lives and careers, consequently created both cognitive and emotional detachment from the global solidarity propaganda as championed by United Nations through several World Bank projects. Critically, human capital development index is implicated as virtually not being the same across nations; this disparity is the major push factor for migration (regular and irregular in nature). With improvements on the push factors, there is an expected reduction on migration interests and as much as it pains, this has not happened. IOM (2017) migration data is indicative that the push factors have worsened as they were in year 2000. This change is what has translated to a significant increase in migration statistics (irregular migration inclusive) even with increased funding for accelerated reduction on the push factors globally. This outcome is sad as much as it is ironically. Hence, the study findings critically imply that: With continuous and un-intervened political and socio-economic deterioration of the poor countries, the potency of the push factors of migration will increase. This will further pressure

on the population of citizens seeking to migrate to developed or high income nations will escalate. More aids to the poorer nations have not essentially reduced the push factors to the chagrin of policy makers. In some instances the aids have displaced and jeopardized other critical national policies which ought to work hand in hand with the aid. Global solidarity to the global threats such as terrorism and insecurity is a lip service as it has not paid adequate attention to factors which in the first instance fuel them such as poverty, poor standard of living and irregular migration. For instance, since its global awareness, the push factors of irregular migration have not been abated rather they are on the increase unlike few decades ago when the awareness is lesser.

## **5. Conclusion**

The study focused on the validity of the ironical reality posed by the surge in irregular migration which trails the supposed global solidarity and unity in the face of unevenness of nature's resource endowments. As much as this created psycho-philosophical irony of global policy which seeks to support poorer nations, it has become the foundation for other global antitheses (such as terrorism and insecurity) whose unsavorily impacts hunt the peace of our world. Inequalities in political power, economic and social structures remain the most cogent reasons for migration whether it is regular or irregular. Irregular migration is born out of several circumstances which usually associated with low socio-economic class. The rise in inequality represents the practical problems created by disparity socio-economic distribution and justice which pressure the push factors of migration. International Organization for Migration (IOM) emphasized that this disparity created what could be regarded as migration "currency" which is typified of the migrant characteristics, motives and causes irregular migration in any nation. There is therefore links in views of the author between the index of irregular migration and global inequality. Anchored on the Neo-classical theory of migration by Hicks (1932) and Dual Labour Market theory was by Ravenstein (1889) the study established that unbalanced distribution of capital and labour at the macro level causes inequality in living conditions is the leading factor of migration. At the after critical review of literature, three implications of the study were outlined emphasizing that disparity in human capital development index created both push and pull factors of migration which pressure increased migration interests among citizens of lower income and low-middle income countries with the potential to escalate irregular migration.

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