

# IRREGULAR MIGRATION AMONG YOUTH IN NIGERIA: METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES AND RESULTS

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## *Abstract*

*Nigeria's population was 150 million according to the 2006 census and the prevailing socio-economic situation in the country present a sustaining situation for emigration. However, attempts at studying the phenomenon of irregular migration has been hindered by some factors primary among which is the access to participants. This study uses the referral method in social research to identify some youth who had left the country under irregular circumstances and were still in transit. The life histories of participants were used to analyze the situation surrounding their departure and also their experiences in transit. Seven youth were interviewed and they responded to questions bordering on their background information, migration intention, international migration experience as well as exposure to the media. This paper discusses some of the methodological challenges faced in the conduct of this study and these include: definition of what constitutes irregular migration; identification of participants; securing the trust and cooperation of participants, and other ethical issues involved in the study of this type. The paper concludes with some policy suggestions on the control of irregular migration as well as discussions on lessons learnt in getting irregular migrant which no doubt constitute part of the hard to reach population.*

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## **Introduction**

The problem of irregular migration is a topical issue as all countries fall into one or more of the three categories of source, transit and destination points. In this study, what constitutes irregular migration includes all types of movement across borders that violate the migration norms of both sending and receiving countries. These types of movement are represented by trafficking and smuggling of migrants from countries of less economic development to more developed countries for the purpose of prostitution, forced labour, organs sales, among other reasons (UNODC 2009a; World Bank 2009). The United Nations estimated that four million people are trafficked globally each year (Arlacchi, 2000; Raymond, 2002) whilst the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2001) suggested that between 700 thousand and 2 million women and children are trafficked within and across international borders annually. The phenomenon of irregular migration has been noted to be driven, among other factors, by rising youth unemployment, insecurity, and change in migration laws, especially the promulgation and enforcement of strict migration laws by countries which hitherto had more relaxed migration laws. Studying irregular migration has been hampered by a number of factors especially the fact that irregular migrants are not usually bold to identify themselves as such and they can only be reached through referral or other respondent driven sampling techniques. This methodological challenge may explain why a number of previous studies on irregular migration have presented the issue from the policy makers' perspectives (Carling, 2006; De Haas, 2007; IOM, 2008; Lutterbeck, 2006; 9k), with a number of studies concentrating on stocks and flows of migration. This informs the present study to examine irregular migration from the perspectives of migrants, leading to a socially embedded understanding of the issue of irregular migration and present the methodological challenges involved in the study. Therefore the study explored the methodological concerns involved in irregular migration among Nigeria youth as well as investigating the coping strategies of returnee irregular migrants in Nigeria. The experiences of these returnee migrants were also explored.

## **Brief literature review**

There have been a number of controversies on what constitutes irregular migration. Definition was a major concern to scholars as the fluidity in migration norms would not allow for a stable and enduring definition of what really constitutes irregular migration. Consequently, the phenomenon of irregular migration has been described by various scholars using different labels (Portes 1978; de Genova 2002; Espenshade 1995; Guild 2004; Baldwin-Edwards 2008; Düvell 2008; Batlistella, 2008; Triandafyllidou 2010; Cvajner and Sciortino 2010; Donato and Armenta 2011; Kubal, 2012). Some of these labels include "illegal migration", "undocumented migration", "unauthorized migration", and "clandestine migration" among others. The various conceptual debates arose following different political and ideological viewpoints in conceiving these concepts. For instance, Koser (2005) criticized the use of 'illegal' to qualify migrants for the following reasons. Firstly, the term "illegal" connotes criminality and most irregular migrants are not criminals. This was corroborated by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Non-Citizens, which recommended that countries of destination should not treat immigrants (even those without valid documents) as criminals. Secondly, since irregular migrants are humans who have Fundamental Human Rights, irrespective of their status, defining them as illegal will therefore amount to denying their humanity (Guild, 2010; Ochoa-Llido, 2004). Methodologically, the concept of irregular migration in this study was limited to those who had been involved in human trafficking and smuggling.

In terms of location of the study, the case of irregular migration in Nigeria is peculiar in many ways. With a population of over 150 million, Nigeria stands as a country to be reckoned with in terms of development potential. Nigeria has been described as the demographic giant of Africa, not only because her population constitutes one-sixth of the total population of Africa, but because the country also plays very crucial political, as well as economic roles in Africa. Even as the country has often been labeled as the “giant of Africa” her poverty rate is well over 70% and she is plagued with a myriad of socio-economic challenges. Nigeria indeed paints an ideal picture of a country rife with several push factors for migration. Migration in Nigeria has also been described as multi-dimensional, considering the fact that the country has played different roles in international migration. Nigeria was a major destination country for most migrants during the late 1970s at the peak of the country’s oil boom (Adepoju, 2006). Later, it became a transit point as well as an originating country for most migrants leaving the coasts of Africa. The prolonged period of military rule also marked a major watershed in the history of emigration given the tyranny of the time and the attendant collapse of basic social and economic infrastructure.

## **Data and methods**

The study was an integral part of a larger study which examined the patterns and processes of irregular migration among youth in Nigeria. This present article was sourced from both primary and secondary data; primary data through in-depth interviews and life histories conducted among seven returnee irregular migrants who had left the country without valid documents and secondary data from desk reviews. The study was carried out with the collaboration of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP), Abuja, Nigeria. The life histories of the returnee migrants were x-rayed in relation with their motivations to migrate as well as experiences on the trip. The referral sampling method was used to capture 4 male and 3 female returnee migrants who had been deported from different parts of the world. Their life histories were taken using key informant interviews and the information audio taped, transcribed and analyzed using content analysis.

## **Results**

### **Socio-demographic background**

Table 1 summarizes the profiles of the respondents. Seven cases were purposively selected from returnee irregular migrants and their life histories were taken with a view to analysing their experiences on the trip. Selected cases for the key in-depth interviews comprised 3 females and 4 males who had left the country in an irregular manner. The 3 young women were trafficked from Benin City, Nigeria to Italy and Libya respectively, while the 4 men were all smuggled out of the country to different parts of the world including Switzerland, Belgium, Libya and Gambia respectively. The main difference between human trafficking and smuggling is the consent of the individuals. While trafficked persons are usually taken out under various guises such as promise of employment or further education, smuggled persons not only pay their ways through but are also aware to an extent of the risks involved. Notably, the relationship existing between smuggled persons and the smugglers always terminates at destination points. This is unlike trafficked persons who are usually still tied to their patrons because of the debt bondage and other obligations which they must have sworn an oath to keep. The majority of the cases were secondary school drop outs who cited inability to cope and lack of support as reasons for dropping out of school. Also, the majority of the selected cases were from polygynous families (with their fathers marrying more than one wife; an average of 3 wives). Furthermore, most of the cases were from large sized families with the most having 19 children in the family while the least had 7 children in the family. The number of children a family has may have implications for the quality of care and attention received by children in that family.

Lastly, all selected cases were deported from destination or transit with the exception of only one who returned to Nigeria after fruitless efforts at crossing to Europe from Algeria. These data support the theory that systemic breakdown is a major factor responsible for the proliferation of irregular migration among youth. This could be observed among the young girls who had to drop out of school because they could not pay their fees. The fact that some of their parents were privy to the arrangement could further explain the breakdown of values in the family which is supposed to be the basis of socialization for the child. The migrants who left the country due to unemployment also alluded to this fact.

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents by socio-demographic characteristics**

S/N	Age	Education	Gender	Family background	Family size	Position in family	Migration history
1	30	SS1	Female	Polygyny	19	11th	Deported from Italy
2	19	SS2	Female	Monogamy	9		Deported from Libya
3	21	SSCE	Female	Polygyny	10	9th	Deported from Libya
4	20	SSCE	Male	Polygyny	17	7th	Deported from Libya
5	39	SSCE	Male	Polygyny	10	2nd	Voluntarily returned from Gambia
6	22	SSCE	Male	Polygyny	7	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Deported from Belgium
7	37	B.Sc.	Male	Polygyny	10	1 <sup>st</sup>	Deported from Switzerland

### **Motivation to migrate**

Returnee migrants were asked what factors motivated them to leave the country when they did. A look through the responses given by all the respondents to this question reflected the push factors inherent in the Nigerian society. As young men and women who were not sure of what their future in the country could be, they all ventured into an alternative line of action that is leaving the country for greener pastures abroad. The quest to make ends meet constitutes the major motivation for all the respondents. All of them were at the time of departure not satisfied with their respective statuses, economically and academically. One of the returnees noted:

*“After seeing some people who had travelled and returned to live flashy lifestyle or maybe he or she has sent some cars home to their families and from there you begin to develop the interest of traveling too. You begin to nurse and plan to go. So as you are planning then you meet the connection men.” (39 Year Old Male returnee migrant from Gambia).*

Another respondent who was motivated by the information available to him about job and life prospects in Europe had this to say:

*“I was hearing some of my friends saying they wanted to travel at the barbing saloon. So I just decided to go with them. I had the mindset of going to hustle and make it. I am a footballer and I believe that when I get to Italy, I will survive.” (20 year old male returnee migrant from Libya).*

One of the respondents' quests for better education was used as bait for her to be trafficked to Italy. She noted that:

*"During the first term holiday in my SS one, a family friend told my parents that he would take me to Italy to continue my education. My parents succumbed to the idea because they felt that in Italy my education would be unhindered and my prospect of getting a job after school was higher than in Nigeria."* **(30-year old female returnee migrant from Italy).**

A similar situation happened in the case of another respondent who had dropped out of secondary school in Nigeria due to inability to pay her school fees. She said:

*"Since I had no money to continue my secondary education, I had to drop out in my SS 2. One Sunday morning, a friend informed me that there was a man who was looking for young girls to take to Paris. I was told that handwork like hair dressing was in high demand there and I had learnt how to plait hair before then. She took me to the man who said he would take us to Lagos to obtain our passports. Unfortunately, when I asked him to let me inform my parents, he refused and locked us up in his house till the day the journey was to commence. He took us to Abuja instead in company of some foreigners."* **(19-year old female returnee from Libya).**

Yet another female migrant reported that:

*"I wanted to go to school but there was nobody to support me to school. I had nothing to do so I started thinking about traveling out of the country. I wanted to go and struggle for myself so I can help my younger brothers who could not go to school. Nobody is really willing to help somebody. Then I met one man whose name is Osaze and my brother's friend. He said he was taking me to Paris. He said he worked with the Nigerian embassy in Paris and if we get to Paris he would give me a good job."* **(21-year old female returnee migrant from Libya)**

### **Experiences on the journey**

Returnee migrants were asked to relate their experiences on the journey and quite a number of facts were revealed. Persons who were smuggled had the liberty to do what they wanted in the course of the journey. For instance, they had to engage in a number of menial jobs to survive and they also had liberty to spend the money earned in the process but the trafficked girls were not as lucky as their movements were limited by their traffickers for security reasons. They had to disguise themselves anytime they were going to buy things from the market.

The smuggled persons (usually men) had to engage in some menial jobs that they would not have done in Nigeria as a result of ego. One of them reported that:

*"I was a shoe maker in Gambia which I cannot do in Nigeria. I was also into barbing of hair to make ends meet."* **(39 year old male returnee migrant, from Gambia).**

Another respondent who had travelled to Switzerland noted that at a point in time he had to do all sorts of menial jobs to survive. He said:

*"At a point in time, I worked as a morgue attendant and I even had to serve as a drug courier sometime to make ends meet."* **(37 year old male returnee migrant from Switzerland).**

Those who went through the land route all reported having to go through long and torturous trips in the desert. One reported that:

*“We were moving from one place to the other in the end we spent over 3 hours like from 12 midnight to 3 am. Some people were even lost in the desert.”* **(20-year old male returnee migrant from Libya).**

One of the women also recalled how some of the girls in the envoy died in transit. She said that:

*“We went by Zodiac ship through Morocco. We were 160 girls on three Zodiac ship and in the middle of the sea, the first and second ship left but our own ship had engine problem and was almost sinking before another ship came from nowhere to rescue us. But before the rescue team arrived, 6 girls had died. Another one died before we entered the Zodiac. Eventually, only 100 of us made it to the land. We went to a Red Cross camp and spent a night there. They gave us some hours ultimatum to leave their land, then we went to Madrid from where our patrons came to pick us.”* **(30-year old female returnee migrant from Italy).**

### **Role of social network in irregular migration**

The role of the social network in irregular migration has enjoyed the attention of scholars (Massey 1994; Sassen, 1995; Brown and Bean, 2006). Social networks serve as the sources of information as well as provision of supports to migrants in terms of finances or other logistics. Respondents were asked what role social networks, particularly, friends and relatives played in their movement. The majority of the returnee migrants had the supports of their parents and friends in the course of the journey. One of the respondents recalled that while in Gambia (a transit country), another irregular migrant got a job in a Scandinavian country and had to return to Nigeria to source money for the trip. He said:

*“When I was in Gambia, there was a driver living in the same house with me who had a driver’s license. Many of us who were transit migrants came together and used his driver’s license to apply for job in one Scandinavian country. One of us was so lucky to be selected and he quickly came back to Nigeria to inform his parents who gave him money to process the necessary travel documents and he got the visa and travelled.”* **(39 Year Old Male returnee migrant from Gambia).**

One of the male respondents reported that he got his initial fund from the sale of his father’s house. He said:

*“My father’s house was sold and I used my share to facilitate my travel to Libya. My father had 4 wives and 17 children. I am the 7<sup>th</sup> child.”*

He added further that:

*“I know many people who had used the sea route; many of my friends have gone through the route. Before they left Nigeria, I knew and about two weeks after they left, an Italian phone number called me and they told me they got there (Italy) safely. Many boys in my area have gone through the sea.”* **(20 year old male returnee migrant from Libya).**

Sometimes, migration decision is not an individual decision as it takes the entire family to decide who travels and how to support him/her. A respondent recalled that:

*“Relatives and friends play very supportive roles for example; my elder brother called me one day and said there was a man in his church who helps young people who want to*

*travel out. The man is a musician who helps people to travel out with his band. My brother provided the money for passport and gave the man some money on my behalf. He gave the man about 150,000. I went with the man to play at an occasion which was allegedly taken to the embassy. After a while, the effort was thwarted and I am not sure he has collected his money from the man". (39 year old male returnee migrant from Gambia).*

One of the respondents also noted that he sent money home through Western Union when he was in Switzerland and though no one knew what and how he was surviving, he noted that:

*"I used to send money to Nigeria through Western Union and I had higher social status among my colleagues in Nigeria as a result of the money I was sending home. Though nobody knew what I was doing to survive."(37 year old male returnee migrant from Switzerland).*

### **Process of human trafficking**

Human trafficking is the second highest world crime after illegal arms transactions. It has also been described as the modern form of human slavery, which like the old form involves the trading of human as commodities with no regards for their fundamental human rights. The Palermo Protocol to Suppress, Prevent and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines Trafficking in Persons as *the* recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation (UNODC, 2011). The United Nations estimates that 2.5 million people are in forced labour (including sexual exploitation) at any time as a result of trafficking (International Labour Organization, 2007; Goldin *et al* 2011). There are two main types of trafficking and these include; internal and international trafficking. While internal trafficking takes place within the borders of a country, international trafficking involves movement of victims outside the borders of the country. Human trafficking differs from migrant smuggling in this aspect as migrant smuggling usually involves movement outside the borders of a country. The human and economic costs of human trafficking are enormous on individuals and communities. For instance, by conservative estimates, the cost of trafficking in terms of underpayment of wages and recruiting fees is over \$20 billion (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2009, World Bank, 2010). Besides the economic costs, it also involves criminality and human rights implications. The most publicised aspects of human trafficking are sex trafficking and child labour, and the involvement of children in the trafficking industry is giving more cause for concern considering the recent dimension which involves children in the sex tourism industry. The United Nations' Children Emergency Funds (UNICEF, 2003) estimated that about 1.2 million children are trafficked each year. The victims of trafficking (mostly women and children) are often either kidnapped or lured from their home by traffickers under various guises like securing employment or pursuing educational advancement (UNODC, 2009b; Goldin *et al* 2011). Table 2 shows the process, means and purpose of human trafficking in brief.

**Table 2: Process of Human Trafficking**

Process	Means	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recruitment</li><li>• Transportation</li><li>• Transfer</li><li>• Harboursing</li><li>• Receipt of persons</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Threat</li><li>• Force</li><li>• Coercion</li><li>• Abduction</li><li>• Fraud</li><li>• Deception</li><li>• Abuse of power</li><li>• Abuse of vulnerability</li><li>• Giving and receiving of payments</li></ul>	Exploitation which includes: a) Prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation b) Forced labor and services c) Slavery and similar practices d) Involuntary servitude e) Removal of organs □

Source: UNODC (2009a); World Bank (2009)

### ***Satisfaction with return***

Respondents were asked about their satisfaction with their return to Nigeria and it was a mixed reaction that emanated from them. While many of the trafficked girls were glad to be free from sex slavery, some of them were not too glad to have returned without accomplishing their goals of travelling. Incidentally, all the ladies were being stigmatised by their friends and relatives for not “making it” abroad. They also complained about the inadequacies of the government programs on rehabilitation and reintegration. One of the ladies said:

*“Actually, I am not happy because I was almost through with the payment of my Madam and I would have been on my own. My madam seized all my things even the gold that the landlord of the house gave me. My documents, clothes and everything are still there. I was asked to pay \$35,000 (6 Million Nigeria Naira) 5 Million Italian money. I have paid almost 5 million Naira” (30 year old female returnee).*

### **Methodological Issues**

A study of this kind is faced with two major methodological issues namely; sampling methods and ethical issues. On the sampling technique, since the respondents constitute the hard to reach population in the sense that they would not ordinarily expose their identity, the snowball or referral sampling method was used to get the respondents. Four of them were got through referral from the National Agency for the Prohibition in Traffic in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP), while the other three men were got through referral from friends who knew them well.

### **Ethical issues**

Practical steps were also taken to ensure that ethical standards were maintained in the study. One of such was that the anonymity of respondents was assured. In the report and other documents, respondents were identified without reference to their actual name to protect their identity. Likewise, the informed consent of respondents was sought before the interview began. Respondents were well informed about the objectives of the study as well as their right to withdraw from the study at any moment in the course of



the study. Lastly, permission was sought from respondents before the sessions were audio taped and those who objected to it were allowed to respond without recording with tapes.

### **Conclusion and policy recommendations**

The study of irregular migration from the perspectives of irregular migrants, who constitutes hard to reach populations requires tactical methods which the study has applied taking into consideration important methodological and ethical issues. These allowed the participants to respond to questions without any fear of being identified with particular responses, while vital issues concerning experiences of returnee irregular migrants are addressed. Secondly, the study also appraised the adequacy or otherwise of efforts put in place by government to address the issue of irregular migration. The results gotten from the study revealed the existence of criminal networks in human trafficking and smuggling as well as loopholes in the prosecution of offenders. Similarly, the results explain the reasons for the inability of the official agency saddled with the task of prosecuting traffickers and counseling victims, to succeed in their tasks. This is due to the combination of both tasks of prosecution and counseling which are not complimentary. As long as the victims continue to see NAPTIP from the prosecutor perspective, there will be the need to have another agency or better still Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to handle the issue of counseling.

The study therefore concludes with the following policy recommendations:

- Youth should be given alternatives to irregular migration
- Enlightenment efforts on dangers of irregular migration should be extended to rural areas
- Less attention should be paid on material acquisitions by members of the society
- There should be more synergy of efforts among NGOs and state based agents
- Government reintegration programs should be audited for effectiveness

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The problem of irregular migration is a topical issue as all countries fall into one or more of the three categories of source, transit and destination points. In this study, what constitutes irregular migration includes all types of movement across borders that violate the migration norms of both sending and receiving countries. These types of movement are represented by trafficking and smuggling of migrants from countries of less economic development to more developed countries for the purpose of prostitution, forced labour, organs sales, among other reasons (UNODC 2009a; World Bank 2009). The United Nations estimated that four million people are trafficked globally each year (Arlacchi, 2000; Raymond, 2002) whilst the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2001) suggested that between 700 thousand and 2 million women and children are trafficked within and across international borders annually. The phenomenon of irregular migration has been noted to be driven, among other factors, by rising youth unemployment, insecurity, and change in migration laws, especially the promulgation and enforcement of strict migration laws by countries which hitherto had more relaxed migration laws. Studying irregular migration has been hampered by a number of factors especially the fact that irregular migrants are not usually bold to identify themselves as such and they can only be reached through referral or other respondent driven sampling techniques. This methodological challenge may explain why a number of previous studies on irregular migration have presented the issue from the policy makers' perspectives (Carling, 2006; De Haas, 2007; IOM, 2008; Lutterbeck, 2006; 9k), with a number of studies concentrating on stocks and flows of migration. This informs the present study to examine irregular migration from the perspectives of migrants, leading to a socially embedded understanding of the issue of irregular migration and present the methodological challenges involved in the study. Therefore the study explored the methodological concerns involved in irregular migration among Nigeria youth as well as investigating the coping strategies of returnee irregular migrants in Nigeria. The experiences of these returnee migrants were also explored.

## **Brief literature review**

There have been a number of controversies on what constitutes irregular migration. Definition was a major concern to scholars as the fluidity in migration norms would not allow for a stable and enduring definition of what really constitutes irregular migration. Consequently, the phenomenon of irregular migration has been described by various scholars using different labels (Portes 1978; de Genova 2002; Espenshade 1995; Guild 2004; Baldwin-Edwards 2008; Düvell 2008; Batlistella, 2008; Triandafyllidou 2010; Cvajner and Sciortino 2010; Donato and Armenta 2011; Kubal, 2012). Some of these labels include "illegal migration", "undocumented migration", "unauthorized migration", and "clandestine migration" among others. The various conceptual debates arose following different political and ideological viewpoints in conceiving these concepts. For instance, Koser (2005) criticized the use of 'illegal' to qualify migrants for the following reasons. Firstly, the term "illegal" connotes criminality and most irregular migrants are not criminals. This was corroborated by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Non-Citizens, which recommended that countries of destination should not treat immigrants (even those without valid documents) as criminals. Secondly, since irregular migrants are humans who have Fundamental Human Rights, irrespective of their status, defining them as illegal will therefore amount to denying their humanity (Guild, 2010; Ochoa-Llido, 2004). Methodologically, the concept of irregular migration in this study was limited to those who had been involved in human trafficking and smuggling.

In terms of location of the study, the case of irregular migration in Nigeria is peculiar in many ways. With a population of over 150 million, Nigeria stands as a country to be reckoned with in terms of development potential. Nigeria has been described as the demographic giant of Africa, not only because her population constitutes one-sixth of the total population of Africa, but because the country also plays very crucial political, as well as economic roles in Africa. Even as the country has often been labeled as the “giant of Africa” her poverty rate is well over 70% and she is plagued with a myriad of socio-economic challenges. Nigeria indeed paints an ideal picture of a country rife with several push factors for migration. Migration in Nigeria has also been described as multi-dimensional, considering the fact that the country has played different roles in international migration. Nigeria was a major destination country for most migrants during the late 1970s at the peak of the country’s oil boom (Adepoju, 2006). Later, it became a transit point as well as an originating country for most migrants leaving the coasts of Africa. The prolonged period of military rule also marked a major watershed in the history of emigration given the tyranny of the time and the attendant collapse of basic social and economic infrastructure.

## **Data and methods**

The study was an integral part of a larger study which examined the patterns and processes of irregular migration among youth in Nigeria. This present article was sourced from both primary and secondary data; primary data through in-depth interviews and life histories conducted among seven returnee irregular migrants who had left the country without valid documents and secondary data from desk reviews. The study was carried out with the collaboration of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP), Abuja, Nigeria. The life histories of the returnee migrants were x-rayed in relation with their motivations to migrate as well as experiences on the trip. The referral sampling method was used to capture 4 male and 3 female returnee migrants who had been deported from different parts of the world. Their life histories were taken using key informant interviews and the information audio taped, transcribed and analyzed using content analysis.

## **Results**

### **Socio-demographic background**

Table 1 summarizes the profiles of the respondents. Seven cases were purposively selected from returnee irregular migrants and their life histories were taken with a view to analysing their experiences on the trip. Selected cases for the key in-depth interviews comprised 3 females and 4 males who had left the country in an irregular manner. The 3 young women were trafficked from Benin City, Nigeria to Italy and Libya respectively, while the 4 men were all smuggled out of the country to different parts of the world including Switzerland, Belgium, Libya and Gambia respectively. The main difference between human trafficking and smuggling is the consent of the individuals. While trafficked persons are usually taken out under various guises such as promise of employment or further education, smuggled persons not only pay their ways through but are also aware to an extent of the risks involved. Notably, the relationship existing between smuggled persons and the smugglers always terminates at destination points. This is unlike trafficked persons who are usually still tied to their patrons because of the debt bondage and other obligations which they must have sworn an oath to keep. The majority of the cases were secondary school drop outs who cited inability to cope and lack of support as reasons for dropping out of school. Also, the majority of the selected cases were from polygynous families (with their fathers marrying more than one wife; an average of 3 wives). Furthermore, most of the cases were from large sized families with the most having 19 children in the family while the least had 7 children in the family. The number of children a family has may have implications for the quality of care and attention received by children in that family.

Lastly, all selected cases were deported from destination or transit with the exception of only one who returned to Nigeria after fruitless efforts at crossing to Europe from Algeria. These data support the theory that systemic breakdown is a major factor responsible for the proliferation of irregular migration among youth. This could be observed among the young girls who had to drop out of school because they could not pay their fees. The fact that some of their parents were privy to the arrangement could further explain the breakdown of values in the family which is supposed to be the basis of socialization for the child. The migrants who left the country due to unemployment also alluded to this fact.

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents by socio-demographic characteristics**

S/N	Age	Education	Gender	Family background	Family size	Position in family	Migration history
1	30	SS1	Female	Polygyny	19	11th	Deported from Italy
2	19	SS2	Female	Monogamy	9		Deported from Libya
3	21	SSCE	Female	Polygyny	10	9th	Deported from Libya
4	20	SSCE	Male	Polygyny	17	7th	Deported from Libya
5	39	SSCE	Male	Polygyny	10	2nd	Voluntarily returned from Gambia
6	22	SSCE	Male	Polygyny	7	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Deported from Belgium
7	37	B.Sc.	Male	Polygyny	10	1 <sup>st</sup>	Deported from Switzerland

### **Motivation to migrate**

Returnee migrants were asked what factors motivated them to leave the country when they did. A look through the responses given by all the respondents to this question reflected the push factors inherent in the Nigerian society. As young men and women who were not sure of what their future in the country could be, they all ventured into an alternative line of action that is leaving the country for greener pastures abroad. The quest to make ends meet constitutes the major motivation for all the respondents. All of them were at the time of departure not satisfied with their respective statuses, economically and academically. One of the returnees noted:

*“After seeing some people who had travelled and returned to live flashy lifestyle or maybe he or she has sent some cars home to their families and from there you begin to develop the interest of traveling too. You begin to nurse and plan to go. So as you are planning then you meet the connection men.” (39 Year Old Male returnee migrant from Gambia).*

Another respondent who was motivated by the information available to him about job and life prospects in Europe had this to say:

*“I was hearing some of my friends saying they wanted to travel at the barbing saloon. So I just decided to go with them. I had the mindset of going to hustle and make it. I am a footballer and I believe that when I get to Italy, I will survive.” (20 year old male returnee migrant from Libya).*

One of the respondents' quests for better education was used as bait for her to be trafficked to Italy. She noted that:

*"During the first term holiday in my SS one, a family friend told my parents that he would take me to Italy to continue my education. My parents succumbed to the idea because they felt that in Italy my education would be unhindered and my prospect of getting a job after school was higher than in Nigeria."* **(30-year old female returnee migrant from Italy).**

A similar situation happened in the case of another respondent who had dropped out of secondary school in Nigeria due to inability to pay her school fees. She said:

*"Since I had no money to continue my secondary education, I had to drop out in my SS 2. One Sunday morning, a friend informed me that there was a man who was looking for young girls to take to Paris. I was told that handwork like hair dressing was in high demand there and I had learnt how to plait hair before then. She took me to the man who said he would take us to Lagos to obtain our passports. Unfortunately, when I asked him to let me inform my parents, he refused and locked us up in his house till the day the journey was to commence. He took us to Abuja instead in company of some foreigners."* **(19-year old female returnee from Libya).**

Yet another female migrant reported that:

*"I wanted to go to school but there was nobody to support me to school. I had nothing to do so I started thinking about traveling out of the country. I wanted to go and struggle for myself so I can help my younger brothers who could not go to school. Nobody is really willing to help somebody. Then I met one man whose name is Osaze and my brother's friend. He said he was taking me to Paris. He said he worked with the Nigerian embassy in Paris and if we get to Paris he would give me a good job."* **(21-year old female returnee migrant from Libya)**

### **Experiences on the journey**

Returnee migrants were asked to relate their experiences on the journey and quite a number of facts were revealed. Persons who were smuggled had the liberty to do what they wanted in the course of the journey. For instance, they had to engage in a number of menial jobs to survive and they also had liberty to spend the money earned in the process but the trafficked girls were not as lucky as their movements were limited by their traffickers for security reasons. They had to disguise themselves anytime they were going to buy things from the market.

The smuggled persons (usually men) had to engage in some menial jobs that they would not have done in Nigeria as a result of ego. One of them reported that:

*"I was a shoe maker in Gambia which I cannot do in Nigeria. I was also into barbing of hair to make ends meet."* **(39 year old male returnee migrant, from Gambia).**

Another respondent who had travelled to Switzerland noted that at a point in time he had to do all sorts of menial jobs to survive. He said:

*"At a point in time, I worked as a morgue attendant and I even had to serve as a drug courier sometime to make ends meet."* **(37 year old male returnee migrant from Switzerland).**



Those who went through the land route all reported having to go through long and torturous trips in the desert. One reported that:

*“We were moving from one place to the other in the end we spent over 3 hours like from 12 midnight to 3 am. Some people were even lost in the desert.”* **(20-year old male returnee migrant from Libya).**

One of the women also recalled how some of the girls in the envoy died in transit. She said that:

*“We went by Zodiac ship through Morocco. We were 160 girls on three Zodiac ship and in the middle of the sea, the first and second ship left but our own ship had engine problem and was almost sinking before another ship came from nowhere to rescue us. But before the rescue team arrived, 6 girls had died. Another one died before we entered the Zodiac. Eventually, only 100 of us made it to the land. We went to a Red Cross camp and spent a night there. They gave us some hours ultimatum to leave their land, then we went to Madrid from where our patrons came to pick us.”* **(30-year old female returnee migrant from Italy).**

### **Role of social network in irregular migration**

The role of the social network in irregular migration has enjoyed the attention of scholars (Massey 1994; Sassen, 1995; Brown and Bean, 2006). Social networks serve as the sources of information as well as provision of supports to migrants in terms of finances or other logistics. Respondents were asked what role social networks, particularly, friends and relatives played in their movement. The majority of the returnee migrants had the supports of their parents and friends in the course of the journey. One of the respondents recalled that while in Gambia (a transit country), another irregular migrant got a job in a Scandinavian country and had to return to Nigeria to source money for the trip. He said:

*“When I was in Gambia, there was a driver living in the same house with me who had a driver’s license. Many of us who were transit migrants came together and used his driver’s license to apply for job in one Scandinavian country. One of us was so lucky to be selected and he quickly came back to Nigeria to inform his parents who gave him money to process the necessary travel documents and he got the visa and travelled.”* **(39 Year Old Male returnee migrant from Gambia).**

One of the male respondents reported that he got his initial fund from the sale of his father’s house. He said:

*“My father’s house was sold and I used my share to facilitate my travel to Libya. My father had 4 wives and 17 children. I am the 7<sup>th</sup> child.”*

He added further that:

*“I know many people who had used the sea route; many of my friends have gone through the route. Before they left Nigeria, I knew and about two weeks after they left, an Italian phone number called me and they told me they got there (Italy) safely. Many boys in my area have gone through the sea.”* **(20 year old male returnee migrant from Libya).**

Sometimes, migration decision is not an individual decision as it takes the entire family to decide who travels and how to support him/her. A respondent recalled that:

*“Relatives and friends play very supportive roles for example; my elder brother called me one day and said there was a man in his church who helps young people who want to*

*travel out. The man is a musician who helps people to travel out with his band. My brother provided the money for passport and gave the man some money on my behalf. He gave the man about 150,000. I went with the man to play at an occasion which was allegedly taken to the embassy. After a while, the effort was thwarted and I am not sure he has collected his money from the man". (39 year old male returnee migrant from Gambia).*

One of the respondents also noted that he sent money home through Western Union when he was in Switzerland and though no one knew what and how he was surviving, he noted that:

*"I used to send money to Nigeria through Western Union and I had higher social status among my colleagues in Nigeria as a result of the money I was sending home. Though nobody knew what I was doing to survive."(37 year old male returnee migrant from Switzerland).*

### **Process of human trafficking**

Human trafficking is the second highest world crime after illegal arms transactions. It has also been described as the modern form of human slavery, which like the old form involves the trading of human as commodities with no regards for their fundamental human rights. The Palermo Protocol to Suppress, Prevent and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines Trafficking in Persons as *the* recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation (UNODC, 2011). The United Nations estimates that 2.5 million people are in forced labour (including sexual exploitation) at any time as a result of trafficking (International Labour Organization, 2007; Goldin *et al* 2011). There are two main types of trafficking and these include; internal and international trafficking. While internal trafficking takes place within the borders of a country, international trafficking involves movement of victims outside the borders of the country. Human trafficking differs from migrant smuggling in this aspect as migrant smuggling usually involves movement outside the borders of a country. The human and economic costs of human trafficking are enormous on individuals and communities. For instance, by conservative estimates, the cost of trafficking in terms of underpayment of wages and recruiting fees is over \$20 billion (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2009, World Bank, 2010). Besides the economic costs, it also involves criminality and human rights implications. The most publicised aspects of human trafficking are sex trafficking and child labour, and the involvement of children in the trafficking industry is giving more cause for concern considering the recent dimension which involves children in the sex tourism industry. The United Nations' Children Emergency Funds (UNICEF, 2003) estimated that about 1.2 million children are trafficked each year. The victims of trafficking (mostly women and children) are often either kidnapped or lured from their home by traffickers under various guises like securing employment or pursuing educational advancement (UNODC, 2009b; Goldin *et al* 2011). Table 2 shows the process, means and purpose of human trafficking in brief.

**Table 2: Process of Human Trafficking**

Process	Means	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recruitment</li><li>• Transportation</li><li>• Transfer</li><li>• Harboursing</li><li>• Receipt of persons</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Threat</li><li>• Force</li><li>• Coercion</li><li>• Abduction</li><li>• Fraud</li><li>• Deception</li><li>• Abuse of power</li><li>• Abuse of vulnerability</li><li>• Giving and receiving of payments</li></ul>	Exploitation which includes: a) Prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation b) Forced labor and services c) Slavery and similar practices d) Involuntary servitude e) Removal of organs □

*Source: UNODC (2009a); World Bank (2009)*

### ***Satisfaction with return***

Respondents were asked about their satisfaction with their return to Nigeria and it was a mixed reaction that emanated from them. While many of the trafficked girls were glad to be free from sex slavery, some of them were not too glad to have returned without accomplishing their goals of travelling. Incidentally, all the ladies were being stigmatised by their friends and relatives for not “making it” abroad. They also complained about the inadequacies of the government programs on rehabilitation and reintegration. One of the ladies said:

*“Actually, I am not happy because I was almost through with the payment of my Madam and I would have been on my own. My madam seized all my things even the gold that the landlord of the house gave me. My documents, clothes and everything are still there. I was asked to pay \$35,000 (6 Million Nigeria Naira) 5 Million Italian money. I have paid almost 5 million Naira” (30 year old female returnee).*

### **Methodological Issues**

A study of this kind is faced with two major methodological issues namely; sampling methods and ethical issues. On the sampling technique, since the respondents constitute the hard to reach population in the sense that they would not ordinarily expose their identity, the snowball or referral sampling method was used to get the respondents. Four of them were got through referral from the National Agency for the Prohibition in Traffic in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP), while the other three men were got through referral from friends who knew them well.

### **Ethical issues**

Practical steps were also taken to ensure that ethical standards were maintained in the study. One of such was that the anonymity of respondents was assured. In the report and other documents, respondents were identified without reference to their actual name to protect their identity. Likewise, the informed consent of respondents was sought before the interview began. Respondents were well informed about the objectives of the study as well as their right to withdraw from the study at any moment in the course of

the study. Lastly, permission was sought from respondents before the sessions were audio taped and those who objected to it were allowed to respond without recording with tapes.

### **Conclusion and policy recommendations**

The study of irregular migration from the perspectives of irregular migrants, who constitutes hard to reach populations requires tactical methods which the study has applied taking into consideration important methodological and ethical issues. These allowed the participants to respond to questions without any fear of being identified with particular responses, while vital issues concerning experiences of returnee irregular migrants are addressed. Secondly, the study also appraised the adequacy or otherwise of efforts put in place by government to address the issue of irregular migration. The results gotten from the study revealed the existence of criminal networks in human trafficking and smuggling as well as loopholes in the prosecution of offenders. Similarly, the results explain the reasons for the inability of the official agency saddled with the task of prosecuting traffickers and counseling victims, to succeed in their tasks. This is due to the combination of both tasks of prosecution and counseling which are not complimentary. As long as the victims continue to see NAPTIP from the prosecutor perspective, there will be the need to have another agency or better still Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to handle the issue of counseling.

The study therefore concludes with the following policy recommendations:

- Youth should be given alternatives to irregular migration
- Enlightenment efforts on dangers of irregular migration should be extended to rural areas
- Less attention should be paid on material acquisitions by members of the society
- There should be more synergy of efforts among NGOs and state based agents
- Government reintegration programs should be audited for effectiveness

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