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The Youth Migration Wave: Health Implication and Demographic Consequences in Wukari Local Government Taraba State Nigeria

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A R T I C L E I N F O

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A B S T R A C T

This study examined the youth migration wave in Wukari, focusing on the aspirations driving migration, the risks encountered by young migrants, and the demographic consequences for both emigrant and host communities. The study review relevant literature, it also guided by the Aspirations-Capabilities theory, the research employed a quantitative design, utilising a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of 400 youths, aged 15–35 years, selected through stratified random sampling, 386 was retieved. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. The findings reveal that the primary aspirations for migration are better employment (35.8%) and educational opportunities (26.4%). Key challenges include difficulty finding employment (31.1%) and inadequate housing (21.2%). Demographically, migration leads to reduced labour availability (29.0%) in communities of origin, while destination areas experience mixed developmental effects, viewed positively by 48.2% of respondents. The study concludes that youth migration is a dualistic phenomenon, offering pathways for personal advancement while generating significant risks and demographic imbalances. Recommendations include enhancing local opportunities in rural areas, strengthening migrant protections, investing in urban infrastructure to accommodate migrant

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INTRODUCTION

Migration is now recognised as a central force shaping modern societies across the world. According to International Migration (IOM, 2025) explains that migration has become a major feature of global social change in the twenty first century. This means that population movement is no longer occasional but a permanent part of how societies develop. Therefore, migration plays an essential role in influencing economic patterns, community structures, and demographic outcomes.

In addition, it defines migration as a response to both pressures and opportunities that exist within any social environment. This means that people move because they face difficulties in their present location while seeing possibilities elsewhere. Consequently, this view helps to explain why many young Nigerians look beyond their immediate environment for better prospects.

Furthermore, Koser, K. (2016), a well-known West African migration scholar, describe migration as patterns in the region, driven by uneven development and limited opportunities in many home communities. In simple terms, this means that when jobs and services are not evenly available, people move to areas that promise improvement. Therefore, his work helps situate Nigerian youth migration within a wider regional context. Also, Awumbila, (2017), notes that youth migration in Africa is shaped by the search for education, employment, and improved life chances. This means that young people migrate because they want better futures that their current environment does not provide. As a result, her view shows that aspiration is one of the strongest forces behind youth mobility.

Nigeria has experience migration in different form as a result of both push and pull factors. According to Sennuga (2023) explains that rural to urban youth migration in Nigeria is closely linked with the decline of economic activities in rural areas and the attraction of opportunities in cities. In simple terms, this means that as rural life becomes harder, cities appear more promising. Consequently, his work shows how internal migration continues to reshape Nigerian demographic patterns.

In addition, Kelong (2025) observes that youth migration in Nigeria is often connected to unemployment and economic hardship, which push many young people to seek livelihoods elsewhere. This means they move not necessarily because they want to travel but because they have limited options at home. Therefore, his work shows how economic pressure drives contemporary migration decisions.

Moreover, Mberu (2017) argues that the movement of young people affects demographic structures by reducing the proportion of young adults in rural communities while increasing population pressure in urban centres. This means that when youths leave, the age balance of the population changes. Consequently, migration produces effects that extend beyond individuals to entire communities.

According to Ajaero (2018), the continuous movement of youths also affects access to services, employment distribution, and social support systems in both sending and receiving areas. In simple words, this means that migration

alters how people share resources and opportunities. Thus, his work shows that migration has broad consequences that are felt across different regions of the country.

Taraba in particular has experience migration due to several factors like ethnic conflict, religious conflict, underdevelopment, unemployment, banditry etc. Wukari LGA has experienced a lot of youth migration due to constant crisis and armed conflict. Also, youth within the outskirt also migrate in search of greener pasture and means of livelihood like every other youth in Nigeria, migration into wukari town has increasingly became worse in recent time due to the establishment of Federal University Wukari (FUW), and also the University Teaching Hospital which has create a lot of employment for both indigenes and other bonafide Nigerians in search of greener pasture. This migration has creates both negative and positive consequences ranging from neglect of traditional values, growing of urban settlement, increase crime, population of urban centres. This migration breeds individualistic style and endanger the aged in rural areas due to neglect as many youth migrate to better their life.

The motivation for this study arises from the increasing wave of youth migration from other parts of Nigeria to Wukari LGA, which has created concerns about their aspirations, the dangers they encounter, and the demographic changes that follow. As youth mobility intensifies, there is a growing need to understand how these patterns influence national development and the wellbeing of communities in Wukari Local Government of Taraba state with the following specific objectives to;

i. To examine the major aspirations that influence youth migration in Wukari Local Government Area.
ii. To analyse the demographic challenges and consequences of the youth migration wave in Wukari.
iii. To proffer strategies for addressing the effects of youth migration and development patterns in both sending and receiving communities in Wukari LGA

LITERATURE REVIEW

Migration

According IOM, (2025), defines migration as the movement of people, both within countries and across national borders, which is shaped by economic, social, political, and environmental factors. This means that migration is not just a simple relocation but is often influenced by broader circumstances that either encourage or compel people to move. In practical terms, this can be seen when residents from rural areas relocate to urban centres because cities offer more employment opportunities, better education, or improved social services than their home regions. Therefore, migration can be understood as a response to opportunities or structural pressures rather than a purely individual choice.

Koser K. (2016), define migration as a process involving movement across space and a change of residence, often driven by inequalities in economic opportunities, social networks, or structural conditions. This view implies that migration is not a one-time event but rather a series of decisions influenced by

both personal aspirations and external factors. For example, a young graduate from a small town may move to a larger city where friends or relatives help them secure a job, illustrating how social networks and opportunity differences interact in shaping migration decisions. Consequently, this perspective emphasises migration as both strategic and responsive, combining individual goals with environmental realities.

Geogiana F. T. (2020), conceptualise migration as a social process in which individuals or groups relocate temporarily or permanently under varying social, economic, political, or environmental conditions. Their perspective highlights that migration is deeply embedded in societal structures and not solely determined by personal desire. For instance, a farmer may leave a drought-affected region to settle in a nearby town where markets, schools, and healthcare are more accessible, reflecting how social and economic conditions guide movement. This understanding underscores that migration carries implications not only for the individual but also for the communities left behind and those receiving the migrants.

Youth Migration

Awumbila (2017) views youth migration as the movement of young people, typically aged 15 to 35, within West Africa, primarily driven by the pursuit of better economic, educational, and social opportunities. She further highlights that youths constitute the most mobile demographic because they actively seek to improve their livelihoods and life conditions. Aspiration and Opportunity for Migration in Nigeria

In simpler terms, this implies that young people move not only to earn more or pursue education but also to access opportunities that may be unavailable in their home communities. For instance, a 20-year-old student from a rural town may relocate to Accra or Lagos to attend university or secure part-time employment, thereby reflecting both aspiration and opportunity-seeking behavior. Consequently, this perspective presents youth migration as a proactive response to opportunities rather than merely a reaction to hardship.

Adepoju (2025) emphasizes that youth migration is influenced by structural inequalities between regions, which are often conceptualized as push and pull factors. He argues that deprived areas push youths away due to unemployment, poor infrastructure, and insecurity, whereas urban or economically advanced areas pull them in with better job prospects, education, and living conditions. In other words, young people move because their home environment restricts their growth, and other locations seem to offer better prospects. For example, a 25-year-old graduate from northern Nigeria may move to Lagos in pursuit of employment opportunities, as the home region provides limited chances for professional advancement. Thus, this perspective frames youth migration both as a response to challenges and as a strategic decision aimed at improving personal circumstances.

Consequences on Development Pattern in Nigeria

According to Mberu (2017), the demographic and societal implications of youth migration from rural to urban areas or across regions has significantly influence the community age grade structure, which lead to shortage labour supply in most rural area, retard development dynamics of sending and improve

the receiving communities. Put simply, the absence of young people can diminish productive capacity in their home towns, while cities receiving them may experience increased population pressure at the same time surplus manpower, at thsame time increase demand for housing and other social amenities which may also pose challenges as to what we are experiencing today in wukari LGA. For instance, when many youths from a rural village migrate to Lagos, the village may face labor shortages in agriculture, whereas Lagos experiences higher demand for housing and public services. Therefore, this view links youth migration to broader demographic consequences, emphasizing that its impact extends beyond individual migrants.

Determinants of Migration

Economic Determinants

Carling (2002) explains that migration decisions are often driven by economic opportunity gaps between origin and destination, where individuals evaluate whether potential earnings elsewhere can improve their living conditions. This view shows that migration is influenced by both actual income differences and perceived chances of financial advancement. In simple terms, people tend to move when they believe another location offers better economic prospects. For instance, a young trader from Kano may relocate to Abuja because urban markets offer higher returns and a larger customer base.

Aspirational Determinants

Bakewell (2020) argues that migration is often shaped by aspirational goals which include the desire for education, personal advancement and improved social status. This means that mobility is sometimes driven not by immediate hardship but by long term ambitions. Therefore, aspirations become an important determinant because they encourage individuals to seek opportunities that their home communities may not provide. For example, a secondary school leaver in Enugu may choose to move to Port Harcourt because he aspires to gain technical skills or apprenticeship training that is unavailable locally.

Social Network Determinants

Castles (2020) states that social networks play a central role in migration by providing information, support and resources that lower the risks and costs of moving. This explanation shows that connections with previous migrants make relocation easier and more likely for others. In simple words, people tend to move to places where they already know someone who can help them settle. For example, a young woman from Makurdi may move to Lagos because her cousin already lives there and offers accommodation and job guidance.

Structural and Inequality Determinants

Skeldon (2022) maintains that uneven development across regions contributes significantly to migration flows, as individuals leave areas with limited infrastructure, weak services and low employment for more developed destinations. This means that regional disparities form strong push and pull conditions that shape movement patterns. Consequently, migration becomes a response to spatial inequalities. For example, youths from semi urban areas in

northern Nigeria may relocate to cities like Kaduna or Kano where public services and economic activities are more advanced.

Demographic Determinants

Clemens (2021) observes that demographic composition, particularly the presence of a large youth population, increases migration rates because younger people are more likely to relocate for schooling, work and social transition. This shows that population structure itself becomes a driver of movement. In simple terms, when a country has many young adults, more migration naturally occurs. For example, in a community with a high number of school leavers, many may move to urban centres to begin vocational training or to seek employment.

Environmental Determinants

Black E. (2021) explains that environmental pressures such as drought, flooding and land degradation influence migration by disrupting livelihoods and increasing vulnerability. This view suggests that environmental change does not directly force movement but interacts with social and economic conditions to influence decisions. Therefore, environmental stress becomes an indirect but significant determinant. For example, repeated flooding in a farming community may push young farmers to move to towns where they can find nonagricultural work.

Migration Risks and Challenges

IOM (2024) explains that migration often exposes individuals to significant risks, especially when the movement is unregulated or undertaken without adequate information. He notes that young migrants, in particular, face dangers such as unsafe travel routes, unstable employment, and limited access to legal protection. In simple terms, this means that the journey itself and the early stages of settlement can put young people in vulnerable positions. For example, a Nigerian youth travelling through the Sahara without proper documents may face extortion or abandonment, showing how the search for opportunity can quickly turn into exposure to harm.

Crawley (2016) emphasises that many risks arise from the mismatch between migrants' expectations and the realities they encounter. Her research shows that young people often move with the hope of finding stable work or safety, but instead confront discrimination, exploitation, or restricted access to services in destination countries. Put simply, even when the journey is successful, life after arrival can be more difficult than migrants imagined. For instance, a young woman who moves from Nigeria to a European city expecting a good job may end up in informal work with low pay because she lacks local networks or recognised qualifications.

Flahaux (2017) highlights that risks are shaped by structural conditions, including weak support systems, restrictive border policies, and economic uncertainty in both origin and destination countries. She argues that these conditions increase the likelihood that young migrants will face hardship, such as poor housing, social isolation, and reduced access to formal employment. In simple words, the environment surrounding migration can make life harder for youths even after they relocate. For example, a Nigerian migrant arriving in a West African city without family support may struggle to secure accommodation

or daily income, showing how structural challenges compound personal difficulties.

Demographic Consequences of Migration

Castles (2020) explains that migration reshapes population structures by influencing the age composition and labour distribution of both sending and receiving regions. He notes that when large numbers of young people migrate, the places they leave behind experience a decline in the working-age population, while destinations experience an increase in youthful labour supply. This means that communities losing many young migrants may struggle with reduced productivity, whereas host areas may face pressure to provide jobs and services for growing populations. For example, when many Nigerian youths depart rural towns for Lagos or Abuja, the villages may lack enough hands for farming, while the cities become more crowded and competitive.

Lee (2021) argues that migration affects demographic patterns through changes in fertility, mortality, and population growth rates in both origin and destination areas. He observes that when young adults move, they often alter their family formation processes, such as delaying marriage or childbearing due to new social and economic realities. In simple terms, migration can slow population growth in sending regions while increasing it incrementally in receiving areas. For instance, a young man who moves from Kano to Port Harcourt for work may postpone starting a family because of the cost of living, influencing the demographic structure of both locations.

Skeldon (2024) emphasises that migration contributes to urban expansion and regional population imbalances. He argues that sustained youth movement towards cities accelerates urbanisation, often faster than infrastructure can accommodate. This shows that migration does not just shift people geographically; it produces long-term demographic transformations that shape planning, resource allocation, and development priorities. For example, continuous migration of young Nigerians into cities like Lagos results in rapid population growth that increases the demand for housing, transportation, and social services, while the rural communities they leave behind may experience gradual population ageing.

Strategic for Addressing the Challenges of High Wave of Youth Migration

Economic Empowerment:

i. Digital Economy: Invest in tech hubs, coding academies, and digital skills training (AI, marketing) to create jobs.
ii. Entrepreneurship: Provide financial support, incubation, and mentorship for youth-led businesses, linked to market needs
iii. Skills Development: Strengthen vocational training to equip youth with relevant, in-demand skills.

i. Improved Governance & Stability:

i. Policy Reform: Develop and implement policies addressing poverty, insecurity, and governance.
ii. Stakeholder Collaboration: Involve local, national, and international stakeholders, including the private sector.

Targeted Interventions:

i. Awareness & Education: Inform youth about migration risks and highlight opportunities at home.
ii. Infrastructure Development: Improve rural infrastructure to retain talent and attract investment.
iii. Youth Participation: Engage youth directly in migration policy debates to harness their potential for development.

Creating Inclusive Environments: Make the domestic economy more inclusive, supportive, and attractive to retain young talent, fostering socio-economic growth. By implementing these multi-pronged strategies, Nigeria can build a more robust internal economy, reduce the "push" factors, and encourage young people to contribute to national development, turning brain drain into brain gain.

Theoretical Framework

The theory guiding this study is the Aspirations Capabilities Framework, propounded by Hein de Haas in (2010). This theory is widely applied in migration studies to explain why individuals, especially youths, decide to migrate, how they navigate the challenges of migration, and how their movements affect demographic patterns in both sending and receiving communities. It provides a comprehensive lens to understand the interplay between personal aspirations, structural constraints, and migration outcomes, making it particularly relevant to a study on youth migration in Nigeria.

The Aspirations Capabilities Framework posits that migration occurs when individuals have both the desire (aspirations) and the ability (capabilities) to move. Aspirations represent the hopes and expectations that drive people to consider relocating, such as pursuing education, employment, social mobility, or better living standards. Capabilities, on the other hand, include the resources, knowledge, and means necessary to achieve these aspirations, such as financial resources, social networks, and legal access. The theory emphasises that migration is not merely a reaction to hardship, but often a proactive strategy aimed at achieving personal and social goals.

Furthermore, the framework recognises that structural and environmental conditions shape both aspirations and capabilities. Young people may aspire to migrate because of limited opportunities in their home communities, yet the feasibility of migration depends on their ability to overcome challenges such as poverty, insecurity, lack of documentation, or social restrictions. This dual focus on desire and capacity allows for a nuanced understanding of migration risks, showing why some youths succeed in migrating while others cannot, and how these movements influence population distribution and demographics.

Application of this Theory to the Study

Justification for adopting this theory lies in its direct relevance to the three main aspects of this study. First, it explains the aspirations driving youth migration in Nigeria. Second, it accounts for the risks and challenges youths face during the migration process. Third, it helps to understand the demographic consequences of youth migration, including shifts in population structure, labour distribution, and urbanisation patterns. The Aspirations–Capabilities Framework therefore provides a clear and coherent lens through which the study

can examine why youths migrate, the difficulties they encounter, and the impact of their movement on both origin and destination communities.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research design to examine the youth migration wave in Nigeria, focusing on aspirations, risks, and demographic consequences. A quantitative approach is suitable because it allows for the collection of numerical data that can be analysed statistically, providing objective insights into patterns, trends, and relationships among variables related to youth migration. This design ensures that the findings are generalisable to the broader population of young people within the study area.

Study Area: Wukari is a Local Government Area in Taraba State, on the A4 highway. The Donga River flows through the area and the Benue River forms a boundary with Nasarawa State to the northwest. The town is the base of the Wukari Federation, a traditional state, made up of ten district; Puje, Auyi, Rafin Kada, Chonku, Kante, Tsokundi, Jibu, Akwana, Hospital and Bantaje district. It is the home of the great Jukun people. It has an Area: 4,308 km² – Density: 73.91/km² and a population of 238,283 in the enumeration of 2006 and a projected population of 318,400 in 2016 (NPCN & NBS, 2016). Wukari is multi-ethnic. While the Jukun consider that it is their traditional homeland, other ethnic groups including the Tiv and Hausa forms a significant part of the population. However, the major source of income in the area it agriculture, though few of the women engage in petty trading, government work like teaching and other clerical work. Recently wukari LGA has three university namely Federal University Wukari, National Open University Wukari Study Centre, Kwararafa University Wukari and a University Teaching Hospital which has made the town to experience significant growth and development as a result of migration from different parts of the country, both rural and urban.

The population for this study consists of youths aged 15 to 35 years in Nigeria. According to the National Bureau of Statistics Youth Survey Report (2023), the population of youths in this age group is 64 million, with females making up 51.6 percent of the total. The study includes both migrants (those who have relocated within or outside Nigeria) and non-migrants (those who have remained in their communities) to capture the full spectrum of experiences and perceptions related to youth migration. This age range is targeted because studies (Awumbila et al., 2017) shows those youths are the most mobile demographic, frequently moving in search of education, employment, and improved living conditions.

The sample size is determined using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where; n = Sample size (?),
N = population size (64,000,000),
e = level of precision (0.05),
1 = constant

$$n = \frac{64{,}000{,}000}{1+64{,}000{,}000\,(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{64{,}000{,}000}{1+64{,}000{,}000\,(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{64{,}000{,}000}{1+160{,}000}$$

$$n = \frac{64{,}000{,}000}{160{,}001}$$

n= 400

Therefore, the sample size for the study is 400 respondents. A stratified random sampling technique is employed. The population is divided into urban and rural youths to ensure representation of both groups, and respondents are then selected randomly from each stratum proportionally to their population size. But since the wards sixe is unknown the researcher decided to make it an equal distribution of figures, that is 50 respondent for each council wards. This ensures the sample accurately reflects the characteristics of the youth population.

Method of Data collection

Data are collected using a structured questionnaire with open-ended questions. The questionnaire captures information on migration motivations, perceived risks, experiences during migration, and the demographic impact of youth migration. Data collection was conducted in person over four weeks, including weekdays and weekends, with informed consent obtained from all respondents. With the use of two (2) research assistant to ensure fast and speedy data collection from six (6) council wards namely; Puje, Hospital, Avyi, Chonku, Tsokundi, Rafin-Kada, Bantaje, Kente The collected data was analysed using frequency and simple percentages.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed. Respondents are assured of confidentiality and anonymity, participation is voluntary, and individuals retain the right to withdraw at any stage. Sensitive questions are handled carefully to avoid discomfort or distress, and ethical approval was obtained from relevant authorities like district heads before engaging n any discussion the respondents for data collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed for this study. Out of these, 386 questionnaires were properly completed and retrieved some questionnaire were not completely filled, others went missing due to exhaustion of research assistant, nevertheless, the researcher has a response rate of 96.5 percent.

Table 1. Social Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	**Category**	**Frequency (f)**	**Percentage (%)**
Gender	Male	198	51.3
	Female	188	48.7
Total	-	**386**	**100**

Age	15–20 years	72	18.7
	21–25 years	152	39.4
	26–30 years	110	28.5
	31–35 years	52	13.5
Total	-	**386**	**100**
Marital Status	Single	214	55.4
	Married	138	35.8
	Divorced/Separated	20	5.2
	Widowed	14	3.6
Total	-	**386**	**100**
Educational Qualification	No formal education	18	4.7
	Primary education	36	9.3
	Secondary education	142	36.8
	Tertiary education (Diploma/University)	190	49.2
Total	-	**386**	**100**
Location/Residence	Urban	248	64.2
	Rural	138	35.8
Total	-	**386**	**100**
Have you migrated from your place of birth?	Yes	178	46.1
	No	208	53.9
Total	-	**386**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The data on gender shows that out of 386 respondents, 198 were male, representing 51.3 percent, while 188 were female, accounting for 48.7 percent. This indicates a nearly balanced gender distribution among respondents, suggesting that both male and female youths are actively engaged in discussions or experiences related to migration. The closeness in numbers also implies that the findings of the study reflect perspectives from both genders without significant bias toward one group.

Analysis of age reveals that the majority of respondents fall within the 21–25 years bracket, with 152 individuals constituting 39.4 percent of the sample. This is followed by those aged 26–30 years at 28.5 percent, 15–20 years at 18.7 percent, and 31–35 years at 13.5 percent. This distribution suggests that migration concerns are most prominent among young adults who are in the early stages of career and education development. The predominance of the 21–25 age group indicates that this is the demographic most likely to consider migration for opportunities in employment, education, or social mobility.

The marital status data show that 214 respondents, representing 55.4 percent, were single, while 138 respondents or 35.8 percent were married. Additionally, 20 respondents (5.2 percent) were divorced or separated, and 14 respondents (3.6 percent) were widowed. This suggests that unmarried youths

are the most active participants in migration, which could be because they have fewer family obligations and greater flexibility to relocate. It also indicates that migration is often considered a pursuit undertaken before major family responsibilities arise.

Educational qualifications reveal that 190 respondents (49.2 percent) have tertiary education, 142 respondents (36.8 percent) have completed secondary education, 36 respondents (9.3 percent) have primary education, and 18 respondents (4.7 percent) have no formal education. This highlights that most respondents are educated, which aligns with the understanding that higher education increases mobility and aspiration for better opportunities. The dominance of tertiary-educated youths also suggests that migration is often linked to the pursuit of academic advancement or skilled employment.

Regarding location or residence, 248 respondents (64.2 percent) live in urban areas, while 138 respondents (35.8 percent) live in rural areas. This demonstrates that urban youths constitute the larger portion of the sample, possibly because cities provide more access to information, resources, and opportunities that facilitate migration. It also indicates that rural youths are still significantly involved, which may reflect migration pressures from rural to urban areas in search of employment and education. These findings correspond with the work of Georgiana F., (2020), she find out that the major causes of migration in America is to access quality tertiary education which is lacking in some states

Finally, when asked whether they had migrated from their place of birth, 178 respondents (46.1 percent) answered yes, whereas 208 respondents (53.9 percent) answered no. This shows that nearly half of the respondents have experienced migration, reflecting a high level of mobility among Nigerian youths. It suggests that migration is a common phenomenon and a relevant issue to study, particularly in understanding its drivers, risks, and consequences within the youth population. This findings is also in line with the IOM (2024), where many youths in Africa migrate in search of greener pasture to boost economic power and better their lives of that of their families

Table 2. Primary Aspirations Influencing Youth Migration

Response	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Better educational opportunities	102	26.4
Better employment opportunities	138	35.8
Higher income or improved standard of living	90	23.3
Desire for social mobility	38	9.8
Family reasons	18	4.7
Total	386	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The data on primary aspirations influencing youth migration indicates that the majority of respondents, 138 or 35.8 percent, migrate primarily for better employment opportunities. This is followed by those seeking better educational

opportunities, accounting for 102 respondents or 26.4 percent. Others cited higher income or improved living standards (23.3 percent), desire for social mobility (9.8 percent), and family reasons (4.7 percent). These results suggest that economic and educational factors are the dominant drivers of youth migration, reflecting a strong pursuit of personal and professional development among Nigerian youths. It also shows that while some youths are motivated by broader social or family considerations, these are less influential in comparison to employment and education. Also, this findings agrees with Koser (2016), many youth migrate in search of employment opportunities to improve their wellbeing and advance their social life.

Table 3. Risks and Challenges Encountered by Youth Migrants

Response	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Difficulty finding employment	120	31.1
Inadequate housing or accommodation	82	21.2
Discrimination or social exclusion	64	16.6
Exploitation or unsafe working conditions	66	17.1
Health or security risks	54	14.0
Total	386	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis of the risks and challenges encountered by youth migrants shows that difficulty finding employment is the most reported challenge, with 120 respondents representing 31.1 percent. Inadequate housing or accommodation was noted by 82 respondents (21.2 percent), exploitation or unsafe working conditions by 66 respondents (17.1 percent), discrimination or social exclusion by 64 respondents (16.6 percent), and health or security risks by 54 respondents (14.0 percent). These findings highlight that while migration offers opportunities, it also exposes youths to multiple challenges, emphasizing that the journey and settlement processes are fraught with potential difficulties and uncertainties. These results tallies with the report from the IOM (2024), which states that it creates urbanization which in turn breeds crimes and other social vices.

Table 4. Demographic Consequences of Youth Migration in Communities of Origin

Response	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Reduced labour availability	112	29.0
Changes in family structures	88	22.8
Increased dependency on remaining adults	64	16.6
Reduced economic productivity	70	18.1
No noticeable effect	52	13.5
Total	386	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The demographic consequences of youth migration in communities of origin reveal that reduced labour availability is the most significant effect,

reported by 112 respondents or 29.0 percent. Changes in family structures were noted by 88 respondents (22.8 percent), reduced economic productivity by 70 respondents (18.1 percent), increased dependency on remaining adults by 64 respondents (16.6 percent), and no noticeable effect by 52 respondents (13.5 percent). This indicates that youth migration has tangible impacts on the human and economic resources of sending communities, affecting productivity, family dynamics, and support systems, while a smaller proportion experiences minimal observable change. This finding partially disagree with the IOM (2020), according to the IOM, it creates breakdown of law and order, it destabilize family, complete loss of traditional values. In as much as it has significant on the items mention above, it does not extinguish it completely

Table 5. Effect of Youth Migration on Development in Destination Communities

Response	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Highly positive	54	14.0
Positive	132	34.2
Neutral	102	26.4
Negative	68	17.6
Highly negative	30	7.8
Total	386	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The effect of youth migration on development in destination communities shows that 132 respondents (34.2 percent) perceive the impact as positive, while 54 respondents (14.0 percent) regard it as highly positive. A neutral effect was reported by 102 respondents (26.4 percent), negative by 68 respondents (17.6 percent), and highly negative by 30 respondents (7.8 percent). These results suggest that youth migration contributes to development in destination areas for many, particularly through labour supply and skills, but it can also create challenges such as pressure on infrastructure and services, indicating a mixed outcome depending on local context and capacity.

Health Implications of Youth Migration in Wukari LGA

The study highlights several health-related consequences tied to the youth migration wave in Wukari Local Government Area, Taraba State:

Strain on Urban Health Infrastructure

Migration into Wukari town, driven by opportunities at the Federal University Wukari and the Teaching Hospital, has led to rapid urban population growth. This increases demand for healthcare services, often outpacing available facilities and staff, resulting in overcrowding and reduced quality of care.

Neglect of Rural Health Needs

With many youths leaving rural communities, the elderly and vulnerable populations are left behind. This reduces support systems for the aged, leading to neglect and limited access to healthcare in rural areas.

Exposure to Health Risks in Migration Process

Young migrants often face poor housing, unstable employment, and limited access to health services in destination areas. These conditions increase

risks of communicable diseases, malnutrition, and mental health challenges. The key challenges include difficulty finding employment (31.1%) and inadequate housing (21.2%).

Mental and Social Health Concerns

Migration disrupts traditional social structures, fostering isolation and stress among migrants. The shift toward individualistic lifestyles can weaken communal support systems that traditionally safeguarded mental wellbeing.

Public Health Pressure from Urbanisation

Rapid urbanisation linked to youth migration contributes to overcrowding, poor sanitation, and increased crime, all of which indirectly affect health outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has examined the wave of youth migration in Nigeria, focusing on the aspirations driving this movement, the risks encountered by young migrants, and the demographic consequences for both sending and receiving communities. The findings reveal that the primary motivations for migration among Nigerian youth are the pursuit of better employment and educational opportunities, underscoring the role of economic and aspirational determinants. However, this journey is fraught with significant challenges, including difficulties securing stable employment, inadequate housing, and various forms of exploitation. Furthermore, the demographic analysis indicates that migration depletes the labour force and alters family structures in communities of origin, while placing increased pressure on urban infrastructure and services in destination areas, thereby reshaping the national demographic landscape.

Therefore, youth migration in Nigeria represents a double-edged phenomenon. While it serves as a critical strategy for personal advancement and contributes skilled labour to receiving economies, it simultaneously poses substantial risks to the migrants themselves and generates complex demographic shifts. The exodus of young adults from rural areas undermines local productivity and accelerates urban growth, often without corresponding developmental planning. Therefore, understanding this dynamic is essential for formulating policies that can harness the benefits of youth mobility while mitigating its associated adversities and imbalances.

FURTHER STUDY

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to address the challenges and leverage the opportunities presented by youth migration in Nigeria:

1. Government and educational institutions should collaborate to enhance local economic opportunities and educational quality in rural and underserved regions to reduce the imperative for out migration.
2. Policy frameworks should be strengthened to protect young migrants, ensuring safe migration channels, access to legal support, and safeguards against labour exploitation and discrimination.

3. Urban planning authorities in major destination cities must invest in scalable infrastructure and public services to manage population growth sustainably and accommodate new arrivals.
4. Development programmes should be initiated in sending communities to mitigate the negative demographic impacts, such as labour shortages and an ageing population, through incentives for youth retention and skills development.
5. To address the health challenges of youth migration in Wukari, policies should expand urban healthcare infrastructure to meet rising demand while strengthening rural health systems to protect the elderly left behind. Health education campaigns must raise awareness of migration risks, and mental health support should help migrants cope with stress and isolation. Public health initiatives focusing on sanitation, clean water, and disease prevention are vital to reduce outbreaks in overcrowded areas. By combining economic empowerment with health-centered interventions, migration can shift from a strain to an opportunity for improved wellbeing and balanced development.
6. Further research should be encouraged to explore the long-term socioeconomic impacts of youth migration and to monitor evolving trends, providing evidence for more targeted and effective interventions.

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