

AFRICAN VALUES AND MIGRATION QUESTIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY: THE SOCIO-POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

Africa is a notable continent with varied cultures and values. Its values and cultures have held its people and societies in one piece for centuries. In the 21st century, there is the introduction of a new practice of massive migration. Migration, commonly, is part of African practice for decades. The worrisome aspect is referred to here and which raises a question is the illegal migration and engagement in illegal deals abroad by African youths and average young men and women. This paper aims at studying the African values and cultural practices amongst the migrated indigenes based in foreign lands. The paper looks at the various African values that pinpointed values and good conducts and as it affects the migrated Africans. The study used secondary sources and interviews as sources of data collection. The paper concludes by stating that illegal migration is wrong and that whether Africans engaged in illegal or legal migrations, the manner of comportment and adoption of African values and cultural ways remains valid for proper growth. This paper recommends that migrated Africans in foreign lands should imbibe proper African values and cultures. Similarly, the government and stakeholders in various African countries should also look into the causes of excess migration of African youths, men and women, and provide the essential needs that lead to excess migration of Africans to foreign countries.

Keywords: African values, migration questions, 21st century, socio-political, psychological Implications

Introduction

Migration, especially, illegal migration and the number of people leaving the African shores each year has become a major concern amongst stakeholders of African nations whose citizens are massively involved in this exercise and amongst various well-meaning humanitarian organizations across the world. The negative implications and

consequences of illegal migrations on human and national welfare are enormous. Africa is at the forefront of the continents that migrate massively for various activities abroad. Commonly, amongst the reasons people migrate illegally to foreign nations include poverty, war, and conflict. In a broader picture, the various disturbing developments prevalent in the continent in recent years that are affecting citizens' decisions are broadly classified into political, economic, religious, and socio-cultural. In the midst of all these, the practice of African values remains uncompromisingly relevant for the citizens and the continent.

Development and civilization have precipitated the new trend in migration internally as people leave their rural villages to migrate to urban cities where there are modern facilities to reside and seek means of livelihood. For more than three decades this practice has become a common phenomenon accepted as normal. It is worrisome to note that most stakeholders tend to overlook the fact that youths massively migrate to urban cities within their nations because of modern amenities and infrastructures. It is a fact that many rural communities across Africa lack modern amenities like electricity, pipe-borne water, good roads, and lucrative jobs existing in modern cities. Migration can either be legal and with good intentions and on the other hand, illegal and with dire consequences. Beauchemin (2018: 86) has observed that many leave with the idea of coming back to the country of origin at some point in their lives.

In the 21st century, the number of African migrants from Africa to Europe through illegal means has increased. It is indeed worrisome that able-bodied African youths and average men and women are continuously leaving their native land to seek a better life in Europe through illegal routes that endanger their lives. In the process of seeking greener pastures, many have engaged in various despicable lifestyles devoid of core moral values. 'Fast Wealth Acquisition' has become the order of the day and has been given many slang names amongst peer groups. The 21st century has witnessed and is still witnessing an increase in the depletion of core African values amongst the younger generation. . Quest for new forms of life – a life of modern living with comfortable accommodations and properties without suffering much – are great contributors to why value system has fallen drastically. Muller et al. (2013.22) note that values are part of a wider cultural framework. Typical Africa, being a traditional society, has and believes in traditional values and firm hold to cultural heritage. Additionally, apart from the enumerated hardships, in recent times, some African parents have lost moral values and have indeed talked their children into acquiring 'quick wealth' for them to belong in the society. For such people, the value and culture of hard work seem to be a curse. This is one of the factors that lead youths to illegal migration.

The illegal migration of Africans has psychological, socio-political, and historical implications on those involved and on the nations, they come from. The psychological implications often leave the youths and children involved in it traumatized for the rest of their lives. The trauma associated with it often leads to change in behaviour and mindset

for life. According to Ruback & Thomson (2001:51) individuals who are victims are also likely to be offenders. All these activities indirectly have socio-political consequences on the nation. For instance, people whom the country hopes on for political leadership and seen as the future leaders, have traveled out to develop nations other than their own. Rosenblum et al (2012:141) observed that absence can also have direct and important political effects by simply creating political space. In most cases, those involved in this journey become hardened criminals after the horrible exposure and experience of crossing the desert and the Mediterranean Sea under uncomfortable conditions.

Concept of African Values

African values, culture, and tradition have been an integral part of the people right from time immemorial. This has enabled them to maintain an organized and stable society. Cultural values are seen or expressed in people's conduct, carriage and actions. Rokeach (1968:160) cited in *Inter-cultural communication at work* by Clyne (1994:3) said that values are internalized...standards for guiding action... an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct. African traditions and cultures usually have clear demarcations between the good and things that are taboos and abominations. Again, Africa has a great attachment to the mother earth and many other natural phenomena whom they believe are continually watching and giving judgment. Daily statements, proverbs, and idioms express the value of cultural values. African values spell out good acts from the bad because each wrong act has its repercussions and rewards. In general, society encourages good conduct, truthfulness, and hard work. Thus, African cultural values when properly observed, tend to sanitize human reasoning and encourages positive behaviour amongst youths. More so, Africans are spiritual people and within the practice of spirituality, are embodied a set of values that are beneficial to society. Religion always tends to compel people to behave positively. Mbiti (1968) has confirmed that Africans are religious in the majority of the things they do. Thus, in general, the African value system is attached to respect, truthfulness, kindness, generosity, and good mannerisms. The words of Hofstede & Hofstede (2005:2) narrated the ability of African value to penetrate its citizens by saying that "Every person carries within him- or herself patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting that were learned throughout their lifetime. Much of it has been acquired in early childhood because, at that time, a person is most susceptible to learning and assimilating" (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005:2).

In a typical African society, quality virtues are acknowledged and celebrated. Extraordinary and outstanding acts are publicly eulogized and in most cases, individuals are crowned with chieftaincy titles. Similarly, most traditional families struggle to have a good name (good reputation) and to lead a scandal-free life. Life of crime and dishonesty is frowned at. There are many existing and practicing festivals and ceremonies in each African community that reflects and encourages cultural values. Decent dressing, speech and language matters, food and heritage, respect for elders are deeply encouraged and applauded as the right African values. Thus, there is no excuses for young Africans that

presently indulge in criminal acts abroad because despite the rising hardships, economic and political, crises and conflict in Africa, African moral values ought to be remembered and observed at all times by all and sundry African origin. In all, African moral values have the potential to stabilize and reduce crime and ill-behavior amongst the younger generations.

Gradual decadence in African values

In recent times, the African value system is on the decrease, and remedy towards this is needed urgently. Each nation within the African continent has its challenges and yet the concept of the value and cultural demands and expectations for every age group has been listed. Culture and tradition are believed to be the vital factor that holds societies together. Hard work, respect for parents and elders is expected amongst the young ones but unfortunately, this is no longer the case. Before now, in most communities in Africa, great value is attributed to men of valour and men who can farm and own large barns and farmlands. Most African elders had basic positive principles and truthfulness becomes their second nature. Title taking was awarded to men and women that are hard-working and are patriotic. Large Families are valued thus immediate and extended families matter. Large families whereby there are many wives and children are part of what counted. Njoh (2006:88) opined that in pre-colonial African society men and women played complementary roles in everyday life.

In today's fast-developing world, many things are changing and it is affecting the state of African values and the things the people value as their culture and tradition. There are complaints across various ethnic groups that their traditional languages are being adulterated, phasing out, or being replaced with foreign languages such as the English language. It is obvious that people's native language is a basic part of their society and duly represents them amid other foreign cultures. Korea, Chinese, and India, for instance, through speaking their language despite civilization preserve their traditional cultural values. Local languages encourage oral tradition which retains African culture. In other words, oral tradition, the important tool that was used in handing over African history from one generation to another was done comfortably with the native language. Kaschula (2001:46) has confirmed that oral tradition is a rich source of maintaining the consciousness of traditional values and patterns of moral behavior in African societies.

In recent times, some religious leaders and churches have contributed to the decadence in African values. In their preaching, they have referred to average lifestyle and poverty as a 'curse' thereby encouraging moral decadence and crime in the society. In a traditional African setting, average living depicts and encourages humility, simplicity, a low crime rate, and a sane environment. Illegal acquisition of wealth is bad and against African cultural values. The wealth that is genuinely acquired through honesty and hard work encourages cultural values. Illegal wealth acquisition through corrupt practices is commonly being observed in African societies today. Illegal activities such as cybercrime, robbery, kidnapping, etc. are against African culture and value system. These activities destroy moral and ethical standards for which African are noted for. In

the 21st century, the influence of peer groups has increased amongst the younger ones and the youths. Peer groups or peer pressure have destroyed most African values, no doubt. Across the world, nations, and societies battle to retain their cultural values and traditions because of their importance.

Moral decadence amongst Africans especially the youths who indulge in all sorts of crimes abroad is a major cause of societal decay and disgrace on the continent. Africans who have lived abroad for many years without returning to their native land of birth have had their ideology and philosophy changed. Thus, living abroad for a long time, bearing and raising children in foreign lands without bringing them home in Africa tend to affect the mindset and behaviour of such people. Njoku (2006:117) observed that all these shifts, similarities, and difference – which reflect value changes cutting across the pre-colonial, the colonial, and the postcolonial – debunk notions of rigidity about gender, and they point to the way the "indigenous" and the "modern" affected the thinking and behaviour. The 21st century is a century of many transformations which revolves around many new crimes. Most illegal migrants continue to dwell in degraded lifestyles abroad shunning African core morals, identity, and heritage which they ought to be protective of. Clyne (1994:3) observed that cultural values constitute “hidden” meaning underlying discourse structures.

Migration and migration questions in 21st century in Africa

Migration, especially, human migration is the movement of people from one place to another. This can occur within and outside a particular geographical location. Oftentimes, it is done because of the quest for greener pastures and security purposes. Animals also engage in migration from one area to another due to weather conditions and other reasons. In the observation of Crossingham&Kalman (2002:4), many animals travel to areas where the weather is better suited to their needs, and this journey is called migration. In recent times, amongst societies and continents, migration, as it concerns humans, has become very worrisome. In the words of Menjivar et al. (2019: 1), Overtime, demographic, economic, religious, or political developments, as well as wars and conflicts, have resulted in massive human developments and have triggered major diaspora movements which have disrupted and reconstructed the social fabric of the sending countries. Impatience and the inability to struggle to earn a decent living also drives people into illegal migration. Studying or working abroad is good but an illegal movement to foreign lands leads to overpopulation and quest fast wealth.

The migration discussions that raise questions globally and which are being discussed here are illegal migration and the subsequent indulgence in illegal businesses to earn a living. Oftentimes, the reason African youths give for engagement in illegal migration is the unemployment in their various countries. The World Bank Group (2018) observed that when making their migration decisions, people weigh the gains of migration against the costs. Looking at the positive side of migration, Adler &Gielen (2003:3) have observed that migration has been a major source of human survival, adaptation, and

growth across the centuries and millennia. Gold & Nawyn (2013:90) note that African migration to the middle east and beyond, using the caravan routes, has been a common practice since ancient times, now took a newer twist and with it a newer challenge. Presently, disturbing characteristics of migration are made through the sea and land. Legal migrations are most times done through the air using airplanes and sea with boats. Sadly, illegal migrations have negative implications. For instance, they constitute a major nuisance to host their communities and bring untold hardships and sufferings on the migrants themselves, and these sufferings indirectly subject indigenes to forgetting their core values and morals. The ills and massive loss of lives surrounding illegal migration lead to a decrease in the population of people as many have lost their lives in the sea or deserts.

Migration has political, psychological, and historical implications on nations. Psychologically, it leads to extreme stress on those that indulged in it. It further leads to emotional turmoil, mental imbalance, and low self-esteem. Migration can subject people to untold hardships and dangers abroad. Those who indulge in human and child trafficking abroad have no conscience and fail to observe the African golden value of fairness to humanity. A lot of stories have been told on the illegal businesses African young men and women engage in foreign nations such as Italy, Malaysia, and other foreign countries in the 21st century. Do these attitudes lead to many questions such as where are the moral values and etiquette inculcated in these people while growing up go to?

Migration has political, psychological, and historical implications on any African nation that witnesses a great exodus of its young people each year. It leads to low population and loss of capable hands that will help stabilize the economic, social-political, and cultural conditions. Historically, the continent is at the stake of recording a century of evil migration and practices. It also leads to the acquisition of other people's cultures for them to blend and adapt favourably in these new environs. It creates an inferiority complex amongst the migrants. Migrants are also, sometimes, exposed to racism and segregation, and bad treatment in the host communities. Racisms and social isolation, no doubt, lower people's sense of value and self-esteem.

Many young men who engaged in illegal migration abroad deal on hard drugs and other immoral activities. Also, some women have engaged in prostitution to make a living. Many have lied to relatives in native African committees with juicy promises that their children will attend the best schools abroad. Also, the promises of engaging relatives in most lucrative businesses and jobs abroad only to use them as slaves and for human trafficking have led to questions on and depletion of African core values. Crimes have exacerbated in the 21st century. It is also unfortunate that nowadays, in most African communities, only the wealthy are applauded and recognized without questioning the source of their wealth. This leads to a determination to acquire wealth by every means available. Aligwekwe (2008) opine that research has proven that the African culture has

withstood the test of time and is within the mode of a contributor to the progress of mankind and thus, we should duly exult her values as worth retaining, for the greater progress of the modern man and the genuineness of the human in him. Mbiti (2015:3) notes that Africa has a very rich heritage of what past generations of African peoples thought, did experience, and passed on to their children. Crime in smuggling peoples through illegal routes and means does not depict African values. Gold & Nawyn (2013:90) observed the smuggling of Africans through North African countries, across the Mediterranean Sea into Europe, that the European Union is demanding that Spain tighten its southern border and tasked it with guarding southern Europe against being a thoroughfare for “illegal” immigrants. Illegal migration and business of trafficking in human beings are often organized crimes with processes of taking oaths and paying the transportation fees of victims who will end up serving their masters for years.

Political implications of migration (illegal migration)

In the 21st century, African nations such as Nigeria are experiencing changes in many sectors. In recent years, there is an obvious economic meltdown that has brought untold hardship to the people. Also, the increase in banditry, terrorism, corruption, and political instability has brought the feeling of unrest and insecurity to many. These are some of the reasons why many are escaping from Africa to reside in other nations across the world. Attas-Donfut (2012:15) observed that in the 1980s, there was a growth of internal migrations across the continent and during this decade most African countries had a negative rate of economic growth; the gross national product remained low, while populations increased. Information Resources Management (2019:271) noticed that the impact of migration both positive and negative on the social, political, economic, religious, and cultural spheres of influence has also received worldwide attention in research. Africans who left the shores of Africa for European nations under scholarships or through self sponsorships to acquire education tend to have positive results on the nations they left. Most of them have no plans of coming back to develop their nations or contribute to the economic and political growth of their nations. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Kwame Nkrumah, etc. are examples of such people who acquired foreign education and still came back to be active in their national politics.

Migration takes people away from their host communities. It has a lot of socio-political implications on African nations. First, it leads to brain drain from a particular nation. It also leads to a scarcity of capable men in times of a nation's election of qualified leaders. It generates more workload on the parts of the government as they battle daily to raise funds to fortify frontiers and borders to prevent illegal emigration and immigration. When citizens indulge in illegal business abroad and are caught, they can be jailed or deported back to their nations. This sort of occasion brings shame to the African nations they come from. Indirectly or directly, the large numbers living on African shores from different nations expose the level of poor African presidents. Most African leaders are egocentric and have failed to tackle the needs of the youths in terms of development plans and employment. An unstable economic and political environment affects people and

leads to the desire to migrate to foreign nations. Some of the youths who run to other foreign countries are exposed to dangers. Kapur (2010:8) observed that the parts of Africa from which the largest number of slaves were taken are today the poorest parts of Africa. For solution and active contribution of political leaders across African nations, Gyimah-Boadi, (2004:138) said that having an inclusive and participatory approach (involving all stakeholders-government, civil society, the private sector, media, etc.) to designing and implementing anti-corruption reforms helps to sustain the process of reform and energizes the necessary political will.

Psychological impacts and implications

Many factors trigger the psychological well-being of individuals within a nation where there is socio-political and economic instability. War, conflict, and refugee conditions disturb the peace of the citizens concerned. Migration has multiple psychological implications on the people involved in it. Illegal migration precisely can lead those involved under severe emotional distress and trauma. In most cases, those crossing the desert and Mediterranean sea have lost their lives in the exercise. Amongst those that survive, a greater percentage of them fell sick or has schizophrenia. Smith et al. (2015) affirmed that physical reactions to health problems cannot always be separated from psychological reactions. Arriving in an unknown environment leads tends to lead to worry as they wonder where to start a new life from in a foreign land. Such insecure arrivals lead to emotional and mental torture. Psychological problems leave African migrants in a bad and unstable state that thinking of moral values becomes almost impossible as it is their primary need to survive. The unstable state of mind and health cannot think of moral values and cultural identity in low standard conditions in foreign countries.

Some of the women making this journey often carry their young children along with them. Such harsh experiences also leave almost permanent psychological torture and experience to the young children. These children sometimes grow up to become hardened and the talk of having balanced African values seems like useless talk to them. Smith et al. (2015) said that physical reactions to health problems cannot always be separated from psychological reactions. Illegal migrants also experience depression and low self-esteem. Hardship met on these foreign lands leads most of the women into prostitution, child and human trafficking, theft, yahoo-yahoo business, and the likes which in turn results in depression, unhappiness, and low self-worth. Affirming that over the past years, psychologists have played great roles in attending to distressed citizens under different conditions, Krippner & McIntyre (2003:3) note that 'in the past 20 years, psychologists have been called upon to collaborate in finding solutions for war-shattered communities in various ways.

Migration and development of cultural values

Legal migration impacts positively on a nation but illegal migration has more disadvantageous implications. Migration is the act of residing outside one's home

country often with the reason to better self. Ultimately, in living abroad, the observation of African cultural and moral values ought to be cherished and imbibed by citizens. Luckily, in places like America and England, Many Africans abroad have promoted their cultures by observing certain cultural festivals. Recognition of African heritage promotes the African continent. Wearing African native dresses, eating native foods, and playing African music abroad also promote African values. Some have engaged in the act of storytelling which is often replete with moral teachings. This way they develop and promote African cultural values.

The funding and investing in African home nations by Diaspora citizens who are dealing on legitimate business abroad promotes the economic development of their home countries. Some of them have shown tremendous interest in the political activities in their countries and have returned to join hands in political elections. Most of the time, those on legal migration are balanced mentally and psychologically. Thus, they end to uphold their moral values and sense of dignity in the foreign lands where they reside. Most on legal migration went to study and gain higher education. Many Africans abroad on legal residency are renowned nurses, doctors, lecturers, diplomats, and owners of many economic organizations. Most educated Africans teach their children to abide by African moral values and shun lies and deceitful acts. According to Gameda (2012:86), lying does not necessarily solve human problems and may even well create more crises for mankind. There is no gainsaying the fact that those engaged in illegal migration dwell deeply in lies and often have low moral values.

Remedy

Taking the plights of citizens seriously and putting the needs of the youths first is paramount to restoring African values. Creating employment opportunities for African citizens and engaging infrastructural facilities both in the rural and urban cities is vital to stopping the migration of Africans to other countries. The practice of democracy in the real sense of the word by many African countries like Nigeria without punishing people that speak their minds is essential. The political, social, cultural, and economic situation in Africa must be boosted to reflect transparency. Shillington (2005:494) note that although African states have remained conscious of the use of education as a tool for community and nation-building, economic problems and competition for scarce resources continue to prove a major obstacle.

Security of lives and properties should be seen as a top priority. Insecurity of lives and properties has pushed many people away from their nations as can be seen in Libya for instance. Similarly, the human rights of all citizens are vital. The acceptance and inclusion of youths, women in the political governance of a local government, state, and federal is the right of every citizen for the smooth running of a given society. Leaving positions in the hands of men alone leads to dissatisfaction amongst the rest of the citizens. Adequate support of the youth and women will develop nations.

Corruption and greed by politicians spell out moral decadence in African nations. It has

destroyed economic resources and has left so much wealth in the hands of few individuals leaving the rest of the people in penury. Indirectly it leads the youths to shun African moral and cultural values and indulging in illegal activities within and outside the continent. A good value system requires good leaders. Migration leads to brain drain which affects nations directly and indirectly. A large number of legitimate citizens leaving their nations to reside in Europe is somewhat a problem just like illegal migration because it leads to loss of capable hands around. Everything has implications on African nations so caution must be exercised. In particular, illegal migration has historical, psychological, socio-political, cultural, and implications. There is a need for every African nation to build its political and economic statuses as earlier stated. There is need also for every school and family to educate their children and youths on the positive benefits of African cultural values. African citizens must shake off the second wave of modern slavery prevalent in modern illegal migration.

Recommendations and conclusions

Making cultural identity and moral values a priority right from tender ages in Africa is vital for the promotion of Africans who may wish to migrate to foreign nations in the future. Traditional African religions have parts that teach that righteousness. African leaders have long neglected illegal migration and the questions surrounding it. They have failed to look at their causes and tackle the problem. It is recommended that they make a u-turn and look at reasons youths give for engaging in illegal migration which depletes vital moral values and leads to different types of crimes against humanity and resolve them. It is also recommended strongly that African migrants to foreign lands should try as much as possible to be mindful of their moral values and ethics and shun illegal deals such as human trafficking, drug pushing, child trafficking, and other forms of crimes that have severe implications that can lead to a lifetime in jails in foreign lands. African moral values and adaption of African cultures remain the only thing that can lead to resistance when one is faced with difficult situations.

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