



## REVERSE MIGRATION TO PLACES OF ORIGIN: IS IT A RESPONSE TO COVID-19 EVENTS IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

The investigated reverse migration to places of origin: is it a response to covid-19 events in Delta State, Nigeria. The objectives of this study were to: examined causes of migration; identify the reasons for reverse migration and the challenges of reverse migration. Both structured interview scheduled and questionnaires were used for the study. Purposive sampling procedure was applied for the study. The result shows that natural disasters and conflicts (mean = 3.45). Lack of basic amenities (mean = 3.44). Bad leadership from Government (mean = 3.29). Inequality in wealth and hardship (mean = 3.12) causes migration. Financial factor and poor remunerations (mean = 3.44). Natural disasters and conflicts (mean = 3.19). Caste discrimination and uncertainty about future (mean = 3.18). Underemployment and unemployment (mean = 2.99). Covid-19 issues (mean = 2.95) were agreed reasons for reverse migration. Challenges of reverse migration are economic challenges (mean = 3.44). Mobility challenges (mean = 3.18). Lack of palliative (mean = 2.87). Covid-19 pandemic issues and inter alia causes reverse migration. It is recommended that Government and able bodied persons should create enabling environment in rural areas, that is attractive to all and make a better livelihood. Government should sincerely give palliative, economic empowerment and employment to reverse migrants. Government should have good knowledge on how to control and manage pandemic as well as disseminate same to the populace in case of outbreak of pandemic

**Keywords:** Reverse migration, places of origin, Covid-19, Delta State

### INTRODUCTION

The term “reverse migration” refers to the process of internal and international migrants returning to their place of origin from the destination state/countries. The Covid-19 crisis has millions of people on the move. As economics shut down and lockdowns proliferated, reverse migration has sets in as a serious concern throughout the developed and developing world. Millions of migrant workers, day labourers and others in the formal and informal economy are relocating to their villages and family homes, putting pressure on limited land resources and increasing the potentials for conflict. The covid-19 pandemic had changed the world abruptly, affecting nearly all of humanity with breath taking speed Khan and Arokkiaraj, (2021): Chavan *et al.* (2021). Reverse migration means the movement of individuals from an inhabited area of employment to their indigenous communities Khan and Arokkiaraj, (2021): Chavan *et al.* (2021). The novel Corona Virus disease otherwise called Covid-19 was originally discovered in China city of Wuhan in the year 2019. The pandemic spread diagonally continents, causing globally life challenges (FAO, 2021). In period of amplified globalization, inhabitants reverse migration due to covid-19 become frequent Reverse migration brought explosive and increase urbanization all over Delta State, Nigeria. There was a national total lockdown that was



announced in Nigeria on April 2020 by governments at some point during the covid-19 pandemic. The stated lockdown covered the whole country and general public was disallowed to step away from home, open shops, go to churches/mosques, conduct businesses and offices were closed. Even as governments extended lockdown, movement were hard for everyone, people were stranded, a lot of citizens were suddenly jobless and choice less other than to find means to go back to their local place of origin.

According to FAO, (2021), the reverse migration of migrants to rural communities of origin has impacted the livelihoods of both migrants and their families in numerous ways, poses grave challenges to their formal and informal sectors of the local economy straining the already limited rural resources, often resulting in the exacerbation of their susceptibility. Several migrants now get themselves in shaky condition, resulting from their seasonal or permanent absence and dependence on mobile livelihoods which they frequently experience greater difficulties and additional challenges, together with loss of earnings, discrimination or stigmatization and suspicion as potential covid-19 carrier in addition to weaker social capital and social safety net causing more problems to access resources and services. ILO, (2020) stated that economics and livelihoods all over the world has been challenged greatly by corona virus or the covid-19 pandemic. Giweze *et al.* (2023) opined that indigenous knowledge is the main asset to invest in the struggle for survival, to provide shelter and to achieve control of their own lives. Challenges surrounded by reverse migration are: bad data, increased pressure on rural housing and land resources, populous movement makes it difficult to distribute aid, lack of remittances meaning less money for property upkeep and properties left behind in cities are increasingly vulnerable. **1 bad data:** We know little about people who are in reality leaving and where exactly are they going. How long they intend to stay? Without knowing the answers to these questions, planning policy responses will be difficult. **2 increased pressure on rural housing and land resources:** After decades of rapid urbanization, many rural towns have adapted to a small population density. As governments of all levels find it difficult to apportion land and residence to citizens on reverse migration, disagreement springing over limited resources like forest and communal agricultural land faces undue stress. **3 populous movements make it difficult to distribute aid:** With millions in motion, some across international borders, government are having difficulty quantifying and distributing aid. **4 lack of remittance:** Some in rural communities have long relied on remittances from cities and abroad to make long term investments such as purchase of lands or properties as well as maintaining it. Nevertheless, as migrant workers lose their jobs in their country of residence and relocate to their rural communities, their source of revenue has dried up. **5 properties left behind in cities increasingly vulnerable:** as migrants flee and relocate to their countryside, they leave behind homes which they often lack formal documentation, these vacant properties are vulnerable to being occupied by squatters or razed down and developed. This is acute in rapidly developing parts of cities Ali *et al.* (2021): Gonzalez-Leonardo *et al.* (2022) and United Nation (2021).

Notable challenges in the study area during covid-19 era are economic challenges, social challenges, mobility challenges, quarantine problem, lack of palliative, lack of remittance from people abroad, repatriation and reintegration. Reasons for the reverse migration are unemployment, covid-19 issue, underemployment, insufficient jobs, pitiable basic facilities, forced labour, impoverished medical care, poor remuneration, insecurity, lack of social freedom, caste discrimination, social unrest, poor chances of marrying, hunger, loss of family and relative, loss of job, panicking health issues, future insecurity and financial factor.



The study was therefore carried out to investigate the causes of migration, identify reasons for the reverse migration and the challenges of reverse migration in the study area.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **The Study Area:**

The research was carried out in Delta State of Nigeria. Delta State consists of three (3) agricultural zones. These are Delta North, Delta Central and Delta South. Delta State is located longitudes 5 00 and 6 45 east and latitudes 5 00 and 6 30 north. The size of the State is 7,440km<sup>2</sup>. Delta State is made up of 25 Local Government Areas. The State has many rural communities that are agrarian in nature. Delta State is blessed with abundant mineral and natural resources.

### **Sampling Techniques:**

Purposive sampling procedure was used to select respondents for the study. First, the three (3) agricultural zones were purposively selected for the study. Secondly, 60% of LGAs in Delta State were purposively selected, making a total of 15 Local Government Areas and its headquarters as well as the communities/towns close to its headquarters with high records of reverse migration. Lastly, 9 respondents from each headquarters and environs with either internal or international reverse migration were purposively selected as the population for the study and that gave a sample size of 135 respondents.

### **Data Collection:**

Data for the study were collected with the use of structured interview scheduled to the respondents that had little or no formal education. While questionnaires were administered to respondents who had good level of education with regards to the objectives of the study and this was done with field extension workers who help to cover the respective zones of the State. The questionnaire was pre-tested in major towns of Delta State. This was done to ensure that the questionnaire did not contain ambiguity and that it can be easily understood and completed by respondents. Two visits were made to the respondents; the first was to deliver the questionnaire while the second visit was to retrieve it.

The objectives of the study were measured on a four point Likert type scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. A mean cut off of 2.5 was calculated and use to depict agreed while a mean of less than 2.5 portray disagreed. The data collected were analyzed using frequency, percentage and mean. The results were presented in tables.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Causes of Migration**

The result in Table 1 presented the causes of migration in the study area. The result showed that natural disasters and conflicts (mean = 3.45). Lack of basic amenities (mean = 3.44). Bad leadership from Government (mean = 3.29). Inequality in wealth and hardship (mean = 3.12) and other items were agreed by the respondents to caused migration. Migration for long had been a strategy in which many people used to fulfills their dreams, to uplift from poverty and access civilized livelihoods that promise honest work. For long, the causes of individuals or families migration are economic reasons, social reasons, demographic characteristics, educational reasons, political issues and religious persecution as well as climate change. The findings of Ofuoku and Chukwuji (2012): Ofuoku (2015) agrees with the above assertion. Migration is a usual occurrence in the life of people in all nation and people migrate from one geographical region to another location for temporary or permanent reasons. Many factors actually contribute to migration. The findings from the study are in harmony with the

findings of Odjebor *et al.* (2022) who reported that several factors are responsible for the cause of migration among people.

**Table 1:** Causes of Migration

Items	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank
Lack of basic amenities	3.44	0.85	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Natural disasters and conflicts	3.45	0.82	1 <sup>st</sup>
Education	2.65	0.90	10 <sup>th</sup>
Lack of infrastructure	2.99	1.06	6 <sup>th</sup>
Low productivity and drudgery in agricultural operations	2.87	1.16	9 <sup>th</sup>
Lack of decent employment	2.95	1.17	7 <sup>th</sup>
Searching for better livelihood and services	2.88	1.15	8 <sup>th</sup>
Searching for higher income opportunity and white collar job	3.00	1.05	5 <sup>th</sup>
Bad leadership from Government	3.29	0.99	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Inequality in wealth and hardship	3.12	1.02	4 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Field Survey, 2023

### Reasons for Reverse Migration

The result for the reasons of reverse migration by the respondents is presented in Table 2. The result indicated that financial factor and poor remunerations (mean = 3.44). Loss of family and relatives (mean = 3.29). Natural disasters and conflicts (mean = 3.19). Caste discrimination and uncertainty about future (mean = 3.18). Underemployment and unemployment (mean = 2.99). Covid-19 issues (mean = 2.95) and others apart from education were agreed reasons and excuses of the reverse migration. The desire to avoid and escape from adverse health conditions, social and physical conditions, famine, joblessness, starvation, lockdown and painful death unknown to family members triggered reverse migration. Covid-19 pandemic issues and inter alia are excuses of the individuals reverse migration.

A lot of reverse migrants said that during covid-19 they were without physical money at all to survive, were worried about the plight of other members of the family at home, some had lost their job and felt pressured from members of the family to come back home. The findings from the study agree with the assertion of Chavan *et al.* (2021) who reported that low mood and dismal, fidgety, doubtful about future, dread of death and need of job are most important issue motivating migrants back to their indigenous places of origin.

**Table 2: Reasons for reverse migration**

Items	mean	Standard deviation	Rank
Covid-19 issues	2.95	1.17	6 <sup>th</sup>
Insecurity and societal turbulence	2.87	1-16	7 <sup>th</sup>
Loss of family and relatives	3.29	0.99	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Underemployment and unemployment	2.99	1.06	5 <sup>th</sup>
Lack of independence and hunger	2.80	1.11	9 <sup>th</sup>
dread of death abroad and health issues	2.73	1.41	10 <sup>th</sup>
Financial factor and poor remunerations	3.44	0.85	1 <sup>st</sup>
Education	2.33	1.07	11 <sup>th</sup>
Caste discrimination and uncertainty about future	3.18	1.02	4 <sup>th</sup>
Repatriation	2.87	1.16	7 <sup>th</sup>
Natural disasters and conflicts	3.19	1.02	3 <sup>rd</sup>

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

### Challenges of Reverse Migration

The result in Table 3 presented the challenges reverse migration faced by the respondents in the study area. The result showed that, economic challenges (mean = 3.44). Mobility challenges (mean = 3.18). Lack of palliative (mean = 2.87). Social challenges (mean = 2.80). Quarantine problem (mean = 2.72). Lack of remittances (mean = 2.70). Repatriation and reintegration had mean = 2.65 respectively. The respondents agreed all items itemized were challenges of reverse migration caused by covid-19 pandemic issues but the challenges had positive and negative impacts on people and rural communities. On the positive impact, the rapid growth rate and development in many villages close to major town in the study area are connected to migrant who are either international or internal reverse migrant, causing uncontrollable and very high development of rural settlement. The findings of this study corroborates with assertion of Ali *et al.* (2021) who stated that ‘one of the emerging phenomena of modern urbanization that had significant impact on various problems in metropolitan areas is the reverse migration from urban to villages locating in the suburbs of the cities’. The negative impacts of reverse migration were the ill treatment suffered such as stigmatization, hostility, discrimination that affected their life during covid-19 pandemic. Ofuoku (2015) said migration negatively impacts on the rural life quality, mostly when the migrants needed productivity is carried away. The findings from the research made true the assertion of ILO, (2020) who stated that economy and livelihoods all over the world has been challenged greatly by the corona virus or covid-19 pandemic.

**Table 3: Challenges of Reverse Migration**

Items	mean	Standard deviation	Rank
Economic challenges	3.44	0.85	1 <sup>st</sup>
Social challenges	2.80	1.12	4 <sup>th</sup>
Mobility challenges	3.18	1.02	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Quarantine problem	2.72	1.41	5 <sup>th</sup>
Lack of palliative	2.87	1.16	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Lack of remittances	2.70	1.40	6 <sup>th</sup>
Repatriation	2.65	0.95	7 <sup>th</sup>
Reintegration	2.65	0.95	7 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Field Survey, 2023



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Covid-19 pandemic issues and inter alia are excuses for reverse migration in the study area. Challenges of reverse migration caused by covid-19 pandemic issues had positive and negative impact on people and rural communities in Delta State of Nigeria. Many factors such as economic challenges, lack of palliative, loss of family members contributed to reverse migration to places of origin. It is recommended that Government and able bodied persons should create enabling environment in rural areas, that is attractive to all and make a better livelihood. Government should sincerely give palliative and offer economic empowerment as well as employment to reverse migrants for them to have better life. In case of any outbreak of pandemic, Government should have good knowledge on how to control and manage the pandemic as well as disseminate same to the populace.

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