

Lund University

**Lund University**

**Department of Sociology**

**Bachelor's In Development Studies-BIDS.**

*Tracing the Experiences of Nigerian Women Migrants Beyond the Category of  
'Irregular' Migration.*

*Author: Chibuikem Emmanuel Anyanwu*

*Bachelor Thesis: UTVK03*

*15 hp Spring 2022*

*Supervisor: Dalia Abdelhady*



**LUND UNIVERSITY**

***Abstract***

As globalization and development seem to have “*removed geographical boundaries between countries*”, the resulting patterns of human mobility (Gomory, 2002; Leach, Scoones & Stirling, 2010) have attracted the discursive study on the topic of migration. There are migration aspects that categorize migrants as regular, irregular, voluntary or involuntary. Such categorizations include the perspectives that ‘criminalize’ women’s irregular migration, which is usually misconstrued as synonymous to ‘trafficking’ and ‘exploitation’. Such classification often associates the migrants with images that influence a general perception; but does not often capture certain perspective of the migrant and their movement.

Bearing in mind the issues of border restriction, border regimes, asylum regulations and poverty, the research aim explores the complexities in the migration of women, the purpose is to amplify their voices outside the bounds of migration discourse on trafficking and exploitation; however, the context is not primarily a feminist approach.

The comprehensive accounts given by five migrant women are captured through narrative interviews examined by the rational choice theory, theories of migration and the social capital theory; the theories explain some of the complexities and highlight the meso, micro and macro considerations.

Part of this research findings reveal that in male dominant societies such as Nigeria, women suffer exclusion and have little access to material advantages; the social capital usually plays a role to facilitate migration movements. The intervening obstacles in migration are possibly overcome by a network of relationships.

Considering that there are divergent views from that of the classificatory regime, there exists an interpretational difference in individual accounts and policy oriented and policy category perspectives. This creates a gap in how we understand and perceive the migrants.

There is a need to acknowledge the bias that exists in explaining in/voluntary and irregular migration of women; a need to operate a more open environment where the individuals can communicate their true realities without fear of preconceptions; and also a need to further promote the individual agency’s perspective with regards to their circumstances and positionality.

***Keywords:*** *Irregular migration, Nigerian Women, Sweden.*

## **Acknowledgement**

After the dream, the first step towards reaching the dream is not to stay where you are but to move in the direction of the dream. The movement is an expression towards achieving the dream.

Dedicated to my family, to humanity, to Yvonne for invaluable inputs and to God my strength.

## Abbreviations

<b>EU</b>	<b>European Union</b>
<b>GDP</b>	<b>Gross Domestic Product</b>
<b>IOM</b>	<b>International Organization for Migration</b>
<b>RAD</b>	<b>Rockefeller Foundation-Aspen Institute Diaspora</b>
<b>SEK</b>	<b>Swedish Krona</b>
<b>USA</b>	<b>United States of America</b>

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## Chapter One: Introduction

### *1.1 Research Overview*

Migration is influenced by push and pull factors and may occur through regulated processes administered by government agencies. It can also occur through alternative routes organized by brokers to by-pass administrative barriers. The various forms of border-crossing have led to categorization of migration by state and non-state actors. Migration is classified based on specific features and trends associated with the movement. The notion of “irregular” migration is categorized as ‘illegal’ border-crossing and attracts penalties in accordance with specific existing regulations. For instance, the USA immigration law penalizes migrants in an irregular situation. The use of force in migration control operations, detention, stigmatization and deportation of migrants in irregular situations are some of the evidence of such penalties.

To deconstruct the notion of irregular migration, this thesis looks at some of the causes of migration to help understand the role of the state in influencing movement decisions by individuals who are themselves rational in decision making. The migration regime and policy categories, often define a person on the move by circumstances and typology of migration movement rather than by the person’s aspiration to achieve the noble goal of partaking in an egalitarian society.

In an expanded discussion, the overview of the research participants’ country of origin is presented in chapter two, section 2.5 to give the reader a broader picture of some of the conditions that motivate a person’s decision to move.

‘Migration’ as referred to in this work is used by the author to mean international human mobility from the global South to the global North unless in cases where specific expression is ascribed to the meaning.

### *1.2 Problem under Study*

In migration discourse, Castles, de Haas and Miller (2014) acknowledge that emotive subjects such as ethnic and racial diversity feature prominently; perhaps not more than issues like the *push* and *pull* factors, *brain-drain* and *brain-gain* phenomenon and the *migration systems*. In exploring these theoretical issues, most literature focus on explaining *why*, *how* and *how far* people migrate (Kapur, 2004 and Pritchett, 2003 in De Haan and Yaqub, 2009).

In answers to these questions, factors that contribute or facilitate migration include social inequality, political instability, economic problems, and environmental problems among others. These are the primary causes of in/voluntary migration.

Through globalization, economic, cultural and ideological structures break down barriers and penetrate across geographies. With isolation removed, people in faraway places are brought within the orbit and closer to people across other geographies so they become aware of better living standards, culture and opportunities in other countries. This motivates people to reassess and explore alternative ways to achieve their potential.

Between the period when a potential migrant decides on migrating and the period the migrant touches down in the first country of arrival, there is a system of complex interacting elements, attributes, relationships and micro, meso and macro considerations that should gain prominence.

In the global South versus global North migration analysis, the attributes and the classificatory characteristics of a migrant receives more attention rather than the analysis to understand meso and micro considerations and the background to a migrant's move (Mabogunje, 1970; Bakewell, 2008). At the background of a potential migrant's move are impulses and stimuli directed towards a potential migrant to motivate in/voluntary decision to migrate.

The research generally examines:

- The connection between micro, meso and macro attributes of the push factors.
- Migration from the lens of the migrants and relates it to theories that explain the process

### ***1.3 Why the Study is needed***

Primarily, the study is needed to examine the researcher's competence in independent research work which is part of the requirement to fulfill a Bachelor program in Development Studies.

The thesis offers a vantage viewpoint which captures lived experiences of the research participants who are part of the "bottom billion", a concept used by Collier to describe those who are part of the world's five billion poor people living below the poverty line. Such people populate the Central Asia and Africa region and they "coexist with the twenty-first century but their reality is the fourteenth century" (Collier, 2007).

Most reports (IOM, 2016; RAD, 2015; World Bank, 2013; US Census Bureau, 2009) on migrants from the global south are highly selective of skilled and educated professionals who are attracted to economic developments, therefore it mainly captures the migration experiences of skilled and educated professionals. This study is not only important to capture the lived experiences of specific migrant women but also looks at the extent to which their migration is voluntary, involuntary, regular or irregular given their circumstances.

Essentially, this work contributes to the discourse on the women migration-poverty nexus and notion of in/voluntary migration from the individual perspectives, race, class, values and origin. Furthermore, the research gives a voice to a class of migrants and calls for social structure's minimal influence on individual agency's perspective as important viewpoints from the individuals may be excluded from the expanding body of research and may remain less visible to policy makers. The approach is strongly aligned to poor-centric international migration from the perspective of the migrant agency to increase the attention given to the understanding of the very people who engage in international migration (de Haan and Yaqub, 2009). In other words, context-dependency rather than generalized conclusion is a way to bring pro-poor international migration in main focus.

#### ***1.4 Aim and Purpose of the Study***

A group of Nigerian migrant women who arrived to the first countries of destination in Europe through irregular migration, do not associate with the label of a *victim* or an *exploited*. At the time of this work, all of them reside in Sweden either as citizens, asylum seekers, or with legal residence documents; to them, this can only be achieved by careful thinking and taking calculated risks and steps. Although their movement at some point involved breaking existing rules, they agree it was a 'rational choice' to follow the path which serves them best towards achieving their goals.

The aim of this research is not to justify their means, but to present the experiences of this set of migrants from a perspective they see themselves and celebrate their achievements. It explores the complexities that motivated their choice of movement in order to justify their goals and not the means to their goals. It offers an explanation on how rational choice theory, theory of migration and social capital theory are interlinked with their movement from homeland to country of residence.

The objective is to influence the dominant explanations which has given the topic of irregular migration an understanding through the perspective of trafficking; this has influenced the way we understand and interpret irregular migrant women.

In general, the global South has the largest number of poor households in the world. The dynamics of the free market and globalization, results in a significant polarization evidenced by the imbalances between the haves and the have nots. This polarization - a push factor- plays a key role in individuals' decision, migration and circulation of people within and across regions.

Potential migrants are stimulated by a desire for better opportunities and the cost to reach the goal rarely matters.

The author acknowledges that trafficking in persons and smuggling are characterized by exploitation and victimization even though the participants in this research may not share similar views.



### ***1.5 Research Questions***

1). What are the explanations for women-driven migration involving women from low income class?

- How does a potential migrant perceive the choice and form of movement?
- What are the facilitating factors of human mobility from the global South to the global North?
- How does migration impact the identities of the migrant in the cause of the movement?
- How voluntary is voluntary migration choice?

2). How does the class of people fund migration?

- What are some of the pitfalls of irregular migration and patron-client sponsorship of women migration?

### ***1.6 Scope and Delimitations***

The study is relevant within the scope of women migration studies that looks at the changing migration status of the migrants. The scope of the study is determined by five participants from a specific geographical area, as a result, the strength of the study lies in its context-dependency.

Though the sample size of respondents is fairly small, it is representative of migration trends of people of similar income class and geographical area and characteristics.

### ***1.7 Methods***

Much of the secondary data sources used here are cited from sources that include publications, working papers, and documents on women migration and poverty. The primary data was obtained from interviews with migrants resident in Sweden. The face to face interview which lasted for a little over half an hour for each respondent was flexible and adaptable in a manner that affords the opportunity to adjust the line of enquiry while observing the body language of the respondents. Bearing the limitations in mind, the standard of the interview is such that it raises little question about the reliability of the outcome; however, this does not totally rule out other biases. For instance, some of the respondents arrived in other countries in Europe first before arriving to settle in Sweden; the account of their cases may not be regarded as a general representation of enquiries on the subject of discussion, but it is fair enough to be reliable.

### ***1.8 Theoretical Approach***

The approach explores and explains individual-level perception of irregular migration. As most decisions to migrate are usually in response to larger structural stimuli, the subject cuts across

individual and societal factors; its units of analysis are the individual person and the larger society.

The research uses theories of analysis of the micro, meso and macro levels to explain the subject. The macro theories are of the structural functional approach and explain the migration push and pull factors from the larger society which influences and shapes the decisions of individuals. The micro theory explores how individuals are involved in the decisions and choices that drive their life goals and achievements.

### ***1.9 Disposition of the Paper***

The first chapter presents a brief introduction on the topic and the theoretical approach and disposition of the paper.

Chapter two presents an overview of the country of origin of the participants which is necessary for the reader to picture the participants' country's political structure and political environment, human rights status and overview of its development. The notion of voluntary and involuntary migration within the context of this study is contained in this chapter but with highlights on economic pressure and poor policy implementation that produce migration push factors.

Chapter three presents the literature review, the previous studies related to the research and sub topics related to the studies.

Chapter four presents the theoretical framework and identifies linkages between the theories used.

Chapter five presents the methods, research design, data analysis, ethical considerations and research limitations.

Chapter six presents the findings and analysis while chapter seven, the conclusion of study.

## Chapter Two: Background of Study

### *2.1 Background of the Research*

Initially, this research set out to explore “*global forces and local impacts*”. However, in the process of seeking data, I spoke with some Nigerian migrants who are resident in Sweden; I hoped to hear their accounts on why and how they left their homeland. It turned out that only the women among them kept their words and were present on the days we agreed.

After the initial chats in which I explained to the women the need for the interview, I reflected to understand that 1.) each of them come from the same part of the same country, 2.) they share similar culture, goals and economic background 3.) all of them entered to live in Sweden at motherhood 4.) they also have a similar migration process. 5.) four out of the five of them migrated first to other countries in Europe before arriving in Sweden; they have shared personalities.

Based on the observations, my research shifted from its initial title and purpose to reflect the available situation.

The responders’ experiences are summarized by various degrees of social and economic injustices which motivated their voluntary yet involuntary decisions to leave their homeland. Some of them have spent at least three years in Sweden, with one or more children born in the course of their movements. At the time of the enquiry, some reside in ‘safe’ Sweden’s asylum facility where they await decision on asylum applications. It could be correct to reason that their motivation to choose Sweden as a safer and perhaps final destination is because they believed that motherhood will thrive in Sweden, and being a mother may increase the chances to obtain residence papers. It could also be because of Sweden’s welfare state which serves well to provide welfare and social assistance schemes for categories of people.

Before the interview, the ethical standards were communicated to each of the participants and each agreed to lend their voices but asked that their identities be withheld.

## ***2.2 Determinants of Migration Push Factors***

Among other micro and meso factors, the macro determinants and social exclusion experienced in the global South are tied to economic policies that operate in various domestic settings. The economic policies are dimensions of international economic tools created by the knowledge system that sits far away from geographies where they are implemented.

Within the world system, the market regime pioneers the global economic policies. The knowledge regime which is recognized as a potent source of the economic policy ideas is critiqued by Campbell and Pedersen (2015) as heavily influenced by the organization of their surrounding political economies such that they have particular national characteristics which in most cases differ from domestic ideals. Those who have encouraged knowledge regime ideals have shown little consideration over the intentions and the machinery by which these ideas are produced, how the machineries connect to the rest of domestic economies of nations across the world and how they vary across countries (Campbell, & Pedersen 2015). The organization of economies through market forces govern economic activities in a manner that differs across geographies and culture. This market force approach lowers the power of sovereign states to control their domestic economies and has subsequently affected how “*well domestic economies adjusted to economic challenge*” (Light *et al* 1990; Campbell, & Pedersen 2015). Concerning the knowledge-regime-inspired economic policy, Light *et al* (1990) states that it “*...neglects how national think tanks and other policy research organizations figure into the story*”.

When these ideas fail, they produce conditions that may lead to what Sørensen *et al* refers to as “*recruitment*”- that is the “*conditions producing emigration*”- which includes “*both migrant motivation (why people migrate) and [the] facilitating factors (what/who makes movement possible)*” (Sørensen, Van Hear & Engberg-Pedersen 2003). With failed economic policies comes either structural poverty– a form of long term poverty due to personal and social conditions– or conjectural poverty– a situation where people who are ordinarily self-sufficient are thrown into poverty due to specific circumstances– (Life, 1987). These economically unfavorable circumstances place a severe burden on individuals, families and communities in a manner that erodes trust for the state, weakens democracy, hampers development and promotes corruption.

Essentially, it can be said that corruption is as much a product of economic and political process as it is as well as a cause. This context is a general reflection of the frustrated aspiration of many Sub Saharan Africa's democracies (Smith, 2010) which points to the research questions that seek to understand *why* and *how* the global South migration flows into the global North.

### ***2.3 The Notion of Involuntary and Voluntary Migration***

The “*in/voluntary*” and *irregular* migration as it appears in the title, points to a mere expression given to a complex form of activity such as migration process from the global south that defies legal gravities. The notion of irregular migration arises when a migrant from a migrant sending country moves against ‘the rules’ to cross international borders; this is usually in the face of abundant negative push factors from the homeland. However, push and pull factors are linked to the world system, specific culture, economy, environment and political states.

As many developing countries in the global South are constantly challenged with insecurity and inequality, families and individuals resort to migration as a means to a better future. A migrant's free choice to migrate is to some extent motivated by lack of choices other than to migrate. People are indirectly affected by larger factors outside of their individual control and as such are forced to respond to the external factors by freely exploring available channels and resources.

Since the factors that lead to “involuntary” and “voluntary” migration are connected to the factors that force people to emigrate, the question arises as to how voluntary is “voluntary” migration and how involuntary is “involuntary” migration? Both voluntary and involuntary migrations seem to be mutually non-exclusive actions occurring within the same system and at the same time.

The voluntary or involuntary migration may follow a regular or an irregular pattern. IOM explains regular migration as the “*migration that occurs through recognized, authorized channels*” while irregular migration is said to occur outside of the regulation of migration laws.

The outcomes of a country's political and economic processes that act against the well-being of people are in a sense an involuntary process by a reason that individuals do not choose their country of birth; in democratic settings where people choose their leaders, they eventually find themselves as part of a macro structure which is not within individual control.

As macro structures exert pressure on the meso and on individuals, in turn, people take decisions to adjust the imbalance; it therefore follows that the involuntary motivates the voluntary.

“Migration [as] the oldest action against poverty” is human mobility as well as a response to social, political, economic and environmental changes. Most immigrants in the global North originate from countries with populations that live below the international poverty line; therefore they are driven by the desire for liberation, to reduce inequality, and to improve livelihood and reach human potential (Yannawar *et al* 2014).

While acknowledging that migration is resource oriented and may not be afforded by the poorest, poor people in low income households may have access to capital in the form of social capital. Most political economies of developing countries are organized around *clientelism*. Social capital is therefore a form of capital whereby the poor can depend on kith and kin and community of origin and various other social ties of affection for opportunities and progress (Smith, 2010). Many *clients* rely on *patrons* and social capital networks for human and financial resources. This network of support facilitates processes in benefit of those who can access them.

#### ***2.4 The Classificatory Study of Migration and the Patron-client System***

Governmentality is the use of “*techniques and procedures for directing human behaviour*” (Foucault, 1997), it regulates the production of knowledge at a specific time and place (Foucault 1970). As an art of governance, the migration system is a governmentality for managing the population, configuration of migrants and control of borders. The securitization of migration enables governments to obtain databases and information with which to distinguish between categories of migrants. The information is usually codified into policies as legal statuses for ascribing rights or limiting privileges of groups. Such categorization ultimately shapes what we know about the subject and the specific social identities of migrants (Scott, Odukoya, and von Unger, 2014).

Classification and categorization of migrants is connected to the use of knowledge and power to generate understanding and hierarchies of migrants. It also invokes “*restrictionism and securitization in the production of truth, knowledge and power in immigration control*” (Ibrahim 2005).

Considering some evidence (Women's Link Worldwide, 2015; Cho *et al.* 2017) that generally portrays irregular migrant women as *victims* of trafficking and given that “*individuals and groups can learn the “art” of how not to be governed*” (Foucault, 1997) it becomes interesting to know how the people involved in category of irregular migration describe themselves outside the category and how they perceive their movements.

The migrant women in this work do not identify with the label of *victims* regardless of the psychological and emotional costs of their journey; rather they identify as people who received impulses and made the conscious choice that they benefit from, a choice which *helps* them achieve potential.

This research bases its consideration of the patron-client system as a support system, on the participants’ viewpoints; *irregular* migration is for the participants an alternative migration channel which is to be carefully chosen in order to escape the harsh realities in their homeland. Therefore, to identify as victims is to undermine an achievement, an achiever’s pride and an achiever’s demonstration of diligence, resilience, intelligence and adaptive abilities.

The *patron-client* system presents a form of a mutual arrangement by two parties- the patron and the client- whereby the patron with authority, social status, wealth and personal resources provides support for the client (Stein, 1984). This vertical *network of relationships* mediates against the barriers to migration and provides access to international migration. The patron-client theory emphasizes the functional or beneficial character of the relationship for the client. The mediating system of patronage presents an adaptive response to *help* reduce the stress experienced by the client in the face of deprivation and insecurity. As aptly put “*...if you cannot rely on anyone else, at least you can count on the patron*” (Stein, 1984). Patrons, potential migrants and alternative migration route ‘experts’ all focus on their specific goals as the triad collaborate to by-pass the impediments presented by the administrative and technical structures of immigration and border management rules in the form of border identity or travel visa.

## ***2.5 Background of the Participants’ Country of Origin***

With over 400 ethnic groups, Nigeria uses the geopolitical zone system as an administrative architecture to group its 36 States. Ethnicization and marginalization is dominant in its political

space; moreover, the state of development in its south geopolitical zone records an increased deprivation, poor economic development, and negative political change which are parts of the migration *push* factors.

This ethnically diverse society is challenged by varying norms, political and religious beliefs which may be incompatible with one another's ideology and aspirations. In its post-civil war era, the state operates with an instrument of coercion gravitating towards bringing the ethnic nationalities and religious diversities to conformity, a strategy that positions some of the ethnic nationalities as marginalized people. To corroborate this claim, the chairman of Nigeria's 2001 Human Right Violation Investigation Commission, Honorable Justice Oputa, observes that:

*“Each ethnic group feels marginalized. From the memoranda and evidence from these groups, it became apparent that there exists a simmering discontent which should not ever be allowed to boil over. The challenge then is to find an answer to this dreadful fiend called marginalisation”* (The Guardian, 2022).

With the peoples' discontent now boiled over, these culminating incidents contribute to the migration push factors and also shape the way people respond. As Marx observes; *“class shapes everything about our lives, it determines our thoughts and actions”*.

According to the Africa Development Bank data reported in Renaissance Capital (2011), the middle class Nigerians constitute 23 % of the total population and earn an average monthly income of \$ 480 - 645. The citizens' relationship to the state is partly connected to a social process explained by any of the propositions; a) *my people-* signifying ethnicity, linguistic inclination or regional preference and b) *‘What is in it for me’?* This social process and ideology sparks a faint spirit of national commitment among citizens, it promotes complicity and elevates corruption which occurs on the *“basis of camaraderie, reciprocity, family ties and whatever”* (Hodgson and Jiang 2007).

As humans interact with many development and globalization elements, they adjust to resultant impacts of globalized systems (UN, 2002; 2019) by reviewing and adopting choices that help them make progress, once of such choices in migration.



## **Chapter Three: Review of Related Literature**

### ***3.1 Introduction***

This chapter discusses what some literature say about gender migration and securitization of migration. The later part presents a broader scope of the migration push factors in relation to migration of women, but not specifically through a feministic approach.

### ***3.2 Gender, Women and Migration***

Women migration has attracted a great deal of interest in recent years in the discourse of migration and development. Van Liempt (2011) specifically notes that given the lack of legal channels, women engage in irregular migration in the form of ‘assisted’ migration to cross international borders. This is usually referred to as ‘smuggling’ or ‘trafficking’; and argues that the discourse on assisted migration is predominantly gendered and reproduces conventionalized views which ignore the broader circumstances in which the movements occur. In line with Van Liempt (2011) argument, Neetha, (2004) observes that little attention is given to the positive role of the global South women migrants and rues that under-representing the women’s positive contribution portrays them as people who are not positive contributors to migration in the survival of family and institutions. The positive roles of women in migration are subtly mentioned (or partially swallowed) by the analytical theme that presents the global South irregular migrant woman through the lens of trafficking and smuggling. In the real sense not all irregular migration is synonymous to trafficking. Nevertheless, the continued analysis of irregular migration of women under migration and trafficking themes have created a negative social identity for some women. Furthermore, male migration which is often analyzed under economic migration, reflects economic migration from a male perspective, as such Neetha (2004) argues that the existing theories of migration highlights the migration factors to explain migration flows with a focus on male economic migrants, this implies that analysis of patterns of female economic migration are likely to reflect those of the male migrant and the analysis of migration of professionally skilled migrants could exclude the migration of people who are not part of the regular migration stock.

According to (Salaam, 2003), the dominant ideology of patriarchy in many countries of the global South largely excludes women. In social society which is historically a polygamous setting, the culture of patriarchy favours male dominance and female exclusion; men usually sit back in the family to keep family name and grow the lineage while women are married out or

relegated to limited chances and limited access to material advantages. This culture of patriarchy encourages women to seek means for their upward social mobility.

Protective policy measures that restrict women's choices (Van Liempt, 2011) is an evidence which strongly acknowledges that migration regime makes it difficult for women from certain parts of the globe to cross international borders; however the least acknowledged is the strength and intelligence of the women agency to travel through alternative means regardless of the risks and high-tech surveillance that accompanies the movement. For the women on the move, the risks are considered moderate when compared to the risk faced in their homelands. Relocating across international borders is a feat often celebrated by those who achieve it; it is compared to succeeding over a difficult conundrum.

The intensity of female migration has surged over the past years, therefore the complexities in women migrations should be analyzed with a refocus. Women take up vital functions and alpha roles in their homes; they invest resources in planning their process of migration, the settling-down process and constantly they mobilize a social network that shapes the flow of movement across borders. The zoning of assisted migration of women towards illegality and the validity of the consensus on male-centric analyses in economic migration should be re-examined.

Light et al (1990) acknowledge there has been a long standing concern for researchers in migration issues to refocus and seek to connect all the determinants of (and complexities in) migration and to not present migration from mainly the focus on policy concerns and world system context. To corroborate the concerns raised by Light et al (1990), de Haas, Castles, & Miller (2019) point out that neoclassical and historical-structural approaches to explain migration, depict human beings as 'passive' in the decision of movement, this approach leaves out the micro considerations in the choices made by those who move.

To understand the types of ideologies that present migration from various perspectives, De Haas (2010) analyzed the period between 1973 - 2001 to explore the main phases in post WW 2 research and policy towards migration and development, the results shows that there are ideological difference between migration 'pessimist', 'optimists' and 'pluralist' schools of thought on how migration is interpreted; his ideological difference leads to the structural imbalance that produces associational status of women in migration, concluding that there is a

‘discursive shift’ in debate on migration as “*each standard has the possibility to satisfy the criteria it sets for itself or reject problem definitions and evaluation criteria used by other paradigms*” (De Haas, 2010; Neetha, 2004).

According to Bakewell (2008), the concept of “*Research Beyond The Categories*” can be used to understand categories of migrants because it identifies with certain class of migrants and explores the limitation of ‘policy relevance’ research which “*tends to obscure and render invisible some population groups, causal relationships, and questions that are methodologically difficult to capture*”

### **3.3 Feminization of Migration**

Current research on women and migration has shown that most forms of global South women’s migration are synonymous to trafficking and smuggling although the findings are not consistent when viewed in the light of migration economics which offers perspective on women’s increasing ‘voluntary’ migration as a means to enhance economic opportunities, a term referred to as “*feminization of migration*”. As much of the existing research suggests that women who engage in irregular migration are victims of exploitation; in contrast, van Liempt (2011) argues that the difference that is made in the system of rules between smuggling and human trafficking is highly gendered and replicates a widely held idea and narratives which deny women’s agency in their migration process (Augustin, 2007 in van Liempt, 2011).

One area of the gap in the literature about women migration revolves around the question of structure-agency interpretation of women’s migration process.

This thesis builds on (van Liempt, 2011) suggestions that it is fundamental to admit women agency in the discourse of women's assisted migration. This will offer an alternative interpretation of the women's agency.

In examining this issue, the following questions are proposed:

- How does a potential migrant describe their choices and forms of movement?
- What does a move to a migrant receiving country mean to an aspiring migrant? and
- How voluntary is their migration?

### ***3.4 Sources of Migrants***

A United Nations (2019) report shows that there are about 272 million international migrants across the globe, which represents 3.5 % of the world population; a large share of the migrants come from rural areas of the global South; this implies that most migrants to the global North come from regions with more households living in poverty. The newly emerging cities have not been able to absorb all of the rural-urban migrants, hence the migration flow from the global South to the global North (Massey, 1990). The discourse requires more discreet insight in order to capture the intricate nature of migration processes engaged by people of various social classes, and cultural backgrounds.

To conclude this review, this research aims at interpreting women migration from individual agency perspective which adds to the understanding of micro level explanations of irregular migration from migrants' perspective. It contributes to women-migration discourse in a unique way, by its class-dependent approach in answering the research questions on irregular migration.

## ***Chapter: Four Theoretical Framework***

### ***4.1 Theoretical Frameworks***

Considering globalization and restrictive migration rules which decrease the route to legal migration, irregular migration has become a principal choice regardless of the associated risks.

Migration study is connected to the social, political, economic and structural dimensions, as such; the “rational choice theory” is used to understand the micro level contributions that lead to migration. Rational choice theory has its foundation in the 1776 work of Adam Smith and explains that people act in the direction of their interest with regards to their personal gain.

Theories used in this work are:

- Rational choice theory
- Theories of Migration and
- Social Capital theory.

#### ***4.2 Rational Choice Theory***

Rational choice theory is one of the leading approaches in migration sociology although there has been critique of some of its assumptions (Kalter, 2003).

The theory states that individuals operate in their self-interest to make choices that provide them with the most benefit. Essentially, people weigh options and take up options that serve their best interest. The criteria for rational choice theory are based on the assumptions that:

- all actions are logical and are made by weighing the costs and benefit
- the benefit of an action must be greater than the cost it requires to be completed
- when the worth of the benefit is lower than the worth of the cost it incurred, the individual will stop the action or engagement
- Individuals will utilize the resources available to them to optimize their benefit.

The most useful element of this theory in sociology is the “actor’s” perspective and the micro-macro connection (Haug, 2008). When applied to migration, the actor’s perspective translates to the behavior of an individual.

The aggregate decisions by an individual lead to an outcome connected to the micro-macro modeling. Individuals are resourceful actors who make choices from available options. With respect to the constraints on available choices, people will evaluate the cost-benefit relation and will take up the choice that benefits them.

The limitation of the theory, which is its focus on individual action, is linked to the structure of the larger setting of socioeconomic order (Abdulai and Shirmshiry, 2014) such that the larger setting provides limited opportunities and resources with which people could achieve better income and well-being (Bradshaw, 2006). Emigration from the global South happens due to income differentials and low quality of life, however, the individual decisions are not totally individualistic. Individual choice is influenced by the larger setting of the economy. In the complexities that push migration, the human agency remains conscious of its goals and makes choices that will help it optimize the goals. Irregular migration presents a low cost choice in terms of resources needed to achieve, it is chosen by many as a preferred alternative to the legal channels which are characterized by multiple intervening factors.

In general, while political and structural factors create lack of resources to participate in the economy (Bradshaw, 2006), socio-cultural factors create an atmosphere of vulnerability and discrimination, therefore individuals as rational actors, explore options that provide minimal restrictions towards achieving their goals.

#### ***4.3 Theories of Migration***

Various migration theories are built upon the macro, meso and micro structures that push migration. The functionalist theory (that is the neoclassical and push-pull model) argues that migration is a positive approach in development as it provides a means for individuals to improve their livelihood. It views people as rational actors who take a conscious part in the decisions that lead to their migration movement. Internal migration precedes international migration as it is a preparatory process for the latter (King and Skeldon, 2010).

The “*new economics of migration*” as a functionalist approach, explains migration on an individualistic framework. It explains that migration is a household livelihood approach that involves collective *risk sharing* by households in order to diversify income sources.

Within the realm of family and community, the use of social capital can minimize unbearable conditions (de Haan & Yaqub, 2019).

The historical-structural approach of migration theories identifies the spread of capitalism as the cause of migration stating that '*creative destruction*' as an '*essential fact about capitalism*', does

not only undermine traditional economies, but also results in inequalities between geographic regions (Reyes, 2001). The historical-structural model critiqued the neoclassical theories, and argues that people do not have a free choice as they are fundamentally forced to move due to traditional economic structures being undermined by the integration with the global political-economic system (de Haas *et al.* 2019). The argument by the functionalist theory that people make rational choices and the argument by the historical-structural model that people have no free choice and are forced to move signifies an ideological difference in the migration school of thought which is referred to in the theoretical framework of this study. In reality, not all migrants are forced out of their home countries due to impacts of capitalism and not all migrants voluntarily emigrate.

The meso and micro theories balance this ideological difference on the assumption that all meso, micro and macro levels are not mutually exclusive. The micro and meso theories explain how individual agency is connected to the meso and how both micro and meso are linked to the macro structures. It deals with the question about people's motivation and decision to move and how they perceive the world.

#### ***4.4 Theory of Social Capital***

The theory of social capital focuses on the use of social networks, civic engagement, the norms of reciprocity and trust as a means of social relations. It is a collective asset in the form of values, network and shared norms that can lead to collective action and improve cooperation among people. As a body of socio-cultural value systems, it contributes some capital and shapes the economy, politics and social behaviour of persons in specific geographical areas.

Social capital is considered as a form of economic variable for economic analysis (Barro and McCleary, 2002); such that it can serve as a means of development and a metric to measure development outside the calculations of gross domestic product (GDP) (Humnath & Yasunobu, 2009).

From the discussion on patron-client relation presented earlier in section 2.4, it can be understood that "*reciprocity exchanges*", solidarity and trust occur between the patron and the client in a network of relations which is regulated by norms and values. These features of patron-client relations are as well sources of social 'capital' (Flores-Yeffal 2015), therefore, as a



form of social capital, it is a non-economic reason for migration and as well a capital to facilitate international migration.

Through a network of relations, people raise the resources needed to facilitate their movement. People also move to locations where they have a network of friends, or acquaintances due to cultural needs. Migrants' choices of destination are shaped around considerations of similar values and the availability of people who share similar values and homeland culture. These factors improve social conditions, integrations, and can fight against insecurities. The concept of social capital presents both the tangible and intangible benefits for migrants.

#### ***4.5 Linkages Between the Theories***

Historical structural theory of migration analyzes the macro consideration of migration and explains that migration is connected to the larger setting of the system and that migration is a part of economic development. Rational choice theory and new economics of labour migration theory are used to illustrate the degree to which an individual participates in their choice-making of a migration process. Both new economics of labour migration and rational choice theory are built on individualistic frameworks and acknowledge that people make free choice.

The macro theories highlight some of the aggregate trends of push factors and interdependencies while the micro-meso theories highlight the human agency factors. The individualistic explanation of migration agrees that the poor can exert human agency by working diligently to improve their livelihoods despite the difficult conditions they live in (Lieten and Nieuwenhuys, 1989 in de Haas *et al.* 2019). The commonality of all theories is that choices and migration is a means to benefit or develop.

## **Chapter Five: Methods and Data**

### ***5.1 Introduction***

This section provides information on the study design, the methods used to accomplish the research, the type of data collected and the limitations of the research design. It also presents

information on data analysis, procedures and the ethical considerations that followed collection of empirical data.

## ***5.2 Research Design***

This research which tries to understand irregular migration is a small scale cross-sectional study in which primary data were collected from multiple participants using a guiding question in a conversational semi-structured interview to elucidate the causes and effects of migration.

Participants depended on retrospective accounts and were allowed a considerable time and freedom to answer on their own terms (Bryman, 2012). The researcher and the subject of research alone contribute the input that goes into the project while the participants contribute the action or contents under study; thus researcher and the participants are mutually exclusive (Reason, 1994, p.42).

The study is specific on a particular nature of the subject and uses some elements of group study to provide a specific account concerned with the subject under investigation. Considering that the qualitative data originates from a small group, limitations (mentioned in chapter five section 5.8) are likely to affect the external generalizability of the findings.

The research was designed around two research questions that initially proved to be too constraining yet helps “you to think”; the main questions were unpacked into sub questions to capture some of the findings. The main questions and the sub questions are characterized by the *what, why, and how* typology of questions which characterizes the research as ‘*descriptive*’, ‘*narrative*’, and ‘*causal*’ type of study (Robson, 2016).

## ***5.3 Disposition of Participants***

In order to access the participants, I contacted one of them whom I regularly socialized with for about two years. Through the snowball sampling technique, I accessed other participants through the first contact person. This made it easy for the researcher to gain the trust of other participants

who would have been apprehensive to speak to a stranger. Participants shared their experiences in an interview characterized by a mix of happy and emotive moments. Although one (the youngest participant) out of all the accounts alludes to being a victim of trafficking, all participants agreed that their migration process was a form of help. Others, except the youngest participant, interpret their sponsored migration as both a feat and *help* from social networks of relationship to facilitate their upward mobility. Assisted migration is seen in the participants' region as a means of opportunities for households to move up the scale of life; which implies it is their "deliberate choice to secure, improve and maintain their livelihoods" (De Haas, 2010; 244).

The researcher comes from the same region of the country as the participants and shares a similar culture. Thus, considering that cultural norms may cause conversation during interviews to be misinterpreted, the researcher's cultural background bridges this gap. Furthermore, the researcher lived and mingled with people, particularly young women who were allegedly trafficked at domestic level into the commercial city [Lagos] that is notable for air, land and sea transport facilities.

While participants recounted their experiences during the interviews, some reported from a third person's perspective using third person pronouns (e.g. 'she' 'they') in order to portray the narrator as a separate entity from the characters described in the account. It may be correct to presume that the use of a third person's perspective by some of the participants is not unconnected with the security and sensitivity of the topic. The participants tried to portray anonymity in order to protect their dignity against any perceived danger or avoid the stigma associated with the label of trafficked victims or exploited persons.

#### ***5.4 Primary and Secondary Data Sources***

Electronic databases and search engines are part of the sources of the materials used. Social Science Citation Index, Science Direct, Google and Google scholar, Researchgate access

provided through Lund University are some of the sources. Some of the sources provide advanced search facility which works well to narrow specific search on the subject using specific *keywords*. A list of some of the keywords to fetch the hits include; *migration and poverty, social network of relations, patron-client, migration theory, women migration, voluntary and involuntary migration, development, etc.* These words are considered to be the central aspect of the research (Robson *et al* 2016). Since the research materials consist of primary data, it is a quantitative approach.

The primary data comes from narrative interviews conducted in Malmö, Sweden between 27<sup>th</sup> March – 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2022. The questions were asked in English language as the interview engaged a small set of participants who are between the age of 28 and 38 years. The participants come from the same geopolitical zone and are able to communicate in English language. Each of them has lived in Europe for at least 3 years and resides in Sweden at the time of the interview. They responded to the same set of questions in English Language and at some point some would use Nigeria's *pidgin* English as a demonstration of cultural connection with the interviewer. They responded in an open and closed structure. The choice of the group was not initially intended; it resulted from exploring the field for available participants of Nigerian origin residing in Sweden; Enquiries through the first participant snowballed into other participants. The first participant encouraged others to come forward. Other participants are people the researcher usually comes across but did not know they share similar backgrounds and experiences with the first participant. A snowball sampling provides a researcher with samples which are rare to find. The interesting observation is that all of the participants had no choice other than to leave their homeland for similar reasons. The interview was conducted on different days at an agreed neutral venue except for one participant.

Some of the administered questions aim to understand: family backgrounds, educational qualification, why the participant made the decision to emigrate, how the movement was funded: by who, on what condition, how the journey experiences are, what route it followed, their perception about the process and how they accessed useful information before, during and upon arrival to destination(s), experiences with living in country(ies) other than homeland, identity within the new location, plans on where to live in future, their aspiration and interactions with migration rule of countries of destination and residence.

Participants were allowed to go off-script for wider narrative; this allowed the research to capture broader themes outside of the initial research questions.

As in other qualitative approaches, the sample of population is “small scale in terms of the number of persons” however, “the social world is viewed as a creation of the people involved” (Robson *et al*, 2016).

Some questions that did not go well are those characterized by triggers; it produced numb or emotive expressions that would have made it difficult for the responder to remain present in the moment; this points to the emotive nature of the subject. However, when it became emotive, I offered wipes and a soothing hug.

The qualitative data were organized and interpreted which allowed the researcher to structure the observations into a theoretical framework and as well introduce other interpretations (Robson *et al*, 2016).

### ***5.5 Power Relations During the Interview Meetings***

There existed some degree of imbalance of power flows during the interview as observed in many social interactions; therefore there may have been an underlying ascribed power (passively or actively) as a result of interviewer’s positionality - as a male interviewer. Improved familiarity and being part of the responder’s culture and history reduced power difference and encouraged disclosure and authenticity (Orit, Strier, and Pessach, 2009).

When I introduced that the purpose for the interview is required for my study at Lund University, I could sense a shift from the responder’s body language, this too, could be a source of power imbalance considering that none of the participants had attended a University anywhere although they have lived in Europe longer than the interviewer. I relied on a sense of humour that comes with our shared norm to douse the tension. I spoke in *pidgin* English to say: “*no shaking, me and you na the same, so nothing de happen*” which literally translates in English as “*do not panic, you and I are one and the same, so nothing extra will happen*”. It ended in a warm smile before the interview began.

### ***5.6 Ethical Considerations***

Confidentiality and anonymity were highly protected in this research as the subject of migration is not only emotive but also political and sensitive. The real names of participants are not printed and little adjustments were made to their names for anonymity. To create an open atmosphere and improve confidence, I shared my personal stories in solidarity with each participant. The interviews took place on different days at the same neutral venue except the oldest participant who requested to be interviewed at her residence. Each participant was informed of the right and privilege to discontinue with the interview at any time and also that they reserved the right to not answer any question they thought was irrelevant. This was a privilege one of the participants said was missing within the interview settings of migration authorities. I had their consent to record the interviews, transcribe and to use the interview material for the purpose of this research only. However, it was clear that their real names will not be associated with the exact elements that describe their personal identities, hence the slight adjustments to the names presented in this work.

It is an advantage to be an interviewer from the same geographical background as the participants; it made the rapport building process much easier, and it was easy to build trust because we shared similar language, history and culture. Phrases like '*you know now*' were commonly used by them. However while acknowledging there may be preconceptions based on bias linked to researching a problem from researchers' own background (Bryman, 2012), this bias is countered by examining the following assumptions:

- Everyone wants a fair world; people must access the right to fairness, equity and justice to reach their potential.
- Women migration is not synonymous to trafficking and exploitation.
- In the problem lies part of the solution.

The research did not experience gatekeepers for access to respondents. There was no financial inducement involved.

## ***5.7 Data Analysis***

The recorded interview of each of the participants was manually transcribed. The voice record was reproduced in written form using the “Voicetyping” tool available with Google Docs.

Each participant began by narrating the account of what motivated their decision to move and the process of their journeys up to the destinations and current country of residence. The pattern of the words recorded in the interview note and the codes drawn from the recorded material include words like, *deprivation, anger, unemployment, fear, insecurity, poverty, family, hardship, help, assist, friend, sponsor, new life, future, culture, safety, future.*

Some questions that used words like ‘trafficking’, and ‘victim’ did not work well for most of the participants, so I avoided the use of the words in order to separate the context from criminality, instead I used the word “trip” when referring to the journey.

### ***5.7.1 Thematic Analyses***

The observed theme is connected to the recurring words - code - from the interview transcript. The words listed in the data analysis session in 5.7 above, led to the use of rational choice theory and social capital theory; the two theories are operationalized around any of the code words like *friend, help, family, and sponsor.*

Words such as insecurity, poverty, hardship, unemployment as used by the respondents, occur most in the section of the narrative where participants give an account on the reason to migrate.

Words like help, assist, relocate, safety, new life occur in the section where the respondent speaks about the process of migration and the settling-down stage of the journey, and the words like culture, future, new life, were found at the section where participants speak on the new destination and next line of action.

### ***5.8 Research Limitations***

Considering that power ebbs and flows occur during interviews and also bearing in mind that the subject is political and could attract stigma in some cultures, some responders are not unlikely to present part of their accounts that corroborate their claims documented with the Swedish asylum authorities.

The emotive and sensitive nature of the subject could also impact the quality of evidence provided by the respondents. Another source of limitation may be traced to the preconception based on the bias linked with researching a problem from the researcher's background (Bryman, 2012 ).



## Chapter Six: Findings

### **6.1 Introduction:**

This chapter presents the findings and some extracts from the interview with the participants and some of the words that emerged from the conversations. Presentation of collected data is limited to the items that are related to the purpose of the paper and research questions.

### **6.2 Narratives of the Journey to a Land of Plenty**

In the midst of imbalances, Nigerians adjust to a survival mechanism that includes ‘*japa*’. *Japa* is derived from one of Nigeria’s local languages; which means “*to run swiftly*” out of a dangerous or threatening situation in order to remove oneself from the situation. *Japa* requires people to do what they can to maneuver every barrier that stands on their road to greatness; this partly defines the strength of a Nigerian who has passed through the rudiments of being a true *Naija*. Traveling overseas with some forged documents is for Tara, Rima, Massi, Onyeka the only way to escape greater danger at home.

The form of migration movement explored in this work is irregular as it occurred through border crossing facilitated by either smugglers or traffickers or the travel by air facilitated by brokers and involves the use of forged documents.

Rima, Tara and Massi are among the participants from Nigeria that took their destinies in their hands. Some of them moved through the rough sea and had to camp at different locations before reaching destinations to join the Europe-based sponsor who bankrolled their journeys.

The conditions were that when they reached Europe and got a job, they would pay back the “sponsor” for every monetary cost of their travel.

Massi was unique by her use of third person’s pronouns. At some point Rima also did use second or third person’s representations such as “*you*” “*they*” “*we*” “*us*”.

Onyeka and Liza journeyed to Europe by air because both had better means that secured their flight tickets. While Onyeka forged documents through migration brokers sponsored by her auntie who lived in the USA, Liza travelled to Sweden at a time when Sweden was tuition-free.

Lisa travelled as a prospective student and deployed a same-sex “cohabiting partner” with a Swedish woman to secure her permanent residence papers; a move in which Liza proved her same-sex partnership with official documents, and in turn, earned a Swedish citizenship and a Swedish passport.

### **6.2.1 Tara’s Journey**

Tara left her rural community at age sixteen after her mother’s demise. As Tara explained, she was ‘*subjected to early marriage*’ which required her “to be circumcised”. For fear of this, she fled home against the decision which would have provided economic benefit for her polygamous family. As she described: “*It was safer for me to leave home...because I was sixteen and was forced to marry. My stepmother and family considered the [economic] benefit, and I was not going to get justice*”.

When she fled to a nearby city and began ‘menial jobs’ as a hairdresser and associated with others who have more knowledge about the ‘system’. As she became exposed to alternatives that offer the opportunity to move overseas, she decided to start saving for her move overseas. At age 21, Tara was yet to save enough money for the move; she then accepted migration sponsorship from a woman who lived in Italy, who was well respected among those who knew her from her community in her homeland. The sponsorship was to bring Tara to Europe so she will work in a hotel. Tara asked to be connected to this woman, this was made possible through friends at the hair beauty salon where she worked.

Since Tara was by many degrees separated from the lady who would sponsor her, proving their relationship to the immigration and visa office was a very tough assignment due to the stringent rules, therefore she and the sponsor agreed that she will take a less difficult path which is to use the alternative migration route by sea transport. Moreover, living in Nigeria, a country where civil rights are stifled, an already traumatized 21 year old Tara from a poor polygamous home and a non ‘professional’ by the ruling standard, would not qualify as one of the ‘highly educated or highly skilled professional’ who could apply for a travel visa through the legal channel.

While migration options are said to depend on geographical area and class (Van Hear in Van Liempt 2011), it may also depend on available and accessible social capital, as this is a form of capital.

The “*sponsorer*” as Tara preferred to call her ‘patron’, had multiple conversations with her to discuss rules and regulations, ‘terms and conditions’. She was assured of her safety when she arrived in Europe; through frequent conversation, Tara develops deeper trust in the potency of the handlers of the process of her impending journey. The patron with the network of handlers worked out everything that was needed for the movement while Tara and her “we” company were lodged in a location in their homeland where they were provided for as she waited for the journey date.

She says:

*“The reason I **decided** to leave Nigeria was because I was **subjected to early marriage** /---/I was going through a lot of frustrations and needed **a place to run to**. I made the decision to come to Sweden even without knowing their migration or Asylum rules/- -/-. I plan to live in Sweden for as long as I can /.../ I already **have a child** here so I plan to leave here for as long as I can /.../. I did not know about Swedish migration or Asylum rules before I came, I base my decision on what I knew **from friends who told me** about Sweden”-*

**Tara, 28 years.**

The phrase ‘I decided’ as used above, indicates the narrator's consciousness and active participation in the personal decision making process which corresponds to the concept of the rational choice theory as regards its individualistic framework; this is also corroborated in the theory of migration in section 4.3 of Chapter four using the concept of new economics of migration. The phrase “subjected to early marriage” suggests there is a factor that stimulates the migration decision. The factor is among those which were addressed in chapter two, section 2.2 above as determinants of migration push factors and in chapter four which discussed structural frames that influence out-migration.

### **6.2.2 Rima’s Journey**

As Rima explains her movement; she originally lived in the rural area. After attending secondary school, her family could not afford to support her for further education. Rima began to look for the type of job she was qualified for, she chose not to mention the job she originally did but she acknowledges that the income was far from being able to maintain her, she describes that “*it becomes very difficult to survive in Nigeria*”.

She began making contacts with her “sister” who “*traveled abroad by the same way*” Rima intended to. The sister was already living in Italy for some years. I do think that “my sister” as used by Rima describes an extended relative; it could probably be someone from the same kindred or community. In Nigeria, the use of ‘*blood sister*’ or ‘*blood brother*’ signifies that the person is born of the same father and the same mother. Rima did not agree to blood relations when quizzed about their relationship. She used the description casually to mirror the person she lived with when she newly arrived in Italy. She partly confirmed the allusion made earlier by saying “*...but we [she and the sister] later went our separate ways, by then I was already able to stand on my own*”.

Recounting her journey which took her through Lampedusa in southern Italy, she describes:

*“I got a **contact through someone** who **connected me to people** who take people abroad; it was going to be through the land transportation, precisely sea transportation /.../. Someone connected me to these people /.../ **These people are called trolley**, [it means ]the connection of people that will take you abroad /.../ they are called trolley”/- - -/. The journey was sponsored by the trolley, the person who **takes us** to abroad so that **when we** get over there to Europe **we** will pay back the money they spent /.../. Whatever that was needed at the point before the travel they will provide for **you** because you are going to pay them back when you get across to Europe”.- **Rima 33 years.***

The use of words or phrases like “*...these people*” “*...connected me to people*” in the narrator’s expression, suggests there is an existing chain of individuals in a relationship who may be working for interests. The word *trolley* means a strongly organized network of alternative migration ‘experts’ in the form of ‘the patron’ dedicated to providing alternative migration routes for women (clients) only. The trolley emphasizes on the network of relationships with a beneficial character for both the patron and the client (Stein, 1984). A social network circle sometimes provides access to the patron who provides the resources with power. However, this dyadic relationship can also be pervasive as it dictates the flow of events. Trolley is only mentioned when describing the irregular migration of women that happens through sea transport. The relationship between sponsor and aspiring migrant is synonymous to the patron-client vertical association.

### 6.2.3 Massi's Journey

Massi spoke using mainly second and third person's pronouns which I think was very helpful to enable her to give an in-depth account. The pronouns in inverted commas refers to Massi's description of the migrant in question whose account she was giving. 'They' travel through Lampedusa and when 'they' reach there the rescuers will receive 'them'.

*“From Lampedusa /.../to the camp, then from camp, their paper is processed before they move to the madam or /.../ [alternatively] madam won't allow them to stay in the camp /.../, [so] they [the sponsors:madams] persuade them to leave the camp and go to meet the madam/.../. It was the trolley who arranged the travel and the rule is 'they' must change 'their' names and use a different name/.../, but “I arrived by flight”/- - -/ [she claims as she smiles at me]. The trolleys have guidelines you must follow. For me “my sister took me there and I started a new life” working at the hotel while my sister worked in an old people's home/.../ we shared the same house/.../those who come through the trolley will first get a sponsor, they will assess you, if they like your person and estimate that you have grace upon your head, they will check your age, facial looks, then they explain to you about the work in Europe”- **Massi, 35 y/o.***

Following the account above, it implies that those of them who make the journey are aware of the “work” they will do, the work in the sex industry is not their goal, the goal is to finally become a legal resident in a country abroad. This clearly shows that it is the choice of the aspiring migrant to take the option as it is considered to serve their best interest at a given time. Massi describes:

*“The sponsor pays up to twenty five thousand euros but they [the migrant] pay back between fifty to sixty thousand euros in total estimate of the cost of travel, it takes up to 1 or 2 years [to pay off] depending on how the person can work /.../ you stay in the sponsor's apartment [like an apprentice], they balance [make account of]the money everyday and account for every dime invested. The apartment is rented to them by Italians and everyone sets off from the house each morning. If you sleep outside without the permission of the madam [the sponsor], you pay up to 1000 euro fine for breaking the rule, if you go where you ought not to go. You can't report to ogbas [their codename for police] because you will put everyone in trouble, including yourself. They take an oath before leaving home, people can't report to ogbas because they are also part of the business. The madam can go as far as threatening the family of the person back home if there is a problem with the ogbas in Europe. They [the sponsor]will tell the family [back home] that they helped your child and now your child is bringing problems to them. Some of the women run away not minding the oath they took. Both black and white people patronize them and it costs up to 50 euro per[service] /.../'”. **Massi, 35y/o.***

Massi's case with the Swedish asylum is based on a fabricated story she presented with evidence to show why she cannot go back home.

She says “ *you must convince them [migration agency] on why you must not go back; if you convince them you are permitted to stay*”

She compares her homeland and Sweden saying:

*Life in Sweden is easy /.../[it is] better than in Nigeria [where] you need connection to be able to survive no matter your qualification, they say the school is good [for children]but my baby is still small /.../ for as long as it takes to get what I want [here] I will stay, but I might decide to leave in 10 years time”- Massi 35 y/o.*

Some of the elements contained in the above account of the participant relate to a mode of operation observed in organized business enterprises. Elements such as definitions of rules and regulations, roles, physical qualities of employee, worker's accommodation, hierarchy, accountability, guarantors and referees, code of conduct, penalty and whistle-blowing are all signified in the above excerpt. These are elements associated with contractual definitions of respected businesses and these definitions bind on the workers.

As such, the potential female migrants' understanding of irregular migration is usually connected to their understanding of it as a business, therefore they consider themselves as part of the enterprise with a motive to use the business platform as a stepping stone to achieve a bigger goal. However, the picture of such enterprise relationships and its activities usually exclude the customers from the picture whereas in analysis of business activities, the demand and supply chain should be central. All business and consumer markets are “socially and politically” designed with an understanding that what people buy determines what you showcase (Andersson and Davidson 2013).

#### **6.2.4 Onyeka's Journey**

Onyeka made the decision and tried to leave her homeland on more than one attempt. The first time she wanted to join her relatives in the USA but it was a lot of problems due to migration requirements. Like the other four women, she is from a poor household.

In her words:

*I left [my homeland because of the difficulties and the poverty. It was a personal decision, also with my family. My auntie [knew] about it and she sponsored me to come to Europe. I came from a very poor background; my family didn't have money to sponsor me. My auntie sponsored my trip /- - -/. /.../later she got married and then she moved to America. Then she became able to help me and even other people in the family [and] not just me. She wanted to take me to America but it was very difficult for her at that time so she. She was married with three children and was still pregnant...so it was difficult for me to work out [my migration] to America. She knew someone in Italy and she had the connection so she sponsored my trip/.../. While in Italy I was staying with my auntie's extended family. I did stay there for a while before I could stand by myself. My auntie connected me to one Italian man who had a company in Italy so the man is a wealthy man and he help[s] people, he would fix people to work for up to six months. I stayed there two months, working [she did not agree to have been involved in sex industry, instead she said factory work]/.../. I had an Italian residence/.../. I arrived here with my carta d'identità, I had all the European documents. I was there for a long time [she obliged to not disclose duration]. I had my first child and second child there, but due to language barrier/.../. I discussed with my hubby and we could relocate for the children to speak English. I had a friend who lived in Sweden/.../who told me it is a good place for family, and the children would go to school also.*

*I went through a flight. I arrived in Stockholm first, I bought a ticket according to the info I had from the Nigerian contact person. Before I came to Sweden, I was pregnant and we sent money to this person, who promised that I would stay for up to 3 months in an accommodation before I get something to do/... /. I was 9 months pregnant.*

*I had a paper from Italy, I was informed by the contact person in Sweden that it would be easy after I arrived, I paid the person 5000 euros to secure me accommodation for the children and myself before we would arrive, I got to stockholm and the Nigerian man did not answer [telephone calls] he disappeared. A Somalian man saw us at the airport after eight hours and took us to immigration and we explained, they interviewed me, and took my document passport, I came with a European passport/.../it was confusing and I was thinking to convert the paper to the Swedish standard, I did not know what to say to them because I did not have the idea/.../they [people within her social network] asked me to frame up stories that were not true of my situation. I requested [to have] my paper [back] to go back to Italy/.../I spoke to my lawyer [attached with Sweden migrations agency] about it, then he said the implication for taking back the statement was a jail term of seven years for doubling [duplication of migrant registration within EU countries]/.../the lawyer insisted that I could not go back until a decision is made on my asylum case.*

**-Onyeka 36 y/o.**

### 6.2.5 Liza's Journey

Liza's movement is remarkable for its strategy. She took the tuition free option to study in Sweden in 2005 and applied to a Swedish university that she would later abandon on arriving in Sweden. She sponsored herself through a series of money from pilferage against the local business she worked for as a teller. It was yet again poverty that drove her to pilfer and to leave her homeland. Her attempt to obtain a travel visa failed once and she tried again the following year; she obtained the visa from the Swedish embassy in Nigeria. While in Sweden and with the proposed studies abandoned for lack of resources, Liza would re-strategize a way to stay back in Sweden because according to her *"I can see that there are **opportunities** that I will get while schooling abroad"*. Entering Sweden as a prospective student was a privilege that provided her with a network of that "opportunities". She became friends with a Swedish family through one of their female members, the both of them moved in together as registered or "cohabiting partner" In Swedish migration terms at the time of this work, registered or cohabiting partners are qualified to obtain a Swedish residence status which allows you to work and live in Sweden. Liza who broke-up with her boyfriend *"three months before [she] traveled abroad"* becomes a cohabiting partner to a woman and bears an *efternamn* (surname in English). She separated from the partner but uses the *efternamn* as a pass. Liza recounts that:

*"I moved from my village to a city [Lagos] in Nigeria, then to another city [Abuja] in Nigeria before I came to Sweden. I would say my reason for leaving Nigeria/.../was for personal development and opportunity I did not find in Nigeria/.../Another reason...is because of the economy and also for security reasons...I don't normally socialize {in Sweden}, I socialize with the African community of friends in Sweden, mostly Africans".-Liza 38 y/o.*

### 6.3 Negotiating the Movement and Beating the System

This narrative is based on the real life accounts of five ambitious women who were participants in the interviews. Each of them once lived in the same homeland where their big achievable dreams did not have fair chances to be fulfilled. For the actor, it was a conscious decision to make a calculated step and take the calculated risk in the direction of their dreams. Ambition they say is priceless therefore neither the price tag nor the 'tag' mattered to them as they



prepared to move. With little or no financial resources, yet their movement was seen in a realm as very possible, it would be made possible by the traditional means through which those before them had followed to become celebrated icons in their communities because they ‘made it’. They were all bound for Europe and it didn’t matter if the move was by air, by sea or by river. They would move by forging documents, observing border patrols and maneuvering through all dangers. Objectively, what one may consider as ‘safe’ may be ‘harmful’ to another, and vice versa; the answer depends on whose stance and whose lens views the context.

In the views of these actors, to move overseas ‘by every means necessary’ is to make progress and the process ‘doesn’t really matter’, they could justify the process by Machiavelli’s famous philosophy presented in ‘*The Prince*’ that says: “*exitus acta probat*” to mean “the end justifies the means”

#### ***6.4 Leaving Home to Overcome Poverty***

In the geopolitical zone of Nigeria where the research participants come from, parents give their female children names such as Possible, Endurance, Favour, Treasure with the belief that the name speaks upon and into the future of the child. In some African cultures, names can also be given to a child to connote circumstances surrounding the birth; it can also be based on aspiration or destiny for which the newborn will live to accomplish. Within the Nigerian context where such nomenclature is usually inspired by life situations, names are expected to fulfill their meaning in the life of a child. A child named Favour is expected to bring favours upon self and family; as such, people’s actions are driven by the meanings attached to their names.

A family that has endured difficult circumstances could name their child “Endurance”, however, when it becomes extreme to endure at home, Endurance must re-strategize and live up to the name-call. A person named “Treasure” would be expected to command treasures. These Nigerian women on the move are no different, they prepare to live out the meanings ascribed to their names, this is by every means necessary.

Warsen Shire once said “*no one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark*”. The global South migration to the global North is primarily driven by the impacts of capitalism and globalization on indigenous cultural and economic settings of the geographical areas; this is due

to its drastic nature that forces people out of their homeland. In the process of movement, people may carry with them elements from the realms around which their ideas are formed. Poverty is a real and “the parent of revolution and crime”; as such the corruption caused by poverty in one geography traverses across international boundaries through migration, and challenges the migrant receiving nations whose budgets take the burden of social transfers that benefit asylum seekers. Poverty is found to be the primary driver of irregular and involuntary migrations even as macro analysts of migration often focus on the migrants’ troubles and less on their struggles; they are individuals who consciously take actions against individual poverty and injustice.

International migration begins with internal movement from rural-urban distance at a time (King and Skeldon, 2010), therefore the women in this study who moved did move slowly but surely till they moved far beyond borders where they could be part of an egalitarian society.

Individuals as the smallest unit of social analysis should be studied more discreetly through different perspectives in order to understand what may not be obvious from the height of the policy realm. Irregular migrants as research objects, will continually consider the researchers and authorities as outsiders because the outsiders themselves are not poor and do not see poverty through the migrants’ lens; therefore they don't understand that “*man must survive*”. The outsiders usually rely on a core framework or pattern in generating, analyzing and communicating findings during interviews with migrants. Migrants' responses at such interviews may be partly influenced by an outsider atmosphere, which obscures certain narratives that could help to understand divergent perceptions.

#### ***6.4.1 Funding and Facilitating the Movement***

Immigration and border management regimes place stringent rules on human mobility; therefore people seek cheaper or easier alternatives to move to where they seek access to better life. Such movement is made possible by resources and capital such as the social capital from the available social network of relations. A branch of utilitarian school of thought argues that “the essence of government is to provide greater happiness for the greater number”. Greater happiness, which is part of a social contract between government and its citizens, usually suffers a deliberate oversight in many nations of the global South; this condition ushers in a more informal and mediating structure as the patron clientelism (Aigbe and Ugo-Oluchi, 2018).

Patron clientelism as a form of social capital in developing countries, has a relationship with cultural norms and corruption due to the nature of its unregulated and unequal power relations (dyadic relationship). This vertical relationship proves to be a negative force in the stride to achieve orderly, safe and regular migration and mobility. Those who are patrons provide and command resources for clients while the clients payback with loyalty and trust.

In the course of movement, a migrant's status is not static, it may shift in adaptation to existing requirements, regulations and situations. A migrant who sets off from homeland as an economic migrant may assume a status of an asylum seeker at some point in the course of the movement. Four of the women who are interview participants in this research, left home as economic migrants, in the process, they changed given names and migration status in response to the situation as they are usually goal-oriented and care more about the goals.

### ***6.5 Discussion and Analysis***

In the narrative section, Tara describes the place where they were lodged in their homeland as a place where “*we were not allowed to use the internet*”. “*We*” as used in her expression implies that Tara’s “*we*” company could mean other young and aspiring women migrants who were lodged and ‘managed’ by the same chaperone appointed by the Europe-based overseer of the team. Tara paid no money to reach overseas. As the ‘client’, she paid her loyalty and trust to ‘the patron’ which demonstrates a strand of rational choice theory’s assumption that all actions are rational and are made due to considering cost and benefit. Eight years later, Tara and her son, resides in Sweden where she claimed asylum, waiting for her residence documents after moving through multiple destinations between 2014 and 2019 to reach Sweden.

The highlighted phrase in Tara’s narrative: ‘*a place to run to*’ as used in the extract of her narration above signifies that the actor’s relationship no longer provides the expected benefit, therefore there is the need to ‘run’. As the value of the benefit becomes lower than that of the value of cost it incurred, there is a need to end the action. This relationship speaks to rational choices theory’s assumption that when the worth of the reward reduces below the cost incurred, the actor will stop the action or end the relationship”. Tara’s statement “*I already have a child*” suggests that she has incurred more responsibilities which necessitated her ambition to assume a new dimension, therefore she must explore other channels in response to the reduced rewards

which is calculated to have dropped below the cost incurred. Tara's interviews also presented phrases like "*Italy gave me everything I wanted, [I was] going for a diploma study... I was sending money back home*". The highlighted phrases identify with the phase of a "new life" for the individual at the peak of benefit from the relationship that existed, however, it changed.

The use of the phrase "*from friends who told me*" as highlighted in Tara's narration in section 6.21 above implies that a network of people have been through the process and the system she was accessing, therefore they have the knowledge on what works well for a given situation. This feature alludes to one of the assumptions of the theories of migration which explains the 'perpetuation' of migration by a network of existing migrant flow in a destination. Looking closely at the phrase, it will also stir the reasoning that the "*friends who told me*" may be a set of other individuals in the same industry who have acquired better knowledge of migration and know some approach that could work for certain life situations. As at the time of the interview with Tara, she considers a 70 - 30 % child custody ratio on giving her child up for adoption by an 'economic father'.

I find Onyeka's account a little contradicting, she claimed to have earned a legal residence in Italy, an EU country, but when she arrived in Sweden another EU country, she became confused on how the European documents she holds would work in Europe; that is the contradiction. I strongly sense that as a mother of three children, she would want to separate her home from the stigma associated with trafficking associated with her migration; hence the choice to leave Italy.

The other contradiction is traced to this: Onyeka says the reason to relocate from Italy to Sweden is for "*the children to speak English*" whereas Sweden's official language of instruction is not English. Analytically her stay in Italy was no longer profitable considering that she had paid a huge price to stay there for long. With two children born there, the value of returns on the cost of her migration to Italy would have diminished with more responsibilities. Onyeka may have also moved considering that she needed a new identity in motherhood. Like the rest of other participants who left their homelands in search of economic freedom, Onyeka framed stories to enable her and her children to become asylum seekers in the Swedish migration agency; it's a "go hard or go home" situation. At the time of this work, she receives 1800 SEK per month and each of her children receives 500 SEK per month to cover their living expenses while the State

pays for their accommodation. This form of relationship between the migrants and the migrant receiving country will last longer if it remains profitable for both parties.

Lisa's responses was monotonous, she did not obliged to answer questions relating to her sexual orientation during the period of cohabitating with a partner, this is why very few themes emerged from the inetrview with her. However, the central theme in Liza's accounts is opportunity for a better life. Her account also suggests there may be a shift of (sexual) identity. She acknowledges to have separated from the partner saying "*apart from the economic situation of Nigeria I believe my country Nigeria is the best place to stay/.../I will return to my country[someday]*" mirrors nostalgia.

As it relates to the accounts presented in this thesis, there are identity shifts, emotional aspects of the social process of migration. Identity of the migrant constantly undergoes the process of change as an individual's self-definition follows a change process based on experiences from critical incidents. The change causes the individual to explore and validate aspects of self (Strauss 1959 in Kazmierska 2003). Immigrants who later visit their homeland realize they have retained little affinity for their homeland and they identify more with the norms of the host country, there is a sort of signal that confirms the identity shift. Visiting homeland is a sort of reflective awareness.

Migrants' status are not static as a migrant may assume the status of an asylum seeker in the host country when economic need is the real motive to leave the home country.

## Chapter Seven: Conclusion

### *Summary*

The objective of this study set out to understand the complexities behind the migration of women. Through research data and analysis, it establishes that factors such as poverty, maladministration, pressure from culture, lack of access to egalitarian life are some of the reasons why women from low income households migrate. This research also establishes that their irregular migration is powered by a fierce ambition and a desire to reach a goal for profitability for self and for family.

According to the findings, a network of relations are the means through which this set of women accomplish their journeys regardless of the risks that accompany the movement. Stringent migration rules are also identified as one of the drivers of this form of migration alternative routes; with reduced legal migration options, many aspiring migrants turn to alternative possibilities to begin their migration process (van Liempt, 2011).

By the use of the rational choice theory, theory of social capital and theories of migration, this research established the interaction between consciously evaluating available options, selecting a profitable plan which is then put to action by the use of material and immaterial capital to accomplish an interest.

This research recommends that policy consideration should improve on policies that restrict international migration of women from the global South. Considering the era of feminization of migration, women have become breadwinners too, therefore policy makers should influence the empowerment of women through a specific talent migration channels oriented in global South womens need; this could reduce the irregular migration flows of a class of women.

Further research is recommended to explore the subject through a feminist approach, including an x-ray on perpetuation of migration and limitations of social capital when it is transferred from one culture to the other. Having more than five participants to cover a wider geographical coverage is also recommended.

*Words: 14,000.*

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