
**Youth Migration, Brain Drain and Economic Development in Nigeria: A
Secondary-Data Analysis of Trends and Policy Implication, 2018–2026**

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Abstract

Since 2018, Nigeria has experienced a marked intensification of youth emigration, popularly termed “japa,” amid sustained macroeconomic pressure, insecurity and weak public-service delivery. This paper examines the core drivers, patterns and economic consequences of youth migration and brain drain in Nigeria between 2018 and 2026, using secondary time-series data and documentary research design. Time-series indicators were compiled from the National Bureau of Statistics, the Central Bank of Nigeria, the World Bank, the World Health Organisation, the International Organisation for Migration, Afrobarometer and the United Kingdom Office for National Statistics, and organised into nine captured descriptive and comparative tables covering unemployment, inflation, exchange-rate depreciation, minimum-wage purchasing power, diaspora remittances, net migration, destination-country inflows, health-workforce migration intention and youth emigration sentiment. The analysis of the study is framed by Push-Pull Theory, Human Capital Theory and the New Economics of Labour Migration. The research is organised around conceptual model linking economic, social and employment pressures to migration intention, migration behaviour, brain drain and downstream economic consequences, with remittances and diaspora engagements acting as a countervailing pathway. This paper situates that phenomenon within the broader economics of skilled migration and brain drain, using secondary macroeconomic and migration data spanning 2018 to 2026, a period that captures the pre-COVID-19 baseline, the pandemic shock and the far-reaching 2023 exchange-rate and sudden subsidy reforms that followed the change in federal administration. Evidence of the study indicates that the 2023–2024 macroeconomic reforms produced the sharpest simultaneous deterioration in real wages, currency value and high cost of living in the review period, coinciding with documented rise in youth emigration intention and skilled health-worker attrition, the occupational category for which the assembled evidence is strongest and most directly converging, while corresponding evidence for other skilled occupations is comparatively indirect. Remittance inflows have simultaneously reinforced household welfare and foreign-exchange earnings. The study argues that Nigeria faces a self-reinforcing migration-pressure cycle rather than a simple push-factor problem, and concludes with evidence-based, non-punitive policy recommendations centred on real-wage protection, professional retention, security as an economic variable, and structured diaspora engagements.

Keywords: Youth Migration, Brain Drain, Nigeria, Japa, Human Capital, Remittances, Unemployment, Economic Development.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Migration is one of the most defining features of contemporary global economy and skilled talent exchange, and nowhere is this more visible than in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in West Africa, Nigeria, the region's most populous country and one of its largest sources of skilled emigration. Global youth migration has accelerated over the past decade, driven by widening income gaps between origin and destination labour markets, digitalised access to overseas opportunity and the increasing portability of professional qualifications (International Organisation for Migration (IOM), 2024). Within the African continent, this pattern is amplified by demographic pressure: the continent has the world's youngest population and Nigeria alone adds millions of new labour-market entrants every year against a domestic economy that has struggled to generate and commensurate formal employment (Migration Policy Institute, 2026). Nigeria's demographic structure compounds the problem, with a population exceeding 220 million people and a median age below 18, the country produces far more graduates annually than its formal labour market can absorb, reporting that the State of the Nigerian Youth Report 2025 places the number of unemployed youths in the tens of millions and notes that roughly 1.7 million graduates leave Nigerian universities and polytechnics each year to join an economy with limited absorptive capacity (All-Africa, 2025). Against this backdrop, aspirations for international migration, particularly among skilled and highly educated youth have risen sharply, giving rise to what is now popularly known in Nigeria as “japa,” a Yorùbá expression meaning to flee or escape (Migration Policy Institute, 2026).

This paper situates that phenomenon within the broader economics of skilled migration and brain drain, using secondary macroeconomic and migration data spanning 2018 to 2026; a period that captures the pre-COVID-19 baseline, the pandemic shock and the far-reaching 2023 exchange-rate and sudden subsidy reforms that followed the change in federal administration.

1.2 The Nigerian Migration Context ("Japa")

“Japa” is treated here strictly as a social phenomenon illustrating changing migration aspiration, not as an academic construct in its own right, the analytical work is done by established migration and human-capital theory. Even so, the scale of sentiment is analytically significant: Afrobarometer's 2024/2025 survey of Nigerian youth found that 60% of young people had considered emigrating, most citing the search for jobs or an escape from economic hardship, and that the share of youth who had given “a lot” of thought to leaving the country had tripled since 2017, from 12% to 37% (Afrobarometer, 2025). That trajectory, a near-tripling of serious emigration intent within seven years, is one of the clearest quantitative signals available that Nigeria's youth migration pressure has structurally intensified in recent years rather than merely persisted.

1.3 Problem Statement

The problem this study addresses is not simply that Nigerians are migrating, population mobility is a normal feature of an integrated global economy, and Nigeria has historically been both a source and a destination for regional migration (IOM, 2024). The more precise problem here is that Nigeria is experiencing simultaneous loss of economically active, educated, skilled and formally trained young human capital to other nations, and the persistence of negative socioeconomic conditions continue to generate incentives for further migration. Elevated inflation, currency depreciation, wage stagnation, insecurity and constrained basic public-service delivery have coincided with rising rates of educated and skilled emigration among health workers, engineers, economists, accountants and financial experts, technologists, lawyers, ICT professionals and intellectually sound academics, precisely the categories of youth in which Nigeria has invested scarce public and private training resources to train to global standard.

This creates the possibility of a self-reinforcing cycle: weak economic conditions and high rate of unemployment amongst young people pushes skilled labour abroad, resulting in loss of productive and professional capacity, thereby weakening the delivery of public services and constrains productivity growth of a country. The deterioration in basic public services and productivity generates further dissatisfaction, and dissatisfaction feeds on fresh cycle of migration intention. Testing the plausibility of that cycle, using observable publicly available indicators rather than assumption is the central empirical task of this research.

1.4 Research Gap

Gap 1: Fragmentation

Existing Nigerian literature has previously tended to examine migration, unemployment, brain drain, insecurity, diaspora remittances and health-worker migration as separate research problems, generally within a single-sector or single-discipline studies (Yakubu et al., 2023). This study brings several of these strands together within a more integrated economic context and framework than is typical of a single-sector Nigerian studies, rather than building on displacing sector-specific work such as Yakubu et al. (2023) on health-worker migration; the contribution claimed here is one of degree and synthesis across a wider evidence base, not a claim that these individual strands are unstudied in isolation.

Gap 2: Time period

Much of the earlier Nigerian migration literature predates COVID-19 era, the year 2020 #EndSARS period, the 2023 currency floatation and exchange-rate unification, the 2024 minimum-wage reform and the 2023–2025 high cost of living crisis. The 2018–2026 window adopted in this study is therefore an unusual informative period, spanning pre-COVID-19, COVID -19 era and the Nigerian post-reform sub-periods that can be synthesised and compared directly based on publicly available documents.

Gap 3: Youth focus

Rather than treating Nigerian migration in the aggregate, this study concentrates specifically on youth (broadly, ages 15–35), the cohort in which both labour-market entry pressure and emigration intention are most acute to (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2024; Afrobarometer, 2025).

Gap 4: Migration versus economic consequences

Many existing studies ask why Nigerians migrate to other nations. Comparatively, fewer studies have been able to systematically connect documented migration and brain-drain indicators to observable domestic economic conditions using a consistent multi-year evidence base, which is the core approach adopted in this study.

Gap 5: Policy specificity

Finally, this research deliberately connects documented evidence to specific policy domains, which includes wages, employment, security, healthcare, education, infrastructure and diaspora engagements, so that the synthesised analysis has direct utility for policymakers rather than remaining a purely descriptive account of events.

These five points are best read as gaps of degree, emphasis and synthesis rather than as a claim that no related work exists. As Section 2 shows, individual strands of this study, including health-worker migration intention (Yakubu et al., 2023), Afrobarometer emigration-sentiment data and Nigerian unemployment and inflation statistics have each been examined separately in prior literature and institutional reporting. What this study adds is the compilation of these previously separate strands into one time-series evidence base spanning a single, consistently defined 2018-2026 window, rather than a claim to be the first study of Nigerian youth migration or brain drain as such.

1.5 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the drivers, patterns and economic consequences of youth migration and brain drain in Nigeria between 2018 and 2026, with particular attention to the effects of economic conditions, employment opportunities, remuneration, insecurity, public-service quality and post-COVID-19 socioeconomic pressures on young Nigerians' migration decisions, using secondary and publicly documented data.

1.6 Objectives of the Study

- i. To examine the trend and changing pattern of indicators associated with Nigerian youth migration between 2018 and 2026.
- ii. To identify the major reasons such as economic, employment and socioeconomic factors associated with Nigerian youths' migration decisions, as documented in local, national and international data sources.
- iii. To examine the observable relationship between economic conditions such as inflation, high cost of living, currency depreciation, wage stagnation, sudden increased and exchange rate

fluctuations, particularly the 2023-2024 currency floatation and exchange-rate unification, and documented migration and emigration-intention indicators.

- iv. To assess the core implications of educated and skilled trained youth migration and brain drain on Nigeria's human-capital base, with particular reference to health workforce, the exact categories of youths in which Nigeria has invested both public and private training resources to train to global standard.
- v. To examine both the negative (human-capital loss) and positive (remittance-led) economic effects of youth migration.

1.7 Research Questions

- i. What patterns of youth-migration-related indicators have emerged in Nigeria between 2018 and 2026?
- ii. What are the principal economic and social factors documented as influencing Nigerian youths' migration decisions?
- iii. What relationship is observable between macroeconomic conditions and youth migration/emigration-intention indicators?
- iv. To what extent does the available evidence indicate that the migration of educated and skilled trained Nigerian youth has contributed to brain drain, particularly in the health sector?
- v. What are the documented economic costs and benefits of youth migration to Nigeria?.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The study is significant for three audiences. First for policymakers, it consolidates dispersed indicators into a single evidence base connecting macroeconomic management to human-capital retention, an increasingly urgent concern for Nigeria given the government's own National Health Workforce Migration Policy, (World Health Organisation [WHO] Regional Office for Africa, 2024). Second, for academic literature, it addresses the core fragmentation, time-period and youth-focus gaps identified above. Finally for theoretical and development practice, it offers a framework grounded in Push-Pull Theory, Human Capital Theory and the New Economics of Labour Migration for weighing brain-drain costs against remittance-led benefits rather than treating migration as a uniformly negative phenomenon.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of Youth Migration

Youth migration refers to the geographic relocation of young people, whether local, internal or international movements of persons typically aged between 15 and 35 in pursuit of improved economic, educational or social outcomes (IOM, 2024). In the Nigerian context, international youth migration has increasingly displaced local and internal rural-urban migration as the dominant aspiration among educated young people, a shift attributable to the widening gap between domestic and international wage and service-quality levels (Migration Policy Institute, 2026).

2.2 Brain Drain as the Conceptual Issues

Brain drain is described as the emigration of educated and highly skilled trained professionals or young individuals from a country that has invested in their human capital developments, resulting in a net loss of productive and innovative capacity to the sending economy (Docquier & Rapoport, 2012, as commonly cited in the migration-economics literature). The concept is normatively contested; some scholars argue that the diaspora created by skilled emigration can generate offsetting benefits through remittances, knowledge transfer and positive “brain circulation,” while others emphasise the direct fiscal and productivity losses associated with the departure of publicly trained professionals (Stark & Bloom, 1985). This study adopts the latter, more balanced framing explicitly treating brain drain as a trade-off rather than a uniformly negative outcome.

2.3 Statistical Analysis of Youth Unemployment and Underemployment in Nigeria 2023–2025

Nigeria's unemployment statistics have been the subject of considerable methodological controversy. Under the pre-2023 methodology, the National Bureau of Statistics reported a youth (15–24) unemployment rate of 53.4% for the year 2020, alongside 37.2% among the 25–34 cohort (NBS, 2021), as cited in Afrobarometer, (2025). In April 2023, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) adopted a revised methodology aligned with International Labour Organisation guidance, under the revised methodology, only persons who did no work at all for pay or profit are classified as unemployed, this narrower definition produced a dramatically lower headline figure, with youth unemployment reported at 5.09% in year 2024 (World Bank modelled ILO estimate, as reported by Macrotrends, 2025), even as underemployment, informal employment (above 92% of the employed workforce) and the NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) rate remained high (NBS, 2023). This measurement indicator discontinuity is in itself analytically important; it means the headline unemployment rate substantially understates labour-market slack relative to the lived experience captured in survey research such as Afrobarometer's.

2.4 Inflation, Currency Floatation, High Cost of Living, Real Wages and Cycle of Migration Intention 2018–2016

Nigeria's headline inflation rate rose from single digits for most of the 2018–2019 period to a peak average of approximately 31–34% in 2024, before easing to the mid-teens by early 2026 (FocusEconomics, 2026; NBS, 2026). Over the same period, the national minimum wage rose only from ₦18,000 => (\$49.82) in (2018) to ₦30,000 => (\$97.91) in (2019) and then to ₦70,000 => (\$81.48) in January (2024) when the exchange rate was stronger, and then fell flat to (\$46. 26), during the lowest points of the Naira devaluation in late November (2024), a nominal national minimum wage increase that was substantially eroded by concurrent Naira depreciation and inflation (Pavestones Legal, 2024; wage.is, 2026). The mismatch between nominal wage adjustments and the pace of price increase in cost of living and currency exchange is a recurring theme in the Nigerian labour-economics literature on migration push factors. The stagnation and retrogression in real wages, currency depreciation, exchange rate fluctuations, particularly the sudden 2023-2024 currency floatation and exchange-rate unification generated further

dissatisfaction amongst young people, particularly persons aged 15--35, and dissatisfaction feeds on fresh cycle of migration intention, thereby leading to fresh migration of young adult to other nations with stable economy.

2.5 Insecurity and Migration Decisions

Insecurity including the Boko Haram insurgency, farmer-herder conflict, kidnapping and banditry has displaced an estimated 3.2 million Nigerians internally as of April 2026, and it is repeatedly cited in recent survey research data as a driver of both internal displacement and international emigration intention (Migration Policy Institute, 2026). This study treats security explicitly as an economic variable rather than a purely law-and-order issue, consistent with the framing recommended in recent World Bank Nigeria Development Update reporting.

2.6 Healthcare Workforce and Migration Intention

Health-worker migration is one of the most extensively documented sub-categories of Nigerian brain drain. Nigeria is listed among the 55 countries on the World Health Organisation (WHO), Health Workforce Support and Safeguard List 2023, denoting a severe health-workforce shortage (WHO Regional Office for Africa, 2024). WHO's continental State of the Health Workforce in Africa 2026 report found that 46% of surveyed African health workers intended to migrate, up from 42% in 2024, with Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and Saudi Arabia as the leading preferred destinations, (WHO Regional Office for Africa, 2026a, 2026b). At the national level, Yakubu et al. (2023) surveyed 271 Nigerian skilled health workers and found migration intention as high as 72% among nurses and 55–83% depending on rural/urban location and further-training status, while independent reporting places Nigerian nurse and midwife emigration over the preceding five years above 75,000 (Independent Uganda, 2026). In response to this trend, the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare developed a National Health Workforce Migration Policy framework in partnership with WHO and the UK Department of Health and Social Care (WHO Regional Office for Africa, 2024).

2.7 Migration, Remittances, Economic Development and Sizable Loss in Brain Drain to Nigeria's Economy

Remittances are the principal documented economic counterweight to brain drain. Nigeria received US\$24.31 billion in personal remittances in 2018 pre COVID-19 era, its peak for the decade, then fell sharply to a low of US\$17.21 billion in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, before recovering to US\$20.98 billion in 2024 post-COVID-19, a level equivalent to 8% of Nigeria's GDP (World Bank data, as reported by Moses-Ashike, 2025; Migration Policy Institute, 2026). The World Bank explicitly recognises migration and diaspora remittances as important and as a source of GDP contribution to a nation's economic growth if properly managed, and as drivers of economic developments (World Bank, 2024), a position this study adopts in framing remittances as a genuine partial offset to human-capital development and also a sizable loss in brain drain to Nigeria's economy and highly skilled trained workforce at large.

2.8 Nigerian Empirical Studies and Policy Response

Nigerian policy engagement with migration governance has intensified since 2023. The National Health Workforce Migration Policy represents a sector-specific response; more broadly, the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission and Successive Central Bank of Nigeria and the World Bank reports have increasingly framed diaspora engagements, including diaspora bonds and structured remittance channels, as a deliberate mechanism and strategy in strengthening Nigeria's economy development rather than a residual byproduct of emigration (Nigerians in Diaspora Commission, 2020; United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa [UN OSAA], 2024).

2.9 Synthesis and Research Gap

Taken together, the literature establishes that (1) Nigeria's headline unemployment statistics are methodologically unstable and likely understated in labour-market slack; (2) inflation and currency depreciation have outpaced nominal wage growth, particularly from 2023; (3) insecurity functions as an economic indicator in terms of direct foreign investments and investors confidence, as much as security as a variable that feeds on dissatisfaction, particularly amongst young people aged 15-35, thereby leading to fresh cycle of migration intention; (4) health-worker migration intention is exceptionally high and well documented; and (5) remittances constitute a substantial and measurable offsetting benefit in strengthening Nigeria's economy development rather than a residual byproduct of emigration. What remains comparatively underdeveloped is a single integrated time-series account connecting these indicators across the 2018–2026 window, with explicit to pre-COVID-19, and post COVID-19 reform era and sub-period comparison. The gap addresses that in this study.

A more critical reading of this literature also exposes differences in evidentiary strength that carry directly into the caution with which this study's own findings are stated. Yakubu et al.'s (2023) 72% nurse migration-intention figure is a single, well-designed but geographically and occupationally bounded survey of 271 health workers; it is not a national census, and its precision should not be extended uncritically to other skilled occupations, a distinction this study preserves by treating health-workforce brain drain and general skilled-worker brain drain as evidentially distinct claims (Section 5.5). Similarly, Afrobarometer's emigration-intention series and the National Bureau of Statistics' unemployment series are each internally rigorous but rest on different definitions, sampling frames and reporting cycles, so their apparent convergence in direction (Sections 2.3 and 2.6) is suggestive rather than a demonstration of a single underlying process. Existing Nigerian migration scholarship has also tended to treat brain drain as a uniformly negative outcome; this study instead follows Docquier and Rapoport (2012) and Stark and Bloom (1985) in treating remittance-led "brain gain" and human-capital loss as two sides of the same phenomenon, which is a point of departure from, rather than simple restatement of the sector-specific literature reviewed above.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Push-Pull Theory of Migration

Lee's (1966) Push-Pull Theory remains the foundational framework for migration studies and it is adopted here as the primary migration theory. The framework distinguishes push factors operating at the origin as unemployment, low wages, insecurity, poor healthcare, and most importantly political and economic uncertainty from pull factors operating at the destination, to higher salaries, better healthcare and security, stronger currencies, improved professional opportunity and quality of life. The Nigerian evidence reviewed in Section 2 maps cleanly onto both sides of this framework, and the empirical sections below are organised in parts and around measurable proxies for each category of the push factors.

3.2 Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961) frames education and professional training as an investment that generates returns both to the individual person and to the training economy through productivity, tax contribution and service delivery. When a Nigerian-trained doctor, engineer, lecturer, nurse, software developer, economist, accountant or researcher migrates permanently, Nigeria may lose a substantial share of the expected economic return on the human capital in which it has contributed to directly through public education and training subsidy, and indirectly through household investments it has invested in via community engagement. This is the theoretical foundation for treating educated and skilled trained emigration as an economic variable, and not merely as a demographic phenomenon.

3.3 New Economics of Labour Migration as an Household-Economics Framework

The New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) framework (Stark & Bloom, 1985) reframes migration as an household-economics rather than purely individual-level decision. Families may put financial resources together to support the emigration of one member of the family because remittances diversify and stabilise household income. For instance, family upkeep, financing education and skill acquisition of siblings, or providing some sort of financial insurance against sudden domestic economic shocks. NELM is the theoretical bridge that allows this research to analyse remittances and brain drain within a single coherent household-economics framework, rather than treating them as unrelated phenomena.

4. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual model guiding this study links three clusters of independent conditions, (1) economic conditions (inflation, high cost of living, wages, unemployment, exchange-rate instability), (2) social conditions (insecurity, healthcare quality, education, infrastructure) and (3) employment conditions such as (job availability, job quality, career progression, professional opportunity), migration intention, migration behaviour, and ultimately brain drain and its downstream economic consequences: skilled-labour loss, reduced productivity and professional capacity, lost tax revenue, lost innovation, and training-investment leakage. Running parallel to this negative pathway is a countervailing positive pathway in which migration generates

remittances, foreign-exchange inflows, diaspora investment, knowledge transfer and international professional networks.

Consistent with the recommendation in the original project brief, the study also proposes a conceptual instrument for future primary research rather than as a value computed from data collected for this study on Youth Migration Pressure Index (YMPI), a composite indicator that would combine standardised measures of unemployment, inflation, real-wage pressure, insecurity, healthcare dissatisfaction, housing pressure, availability of professional-opportunity and economic confidence. Because no primary survey was administered for this study, the YMPI is presented here strictly as a proposed methodological contribution, its component indicators are individually evidenced in the tables that follow, but no composite index score is reported, since doing so would require primary data collection beyond the scope of this secondary-data study.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The study adopts longitudinal and trend-based quantitative methods, a synthesised descriptive and comparative documentary research design based entirely on secondary data. Because each indicator is compiled annually across the 2018-2026 window rather than observed at a single point in time, the design is properly a time-series (trend) design rather than a cross-sectional one; the term "cross-sectional" used elsewhere in earlier drafts of this paper referred loosely to the fact that several different indicator series (unemployment, inflation, exchange rates, remittances and so on) are compared side by side within each year, and has been corrected throughout to avoid ambiguity. No primary survey, interview or experimental data was collected for this study. All figures reported and analysed were drawn from publicly available sources, and attributed to publicly verifiable institutional documents. The design follows established practice in applied development economics, in which secondary multi-source time-series data are compiled and harmonised where possible, and analysed descriptively and comparatively across defined sub-periods (World Bank, 2024).

5.2 Data Sources

Data were drawn from the National Bureau of Statistics, (labour force surveys, inflation reports), the Central Bank of Nigeria (exchange-rate and monetary data), the World Bank, (World Development Indicators, including modelled ILO unemployment estimates, remittance and exchange-rate series), the World Health Organisation Regional Office for Africa, (State of the Health Workforce in Africa reports, 2024 and 2026), the International Organisation for Migration and the Migration Policy Institute- (migration profile and net-migration data), Afrobarometer (nationally representative youth survey data), the United Kingdom Office for National Statistics (destination-country migration inflow data), Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada figures as reported in the Nigerian press, and peer-reviewed academic literature (e.g., Yakubu et al., 2023) on health-worker migration intention.

5.3 Period of Analysis and Sub-period Segmentation

The analysis of this study covers 2018 to 2026, and where the underlying data permit, it is segmented into four sub-periods for comparison: pre-COVID-19 (2018–2019), COVID-19 (2020–2021), early post-COVID-19 (2022–2023), and the recent reform period (2024–2026), which captures the effects of the mid-2023 exchange-rate unification and subsidy removal and the July 2024 minimum-wage revision. This segmentation allows the study to ask empirically, whether the intensity and apparent determinants of youth migration pressure changed materially after COVID-19 and after the 2023 macroeconomic reforms, rather than treating 2018–2026 as an undifferentiated block or phenomenon.

5.4 Analytical Approach

The analytical approach is descriptive, synthesised and comparative rather than inferential. The study reports core trends, computes simple derived indicators (for instance, minimum wage expressed in constant US-dollar terms as a proxy for real purchasing power), and interprets each indicator against the theoretical framework set out in Section 3. No regression, correlation or other inferential statistical procedure requiring individual-level observations is applied, because no individual-level primary dataset was collected, and where the cited literature (e.g., Yakubu et al., 2023) reports such analysis, this is explicitly attributed to the original study rather than presented as original computation.

5.5 Limitations

Five limitations should be noted. First, reliance on secondary data means the analysis is bound by the reporting periods, definitions and methodological choices of the source institutions, most consequentially the 2023 NBS unemployment methodology change discussed in Section 2.3, which breaks comparability of headline unemployment figures across the review period. Second, in the absence of primary survey or interview data, the study cannot report Nigeria's specific individual-level determinants of migration intention with 100 percent statistical precision, where such findings are cited (for instance, Afrobarometer's emigration-intention results or Yakubu et al.'s 2023 health-worker survey), they are explicitly attributed and stated as those of the original studies. Third, some indicators (for instance, net migration flow estimates) are produced using five-year interpolation methods by international agencies and should be read as captured estimates rather than 100 percent statistical precise counts. Fourth, because data collection for this study closed in September 2026, all figures reported for calendar year 2026 (for example, the 2026 inflation, exchange-rate and health-workforce migration-intention figures in Tables 2, 3 and 8) are necessarily partial-year, interim or forecast values drawn from the most recent releases, quarterly reports or projections available from the cited source institutions at that time, rather than finalised full-year out-turns; these figures should be read as true provisional literature and are liable to revision once the source institutions publish final 2026 data. Fifth, the evidence base assembled in this study is not evenly strong across professional categories: the health workforce is the only occupational group for which this study was able to draw on converging, multi-source, survey-based and destination-country administrative data (Table 8), and the brain-drain claims made for that sector are correspondingly the most strongly evidenced in the paper.

For other skilled categories mentioned in the paper, such as engineers, accountants, ICT professionals and academics, the available secondary data are comparatively sparse and largely indirect (for instance, aggregate passport issuance and UK visa statistics in Table 7, which are not disaggregated by profession); brain-drain claims for these groups should therefore be read as suggestive and consistent with the broader pattern, rather than as being evidenced to the same standard as the health-sector findings. These limitations are consistent with standard research differentiation, and do not undermine the research synthesis, descriptive and policy-oriented objectives of the study.

6. Results, Synthesis and Data Analysis

This section presents nine tables compiled from the secondary sources described in Section 5.2. Each table is followed by a synthesised interpretation linking the reported figures to the theoretical and conceptual framework set out in Sections 3 and 4. Consistent with the descriptive design set out in Section 5.4, the relationships discussed below are documented as temporal co-occurrence and directional consistency across independently sourced indicators, not as statistically tested associations or causal effects; no correlation, regression or other inferential test has been run on these series, and readers should interpret phrases such as "coincides with," "is consistent with" and "aligns with" in that descriptive sense throughout this section.

6.1 Table 1. *Nigeria Youth Unemployment Rate (Ages 15–24), 2018–2025 — Two Reporting Methodologies*

Year	Pre-2023 NBS Methodology (%)	World Bank Modelled ILO Estimate (%)	Note
2018	n/a (pre-series)	n/a	Old methodology series begins 2019/2020
2019	—	—	—
2020	53.4	—	Old methodology; widely cited baseline
2021	—	8.99	New/modelled series
2022	—	6.02	—
2023	—	5.13	NBS methodology revised April 2023
2024	6.50 (Q2, new NBS method)	5.09	Two methods diverge
2025	—	5.34	—

Sources: National Bureau of Statistics (2021, 2023, 2024); World Bank modelled ILO estimates as reported by Macrotrends (2025) and FRED/St. Louis Fed (2026); Africa Check (2024).

The two columns in Table 1 are not directly comparable and that is in itself the finding: Nigeria's 2020 unemployment rate under the old methodology was (53.4%) and its 2024 rate under the new, ILO-aligned methodology was revised to (5.09–6.50%), which differ by roughly a factor of ten, driven entirely by a definitional change rather than a genuine labour-market improvement (Africa Check, 2024). The new methodology counts only people who did no work at all for pay or profit as unemployed, which excludes the large share of Nigerians in low-hours, low-income informal work. Reading alongside the NBS's own finding that informal employment exceeded 92% of the employed workforce in 2023 (NBS, 2023), the headline of post-2023 figures should be treated as a narrow measure of complete joblessness rather than a comprehensive indicator of labour-market slack, a caution that matters directly for this study, since understated unemployment would tend to understate one of the principal push factors in migration theory.

6.2 Table 2. Nigeria Headline Inflation Rate (Annual Average, %), 2018–2025

Year	Annual Average Inflation (%)	Sub-period
2018	~12.1	Pre-COVID
2019	~11.4	Pre-COVID
2020	~13.2	COVID-19
2021	~17.0	COVID-19
2022	~18.8	Early post-COVID
2023	~24.7	Early post-COVID / reform onset
2024	31.4	Reform period
2025	23.0	Reform period (disinflation begins)

Sources: National Bureau of Statistics; World Bank CPI data; FocusEconomics (2026); Statista (2026); CEIC (2026).

Inflation nearly tripled between the pre-COVID-19 baseline (2018–2019, averaging ~11–12%) and its 2024 peak of 31.4%, with the steepest single acceleration occurring in 2023–2024, immediately following the mid-2023 sudden fuel-subsidy removal and exchange-rate unification. By early 2026 the rate had eased to the mid-teens on a year-on-year basis, but the 2024 peak represents the single most severe cost-of-living shock in the review period and coincides with the sharpest documented rise in youth emigration sentiment (Table 9). This pattern is directly

consistent with Push-Pull Theory's prediction, that a sudden sharp deterioration in origin-country such as high cost of living functions as an acute variable rather than a merely chronic push factor.

6.3 Table 3. Nigerian Naira–US Dollar Official Exchange Rate (Year-End), 2018–2026

Year	NGN per USD (year-end)	Year-on-Year Change
2018	~307	—
2019	~307	~0%
2020	~381	≈+24% depreciation
2021	~435	≈+14% depreciation
2022	~461	≈+6% depreciation
2023	899	≈+95% depreciation (NAFEM unification, June 2023)
2024	1,535	≈+71% further depreciation
2025—2026	Fluctuating between ~1,350–1,430 (stabilising but still unstable)	Partial recovery but still unstable. Factors include changes in supply and demand for foreign exchange, fluctuation in global oil price, shifts in local and global political landscapes (for instance, Russia and Ukraine war, crisis in the Strait of Hormuz which is deeply tied to major shifts in global political landscape), ongoing reforms and evolving central bank of Nigeria's monetary policy.

Sources: Central Bank of Nigeria; FocusEconomics (2026); nairaratetoday.com historical series (2026).

The naira's official value fell from roughly ₦307/US\$1 in 2019 to ₦1,535/US\$1 by the end of 2024, a cumulative depreciation of approximately 80% in five years, with the single sharpest move occurring in 2023 following the unification of the exchange-rate windows under the NAFEM system. Because Nigeria was import-dependent for fuel before Dangote refinery began

operation in January 2024, pharmaceuticals and many capital goods company's needed US\$ for foreign trade, tuition fee payments, exchange purchases and for smooth business operations, which lead to scarcity, higher exchange rates, changes in supply and demand for foreign exchange currencies. The sudden currency depreciation of this magnitude transmits directly into the inflation shown in Table 2 and, as Table 4 shows, erodes the real value of naira-denominated wages even when nominal wages increased. This is one of the clearest and most direct economic transmission channels linking macroeconomic policy to migration "pull" toward hard-currency-earning destinations.

6.4 Table 4. National Minimum Wage in Naira and Approximate US-Dollar Equivalent, 2018–2026

Effective From	Minimum Wage (₦/month)	Approx. USD Equivalent (at contemporaneous rate)
2018 (pre-2019 Act)	18,000	≈ \$59
April 2019	30,000	≈ \$83 (at ~₦360/\$)
2023 (unchanged, pre-reform)	30,000	≈ \$33–39 (post-unification rate)
July 2024	70,000	≈ \$43–50 (at ~₦1,500/\$)
2025–2026 (unchanged federally)	70,000	≈ \$47–52 (as naira try to be stabilised by the Nigerian government through ongoing reforms and evolving central bank of Nigeria's monetary policy.

Sources: National Minimum Wage Act 2019; National Minimum Wage (Amendment) Act 2024; wage.is (2026); Pavestones Legal (2024); Remote4Africa (2024).

The 2024 minimum-wage reform raised the naira figure by 133% (₦30,000 to ₦70,000), which appears in isolation to be a substantial policy response. Expressed in US-dollar terms, however, the increase is far less dramatic; (from roughly \$33–39 to \$43–50), because it was implemented against a currency that had simultaneously lost more than half its value. Several Nigerian states subsequently approved wages above the federal floor (for instance, ₦85,000 in Rivers and Lagos states), which in itself is an indirect evidence that the federal minimum was widely judged inadequate relative to the cost-of-living increases documented in Table 2 (AllAfrica, 2024). This gap between nominal wage policy and real purchasing power is one of the clearest quantitative illustrations of the "real wage pressure" push factor identified in the conceptual framework.

6.5 Table 5. Personal Remittances Received by Nigeria, 2018–2024

Year	Remittances (US\$ billion)	Approx. % of GDP
2018	24.31	≈ 6.1
2019	23.80	≈ 5.6
2020	17.21	3.98
2022	≈ 19.5	4.26
2023	≈ 20.1	5.65
2024	20.98	> 8.0

Sources: World Bank remittance data as reported by Moses-Ashike (2025); Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (2020); TheGlobalEconomy.com (2024); Migration Policy Institute (2026).

Remittances peaked in 2018 at US\$24.31 billion a year, which exceeded Nigeria's entire oil revenue of US\$18.2 billion (Nigerians in Diaspora Commission, 2020), then remittance fell sharply to a pandemic-era low of US\$17.21 billion in 2020, and recovered swiftly to US\$20.98 billion by 2024, a level the Central Bank of Nigeria and World Bank estimate at over 8% of GDP once currency-adjusted formal channels (International Money Transfer Operators, up 43.5% year-on-year in 2024), are included (Moses-Ashike, 2025). The dip in 2020 aligns with the global COVID-19 pandemic income shock in destination economies, while the subsequent recovery occurring even as emigration intention was rising. (Table 9) is consistent with NELM theory's prediction that a growing diaspora stock generates a growing, and increasingly important remittance flow that reinforces the economy rather than substitutes for continued emigration.

6.6 Table 6. Nigeria Net Migration Estimates, 2020–2024

Year	Net Migration (five-year estimate basis)	Year-on-Year Change
2020	-17,391 (approx., pre-2021 spike base)	—
2021	-86,115	+494% vs. 2020
2022	-51,680	-40% vs. 2021
2023	-57,936	+12% vs. 2022
2024	-35,202	-39% vs. 2023

Sources: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) five-year estimates, as reported by Macrotrends (2025).

Net migration figures sharply rose and reoccurring negative throughout, indicating that, on these UN DESA interpolated estimates, Nigeria consistently loses more people to emigration than it gains through immigration with a pronounced spike in 2021 that plausibly reflects a post-lockdown surge in departures once international travel restrictions eased and destination-country visa processing resumed. These (UN DESA) figures are five-year interpolated estimates rather than annual counts and should be read as indicative of direction and relative scale rather than as 100 percent precise annual flows; even so, the consistently negative sign across every year in the series corroborates with qualitative and survey-based evidence of sustained reports, rather than episodic net outward migration.

6.7 Table 7. Nigerian Migrant Inflows to Selected Destination Countries

Destination / Year	Indicator	Value
UK, skilled work/study visas, 2019	Visas issued	≈ 19,000
UK, skilled work/study visas, 2021	Visas issued	≈ 59,000 (+210% vs. 2019)
UK, all Nigerian arrivals, 2024	Total relocations	≈ 52,000 (27,000 work; 22,000 study; 3,000 other)
UK, Nigerian healthcare-worker visas (multi-year period)	Visas granted	13,609 (2nd highest after India)
Canada, Nigerian immigrants, 2019	Immigrants admitted	12,595
Nigeria, passports issued, 2020	Standard + other passports	767,164
Nigeria, passports issued, 2021	Standard + other passports	1,059,607 (+38% vs. 2020)

Sources: UK Office for National Statistics (2025), as reported by Kolaking/Nairametrics (2025); Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada data, as reported by The Punch/Kolaking (2022); Nigeria Immigration Service passport-issuance data (2022).

Two independent indicators destination-country visa data and Nigeria's own passport-issuance statistics move in the same direction across the review period. UK skilled work/study visa issuance to Nigerians more than tripled between 2019 and 2021 (a 210% increase), and Nigerian passport issuance rose 38% between 2020 and 2021 alone, consistent with pent-up post-lockdown emigration. By 2024, Nigeria remained among the leading non-EU+ source countries for UK migration, even as the UK's overall net migration fell by nearly half, indicating that Nigerian outflows have been comparatively resilient to destination-country immigration

tightening policy. The health-worker-specific UK visa figure (13,609, second only to India), this corroborates with the WHO and Yakubu et al. (2023 reports). Health-workforce findings in Table 8 using an entirely independent, destination-side data source indicates a strong convergence that strengthens confidence in the underlying brain-drain finding.

6.8 Table 8. Health-Workforce Migration Intention Indicators, Nigeria and Africa, 2020–2026

Indicator	Value	Year / Source
Africa-wide health workers intending to migrate	46% (up from 42%)	2026 / WHO AFRO
Nigerian skilled health workers intending to migrate (survey, n=271)	55% (urban) / 81% (rural)	2023 / Yakubu et al., PLOS Global Public Health
Nigerian nurses intending to migrate (same survey, by profession)	72%	2023 / Yakubu et al.
Nigerian nurses & midwives emigrated (5-year cumulative)	> 75,000	2020–2025 / reported by Independent Uganda (2026)
Ghanaian nurses seeking verification to practise abroad	2,678 → 6,208 (+232%)	2020 → 2022 / WHO, regional comparator
Nigeria's status on WHO Health Workforce Safeguard List 2023	Listed (1 of 55 countries)	2023 / WHO AFRO

Sources: World Health Organisation Regional Office for Africa (2024, 2026a, 2026b); Yakubu et al. (2023); Independent Uganda (2026).

Every indicator in Table 8 points in the same direction and at a scale well above the general (non-health-sector) unemployment and migration figures reported elsewhere in this study. The Yakubu et al. (2023) survey finding that 72% of surveyed Nigerian nurses intended to migrate against an Africa-wide average of 46% across all health occupations in 2026 indicates that the Nigerian health workforce professionals are migrating at a rate substantially above the already-elevated continental baseline. Reading together with Nigeria's placement on the WHO Safeguard List and the cross-validating UK visa data in Table 7, this constitutes the most robust captured brain-drain evidence in this study; a strong converging, multi-source, multi-method captured picture of a single professional category experiencing severe and accelerating human-capital loss to youth migration.

6.9 Table 9. Afrobarometer Youth (18–35) Emigration Intention, Nigeria, 2017 vs. 2024

Indicator	2017	2024	Change
Youth who have considered emigrating	n/a (not directly comparable)	60%	—
Youth who have given “a lot” of thought to leaving the country	12%	37%	+25 percentage points (tripled)
Youth who think things will get better in the coming year	—	46%	—
Sample basis	Standard Afrobarometer round	1,600 adults, stratified probability sample, June–July 2024 (± 2.5 pp margin of error, 95% CI)	—

Source: Afrobarometer (2025), Dispatch No. 998.

The tripling of serious emigration intent rose from (12% to 37%) of youth between 2017 and 2024 is one of the most crucial indicators assembled in this study, the most direct survey-based measure of the migration-pressure trend the study set out to examine. Because the underlying survey uses a nationally representative, stratified probability sample with a published margin of error, this figure carries more methodological weight than aggregate administrative statistics such as passport issuance (Table 7), even though both move in the same direction. The finding that only 46% of youth expect things to improve in the coming year is consistent with the study, and helps explain, the persistence of high emigration intention despite the partial macroeconomic stabilisation (disinflation and partial naira recovery) observed from late 2025 into 2026 in Tables 2 and 3; sentiment and expectation appear to lag in observable indicator improvement.

7. Discussion

Reading together, the nine tables in Section 6 support three central observations. First, the period 2023–2024 stands out descriptively as a marked inflection point, a sharp acceleration relative to the gentler trends of 2018–2022, rather than a simple continuation of prior trends; the term is used here in its everyday descriptive sense rather than as a claim that a formal statistical structural-break or change-point test was conducted, since the study's descriptive design (Section 5.4) does not support such inferential testing; the Nigerian naira lost more than 40% of its value against the US dollar within a single year (Table 3), headline inflation reached its decade high (Table 2), and even a 133% nominal increase in minimum wage left real dollar-equivalent

purchasing power lower than at almost any point since 2018 (Table 4). This is precisely the combination of push factors such as unemployment, low real wages, and economic uncertainty that Push-Pull Theory identifies as the strongest drivers of emigration intention (Lee, 1966), and it coincides with the sharpest rise in Nigerian youth emigration sentiment recorded by Afrobarometer, from 12% giving “a lot” of thought to leaving in 2017 to a record high of 37% in 2024 (Table 9).

Second, the health sector offers the clearest and strongest converging multi-source, multi-method captured picture of a single profession, most direct measurable illustration of Human Capital Theory's brain-drain mechanism (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961). Nigeria's presence on the WHO Health Workforce Support and Safeguard List, documented emigration of more than 75,000 nurses and midwives over five years, and survey-based migration-intention rates as high as 72% among nurses (Yakubu et al., 2023) together indicates that publicly and private subsidised professional training is being converted into a sizable workforce capacity for and in destination countries at a scale that plausibly exceeds Nigeria's capacity to train replacements for the local economy, a dynamic consistent with the training-investment-leakage pathway in the conceptual framework analysed and captured in (Section 4).

Third, the remittance evidence in (Table 5) is not merely a footnote to the brain-drain narrative, it is comparably larger and since 2020, a recovering economic flow equivalent to 8% of GDP in 2024 and consistently larger in dollar terms than Nigeria's oil revenue in previous years for which both figures are documented and available, (Nigerians in Diaspora Commission, 2020). This is the empirical anchor for the New Economics of Labour Migration framework (Stark & Bloom, 1985). Nigerian households appear in aggregate to be converting a portion of emigration into a diversified household-economics and income strategy as noted in Section 3.3, rather than experiencing migration purely as a loss.

These three observations are consistent with aims and objectives of the study rather than contradictory to it or to one another, they also support the study's central conceptual claim:, that Nigeria is not simply losing people, nor simply gaining remittances; it is caught in a measurable trade-off in which the same macroeconomic deterioration that drives skilled emigration and the resulting human-capital loss is partial, but only partially offset by the remittance income that emigration itself generates. Consistent with the methodological caution set out in Section 5.5, the language used throughout the study is deliberately associative rather than causal. The data indicates and confirm that sustained emigration of economically active, skilled, trained and educated Nigerians are associated with measurable human-capital and labour-market pressures, not that migration alone caused Nigeria's broader economic difficulties, which have multiple and well-documented structural causes beyond the scope of this research (World Bank, 2024).

Comparing the four sub-periods identified in Section 5.3, the evidence suggests that the determinants of migration pressure did not change in kind after COVID-19. Insecurity, wage stagnation and retrogression, unemployment and healthcare quality remained in the same broad categories identified in pre-COVID-19 literature but did change markedly in intensity with the

2023-2024 currency floatation and exchange-rate unification, and the sudden subsidy reforms, thereby functioning as an acute accelerant layered on top of Nigeria's chronic and pre-existing pressure structure problems.

8. Policy Implications and Recommendations

8.1 Youth Wage and Income Policy

Table 4 demonstrates that nominal minimum-wage increases have repeatedly been outpaced by inflation and currency depreciation. Wage policy should therefore be indexed, or at minimum be periodically reviewed by Nigeria's policy makers, particularly by the (National Salaries, Incomes and Wages Commission NSIWC), against real inflation figures and exchange-rate movements, rather than single digit adjusted only after prolonged labour union agitations, with the explicit policy and objective of protecting real wages and stronger purchasing power of Nigerian workers, and not merely nominal purchasing power that get eroded by high cost of living.

8.2 Youth Employment Incentive Schemes

Given that more than 1.7 million graduates enters Nigerian labour market annually against limited formal absorptive capacity (All-Africa, 2025), targeted incentives such as tax credits or wage subsidies for firms that formally employ recent graduates and young professionals could narrow the employment gap identified in Table 1's underemployment and NEET figures.

8.3 Incentive Schemes and Retention Packages for Highly Skilled Professional

For occupations with documented high migration intention such as doctors, nurses, lecturers, engineers, economist, accountants and financial experts, scientists and ICT professionals as noted in (Table 8), retention packages combining competitive remuneration, career-progression, pathways to further professional training with free or subsidised tuition fee, and improved working conditions are indicated as a direct response to the specific push factors these groups report.

8.4 Health-Worker Retention Policy

Nigeria's own National Health Workforce Migration Policy, developed with WHO and the UK's Department of Health and Social Care support, already provides an institutional vehicle for this; the evidence in Table 8 suggests its remuneration, working-condition and career-progression components warrant accelerated implementation given the scale of documented nurse and midwife attrition.

8.5 Security as an Economic Variable

Given the scale of insecurity driven by internal displacements of (3.2 million people as of April 2026) and its consistent appearance as a push factor in the literature, security policy should be re-evaluated by Nigerian security chiefs and their agencies. More resources should be allocated to

security based on its importance to economic activity and productivity, particularly in areas such as Police and Army welfare, including higher take home salaries of at least ₦750,000 or \$500 per month for rank and file officers, there should be pathways to further professional security training, free or subsidised tuition fee for their children up to the age of 21, robust pension package, tax incentives, free interest loan, subsidised government shelter coverage and home building plan. The ability of citizens to work, trade, farm, study and invest safely is an important economic variable that demands urgent government attention, and not just merely law-and-order activity but rather exclusively a serious push factors.

8.6 Diaspora Engagement Policy

Rather than treating emigrants solely as a lost resource, the remittance evidence in Table 5 supports continued and expanded investments in structured diaspora engagement: diaspora bonds, temporary-return and knowledge-transfer schemes, and remote professional-contribution mechanisms, building on existing Nigerians in Diaspora Commission and Central Bank of Nigeria initiatives.

8.7 Return-and-Reintegrate Programmes

Targeted incentives; tax relief, research grants, start-up financing and professional-recognition pathways could improve the return of migration, knowledge-transfer and knowledge-circulation dynamics that NELM theory identifies as plausible and currently under-exploited benefit of the existing diaspora stock.

8.8 Addressing Underlying Push Factors

Ultimately, the evidence assembled in this study supports the conclusion that the most sustainable response to brain drain is not to restrict Nigerians freedom of movement or to leave, but to make remaining in Nigeria economically and socially worth it, a rational conclusion that follows directly from the observed correlation between the 2023–2024 deterioration in real wages, currency value and high cost of living, and the concurrent rise in documented emigration intention.

9. Conclusion

This research examined the core drivers, patterns and economic consequences of youth migration and brain drain in Nigeria between 2018 and 2026. The study adopts secondary time-series quantitative data analysis, a synthesised descriptive and comparative documentary, institutionally sourced data organised into nine descriptive and comparative tables. The gathered evidence supports three central rational conclusions. First, Nigeria's youth migration pressure is better understood as a structurally intensifying trend than as a stable background phenomenon, with the sharpest deterioration in underlying economic conditions and the sharpest rise in documented emigration sentiment concentrated in the 2023–2024 reform period. Second, that brain drain in Nigeria is not evenly distributed, it is concentrated in specific publicly trained professional categories, most visibly the health workforce, where migration-intention rates are exceptionally

high and already a subject of national concern, with a dedicated national policy response. Third, that most Nigerian households appear to be converting a portion of emigration into a diversified household-economics and income strategy as noted in Section 3.3, also, that diaspora remittances constitute a genuine substantial and partially offsetting economic benefit of emigration, equivalent to 8% of Nigeria's GDP in 2024, excluding "Detty December" spending spree, which was estimated to be around ₦60 billion (roughly \$38.5 million to \$39 million) during their visits to the country (Thisday Nigeria, 2025). This means that policy framed purely around preventing the departure of young Nigerians, particularly educated, skilled and professionally trained is likely to be less effective, and less economically coherent, than policy framed around improving the domestic economic and social conditions that determine whether departure feels necessary or not.

Consistent with the methodological caution applied throughout this study, these conclusions are stated in associative ways rather than causal terms; the data indicates that sustained emigration of economically active, highly skilled Nigerians is associated with measurable human-capital and labour-market pressures, within an economy shaped by multiple interacting structural factors, including insecurity, wage stagnation and retrogression, unemployment and healthcare quality, sudden intensity in the 2023-2024 currency floatation and exchange-rate unification, and the sudden subsidy reforms, thereby forming an acute accelerant layered on top of Nigeria's chronic and pre-existing pressure structures. Future research should employ primary survey and interview data, the type originally envisaged in the mixed-methods design for this study but deliberately did not pursue. Primary survey and interview data will be well suited and placed to test the specific determinants of migration intention identified here, including through the Youth Migration Pressure Index proposed in Section 4, and to also examine directly the "what would you stay?" question that ultimately determines whether Nigeria's migration-pressure cycle can be broken.

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