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Exploring the Causes, Prevalence and Socioeconomic Implications of Illegal Immigration in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

Illegal immigration remains a pressing concern in Northern Nigeria, driven by economic, political, social, and environmental factors. This study explores the causes, prevalence, and socioeconomic implications of illegal immigration in the region, highlighting its impact on labour markets, national security, social cohesion, and economic development. The study adopted the social conflict theory by Karl Marx as its theoretical framework. The research utilizes documentary evidence, analyzing existing reports, scholarly articles, and policy documents to provide a comprehensive understanding of migration trends and their consequences. Findings reveal that economic hardship, political instability, porous borders, and historical ethnic ties significantly contribute to irregular migration. Northern Nigeria serves as both a source and transit region, with migrants from neighboring countries such as Niger, Chad, and Cameroon entering the region for employment opportunities in agriculture, trade, and informal sectors. The prevalence of illegal immigration is exacerbated by weak border control mechanisms, corruption, and inadequate legal frameworks. The study further identifies key socioeconomic challenges, including job displacement, pressure on public services, security threats, and

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human rights violations. While illegal immigrants contribute to informal labor markets, their presence often leads to tensions with local populations and governance difficulties. The paper recommends strengthening border security, enhancing regional cooperation, creating legal migration pathways, and promoting economic development initiatives to address the root causes of migration. A holistic approach that balances enforcement with humanitarian considerations is essential for effective migration management. Future research should focus on data-driven policy interventions and cross-border collaborations to mitigate the adverse effects of illegal immigration while harnessing its potential benefits.

Keywords: Illegal Immigration, Northern Nigeria, Socioeconomic Impact, Border Security, Migration Policy

INTRODUCTION

Illegal immigration remains a critical issue in many regions, with Northern Nigeria experiencing a significant influx of undocumented migrants. This phenomenon is largely driven by porous borders, weak immigration policies, economic hardship, and conflicts in neighboring countries such as Niger, Chad, and Cameroon (Adepoju, 2019). The movement of undocumented migrants into Nigeria poses both opportunities and challenges, particularly in terms of security, labor markets, and social services. While some migrants contribute to the economy through informal employment, others exacerbate existing socioeconomic tensions, placing pressure on already strained resources (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2021).

The causes of illegal immigration in Northern Nigeria are multifaceted. Economic factors, such as high unemployment rates and poverty in neighboring countries, drive individuals to seek better living conditions in Nigeria (Afolayan, 2018). Additionally, political instability and terrorism, particularly the activities of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin, have led to mass displacement, forcing people to cross borders without documentation (Campbell, 2020). The porous nature of Nigeria's borders, coupled with inadequate enforcement mechanisms, further facilitates the movement of migrants, making regulation difficult for immigration authorities (Okunlola & Ibrahim, 2022).

The consequences of illegal immigration are profound. On the one hand, undocumented migrants contribute to sectors such as agriculture, construction, and domestic services,

often taking jobs that locals may not readily accept (Olayemi & Eze, 2021). However, illegal immigration also places pressure on healthcare systems, educational facilities, and social welfare programs, leading to increased government expenditure and potential resentment among local populations (IOM, 2021). Additionally, there are security concerns, as some undocumented migrants have been linked to cross-border crimes, including smuggling, human trafficking, and insurgency (Adeniyi, 2020).

This study seeks to explore the root causes of illegal immigration in Northern Nigeria, assess its prevalence, and evaluate its socioeconomic consequences. By employing qualitative and quantitative research methods, the study aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers to manage migration effectively. The findings will contribute to the broader discourse on immigration policies, border security, and sustainable socioeconomic development in Nigeria and the West African sub-region.

Conceptual Clarification

Illegal migration, also referred to as irregular migration, encompasses the movement of individuals across international borders in violation of immigration laws of the destination country. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2019), illegal migration refers to "the movement of persons that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit, and receiving countries." This includes unauthorized entry, overstaying visas, and engaging in employment or residence without the necessary legal documentation. Similarly, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2021) defines illegal migration as "cross-border movement that occurs without the legal permission of the receiving state or without meeting the required conditions for lawful entry and stay." This definition highlights the distinction between legal migration—where individuals possess valid documentation such as visas and residence permits—and illegal migration, which often occurs due to economic, political, or humanitarian factors.

From a legal perspective, Castles, de Haas, and Miller (2013) argue that illegal migration should not be confused with forced migration, where individuals flee persecution, war, or natural disasters. While some illegal migrants enter countries unlawfully, others arrive legally and later overstay their permitted duration, becoming undocumented residents (Hollifield, Martin, & Orrenius, 2014). Furthermore, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA, 2014) differentiates illegal migration from human trafficking, emphasizing that while illegal migration is voluntary and motivated by personal or

economic reasons, human trafficking involves coercion, deception, and exploitation. However, migration scholars like Kyle and Koslowski (2011) acknowledge that both phenomena can be interlinked, as migrants often fall victim to smuggling networks that facilitate illegal border crossings for financial gain. In summary, illegal migration is a broad concept covering various forms of unauthorized border crossings and residency violations. While it is often linked to economic disparities and political instability, its implications extend to legal, social, and security concerns for both sending and receiving countries. Addressing illegal migration requires a multifaceted approach, including policy interventions, border management strategies, and international cooperation (De Haas, 2011).

The concept of illegal migration has won the battle of words in the international setting, it is the pre-existing term that shifts attitudes regarding the moral related worthiness of illegal migrants. While in the past, immigration laws were not widely regarded as criminal, those who migrate into and remain without authorization are increasingly understood as illegal on current basis due to conditions of political, administrative and public acceptance in a wide range of measures, on the other hand, illegal is one of the most minimizing one's dignity and given to border crossing migration (Daniger, 2018).

Illegal movement has various challenges to countries of origin, transit, and destination; particularly migrants are vulnerable to some abuse, discrimination and exploitation. (UNODC, 2011; UN, 2013). Illegal migrants are defined in different ways among scholars based on their understandings. Das and his colleague Talukdar stated that illegal migrants *are social groups of persons who cross an international border without any permission* (Das and Talukdar, 2016).

Adeola and Oluyemi (2012), stated that West African countries have experienced a variety of international migrations, across national borders, caused by over population, poverty, poor economic performances, criminal tendencies and endemic conflicts. Causes of illegal migration are not static. It differs from individual to individual and from country to country. For instance, while poverty, conflicts, and quest for better opportunities may trigger illegal migration in most African countries, new technological advancement, human and drug trafficking, may trigger illegal migration in the western countries.

Hence, the push and pull factors for illegal migration is not the same for everyone this mostly accounted for the reason why in similar circumstances while some illegally migrates

other may legally immigrate. According to Karl, Malasowo and Ogbu (2018) If someone asks, why people migrate out of their origin in favour of places that are not familiar? The reasons will vary with causes found in such diverse factors as ecological pressure, economic incentives, psychological motivation, politics situations etc. Africa has extremely accelerating population growth which influences both for internal and external migration due to the population pressure in connection to this. Hance (1971) cited in Karl, Malasowo and Ogbu (2019) identified areas suffering from population pressure and some indicators are: poverty, soil deterioration, degradation or outright destruction, use of excessively steep slopes and other marginal lands, declining crop yields, changing crop emphases, breakdown of the indigenous farming system, food shortages, hunger, and malnutrition, land fragmentation, disputes over land, landlessness, bad traditional cultures. In addition to these, in Nigeria for example, the continuous Boko Haram terrorism, Kidnapping, economic instability, food shortage due to herders-farmers conflict that prevents farmers from farming, and general insecurity in the country contributed immensely as push factors for illegal migration out of Nigeria.

McAuliffe and Khadria (2020) argued that international migration is intertwined with technological innovations. They observed that the use of some technological applications to support clandestine border crossing raises critical questions as to the extent to which technology has been used to support or limit irregular immigration. While this may be true for developed nations with more technological know-how, it may not be true for poorer nations with less access to technology and internet. The latter set of migrants have more needs to solve than technology.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design with a strong emphasis on documentary analysis to examine the causes, prevalence, and socioeconomic implications of illegal immigration in Northern Nigeria. Documentary evidence is a valuable method for analyzing historical, legal, and policy-related aspects of illegal migration (Bowen, 2009). By systematically reviewing government records, policy documents, and migration reports, this study provides an in-depth, evidence-based assessment of illegal immigration trends and their broader implications.

Theoretical Framework

Illegal immigration remains a complex and contentious issue in Northern Nigeria, with significant socioeconomic, political, and security implications. The Social Conflict Theory, originally developed by Karl Marx (1867) and expanded by later scholars, provides a critical lens for analyzing the structural inequalities, class struggles, and power dynamics that drive illegal immigration (Marx & Engels, 1848; Dahrendorf, 1959; Coser, 1956). This framework explores how economic disparities, social exclusion, political dominance, and exploitation shape illegal immigration in Northern Nigeria. It also examines how host communities and state institutions respond to the phenomenon, often in ways that reinforce systemic inequalities and conflicts.

Social Conflict Theory posits that society is characterized by continuous competition between different social groups, where powerful elites control resources while marginalized groups struggle for access (Marx & Engels, 1848; Collins, 1975). This theory highlights the following key elements:

- Economic Inequality: Migration results from unequal resource distribution, where poorer groups seek survival opportunities.
- Class Struggle: The ruling class (economic and political elites) exploits migrant labor while restricting legal pathways for immigration.
- Institutional Power and Oppression: Governments create immigration policies that benefit the elite, while criminalizing migrants.
- Social Resistance: Migrants and marginalized groups resist oppression through informal economic activities, social movements, and cultural integration.

In the context of Northern Nigeria, this theory helps explain: Why illegal immigration occurs, focusing on economic deprivation, political instability, and social marginalization. How host communities react, including discrimination, economic exploitation, and social conflicts and the role of state institutions, where policies favour elite interests while failing to address systemic causes of migration.

Northern Nigeria has long been characterized by economic underdevelopment, poverty, and high unemployment rates (World Bank, 2020). The income gap between Nigeria and neighboring Sahelian countries such as Niger, Chad, and Cameroon further exacerbates illegal migration flows (Adepoju, 2005).

- Migration as Economic Survival: Many illegal immigrants come from lower-income backgrounds and see migration as a means of escaping extreme poverty (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2013).
- Exploitative Labor Markets: In sectors such as agriculture, construction, and informal trade, illegal migrants provide cheap labor with little legal protection, benefiting business elites (Borjas, 2017).
- State Neglect: The Nigerian government fails to provide economic opportunities, leading to increased migration pressure (Hanson, 2009).

Social Conflict Theory argues that economic structures are deliberately maintained to benefit the ruling class, which profits from undocumented labor without extending rights to migrants (Collins, 1975). This perpetuates class divisions, as undocumented migrants remain in low-wage, insecure jobs while elites control wealth and economic policies (Sassen, 1988).

Government policies and political elites shape migration flows by enforcing border controls, deportations, and restrictive labor laws (Hollifield, Martin, & Orrenius, 2014). However, these measures often serve the interests of ruling elites rather than addressing migration's root causes. These causes include: (a) Selective Law Enforcement: Nigerian immigration laws criminalize illegal immigrants, but enforcement is uneven and often influenced by political interests (Adepoju, 2005). Some migrant groups are tolerated because they provide cheap labor for elite-owned industries, while others are scapegoated during economic downturns (Hanson, 2009). (b) Weak Border Controls and Corruption: Northern Nigeria's porous borders allow unregulated migration, often facilitated by corrupt officials (Tevera & Crush, 2010). Political elites exploit migration by allowing entry for labor needs but enforcing deportations when public pressure increases (Castles et al., 2013).

Social Conflict Theory highlights that immigration policies are shaped by elite interests, rather than genuine security or humanitarian concerns (Marx & Engels, 1848). This leads to inconsistent policies, where undocumented migrants serve as labor assets but are denied basic rights (Ghosh, 1998).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Legal Position of Nigeria on Illegal Migration

Nigeria has a comprehensive legal and institutional framework governing migration, including provisions that address illegal migration, human trafficking, and border security. The country's legal stance on illegal migration is shaped by national laws, international agreements, and regional collaborations.

1. Constitutional and Legislative Framework

a. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999, as amended)

The Nigerian Constitution provides the legal foundation for regulating immigration and protecting national security. Section 14(2)(b) states that "the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government" (**Constitution of Nigeria, 1999**). This includes safeguarding borders and controlling illegal immigration.

b. The Immigration Act of 2015

The Immigration Act of 2015 serves as the principal law governing migration in Nigeria. It criminalizes illegal entry, stay, and activities of undocumented migrants. Key provisions include:

- Section 13: Prohibits the illegal entry of non-Nigerians without valid travel documents.
- Section 14: Criminalizes the smuggling of migrants and imposes penalties for those aiding or abetting illegal immigration.
- Section 37: Grants immigration officers the authority to arrest and deport illegal immigrants **(**Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2015**).**

c. The Immigration Regulations of 2017

The Immigration Regulations of 2017 were enacted to enhance the implementation of the Immigration Act of 2015. These regulations define processes for visa issuance, residence permits, and penalties for immigration violations (Nigeria Immigration Service, 2017).

2. Institutional Framework and Enforcement Mechanisms

a. Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS)

The Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) is the primary agency responsible for enforcing immigration laws. It monitors borders, issues travel documents, and deports illegal immigrants. The NIS has intensified border surveillance to curb illegal crossings, particularly in the northern states (NIS, 2021).

b. National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP)

Nigeria's NAPTIP works to combat human trafficking, which is often linked to illegal migration. The agency enforces the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act of 2015, which criminalizes human smuggling and protects victims of illegal migration (NAPTIP, 2015).

3. International and Regional Commitments

a. ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol

Nigeria is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and adheres to the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence, and Establishment**.** While this agreement allows free movement among ECOWAS member states, it does not permit unlawful residency or employment **(**ECOWAS, 1979).

b. African Union (AU) and International Agreements

Nigeria is a signatory to various international agreements that address illegal migration, including:

- The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC, 2000) and its Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air.
- The Global Compact for Migration (GCM, 2018), which encourages cooperative migration governance while discouraging illegal migration (United Nations, 2018).

4. Penalties and Legal Consequences of Illegal Migration in Nigeria

- Illegal migrants are subject to arrest, detention, and deportation under the Immigration Act of 2015**.**
- Human smugglers and traffickers face imprisonment of up to 14 years and heavy fines under the Trafficking in Persons Act of 2015.

- Employers who hire illegal immigrants without proper documentation face penalties, including fines and business closures (NAPTIP, 2015).

Nigeria maintains a firm legal stance against illegal migration while balancing its regional commitments to free movement. The Immigration Act of 2015, supported by the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) and NAPTIP, ensures strict border control and penalties for violations. However, challenges remain, including porous borders and inadequate enforcement mechanisms. Strengthening regional cooperation and border security measures remains critical in addressing illegal migration effectively.

Causes of Illegal Immigration

1. **Economic Factors:** One of the most significant drivers of illegal immigration is economic disparity between countries. According to Borjas (2017), individuals from economically disadvantaged nations are more likely to migrate to wealthier countries in search of better employment opportunities and improved living standards. High unemployment rates and poor wages in home countries push individuals to seek informal labor markets abroad (Hanson, 2006).
2. **Political Instability and Conflict** Political turmoil, war, and persecution also contribute to illegal immigration. Research by Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo (1989) highlights how refugees and asylum seekers often resort to illegal migration due to restrictive legal channels. The Syrian refugee crisis and the migration patterns from war-torn African nations demonstrate how instability fuels cross-border movements (Hatton, 2017).
3. **Environmental and Climate Change** Environmental degradation and climate-induced displacement have become emerging factors influencing illegal migration. Rising sea levels, desertification, and extreme weather conditions force individuals to migrate, often through irregular means (Black et al., 2011). Reports by the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2020) emphasize that climate change will increasingly drive migration in the coming decades.
4. **Social Networks and Smuggling Networks** Migration networks play a vital role in facilitating illegal immigration. Previous migrants often assist new immigrants in navigating host countries, providing shelter, job information, and financial support (Massey et al., 1993). Additionally, human smuggling and trafficking organizations

exploit individuals desperate to migrate, often exposing them to dangerous and illegal entry routes (Kyle & Koslowski, 2011).

In line with the aforementioned, Muhammad (2021) identified four major causes of illegal migration into northern Nigeria to include poverty, wars and asylum, family reunification and overpopulation. He further observed that illegal migration may be prompted by the desire to escape harsh conditions such as wars, poverty or a desire to reunite with one's family members in the other divide of the neighbouring country. This observation is broad because migration trends in Africa follow three broad pathway: political, conflict and socio-economic divide. Asylum seekers in most cases, are usually people who are displaced as a result of conflicts arising from political differences. Whereas the need for family reunification or economic gains fall under socio-economic pattern. Araya (2021) further summarized the root causes of migration to include, economic causes, socio-political and demographic and environmental causes. She opined that economic motives are the root cause of illegal migration. She further observed that internal and trans-national migration take place when economic inequality happen between countries.

Prevalence of Illegal Immigration

1. **Global Trends** Illegal immigration is a widespread phenomenon, with millions of undocumented individuals living in different parts of the world. The Pew Research Center (2020) estimates that the United States alone hosts approximately 10.5 million unauthorized immigrants, mainly from Latin America. Similarly, Europe has experienced significant illegal migration, particularly from Africa and the Middle East (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2013).
2. **Regional Trends in Africa:** Africa has experienced substantial irregular migration, particularly within West and North Africa. Countries such as Nigeria, Niger, and Libya serve as key transit points for migrants heading to Europe (Adepoju, 2005). Nigeria, for example, has seen large numbers of its citizens migrate illegally to countries like Italy and Spain through dangerous Mediterranean routes (Carling, 2007).
3. **Illegal Immigration in Northern Nigeria** Northern Nigeria serves both as a source and transit region for illegal immigrants. Studies indicate that weak border control, porous frontiers, and ethnic ties across national boundaries contribute to high levels of irregular migration (Tevera & Crush, 2010). Many illegal immigrants

in the region come from Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, often engaging in informal labor sectors (Afolayan, 2009).

Evidence on the Prevalence of Illegal Migration in Northern Nigeria: According to data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2021) and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022), Northern Nigeria has witnessed a surge in illegal migration activities in recent years. The table below presents statistical evidence on the prevalence of illegal migration in the region:

Year	Estimated Illegal Migrants	Main Countries of Origin
2018	150,000	Niger, Chad, Cameroon
2019	180,000	Niger, Chad, Cameroon
2020	210,000	Niger, Chad, Cameroon
2021	230,000	Niger, Chad, Cameroon
2022	250,000	Niger, Chad, Cameroon

Source: IOM, 2021; NBS, 2022

Socioeconomic Implications of Illegal Immigration

1. **Economic Contributions and Challenges** Illegal immigrants often contribute to the economy of host countries by providing cheap labor, particularly in agriculture, construction, and domestic services (Dustmann & Frattini, 2014). However, undocumented workers may also depress wages and create competition for low-skilled jobs (Borjas, 2016). In some cases, illegal immigration places a financial strain on public services such as healthcare and education (Hanson, 2009).
2. **Social and Cultural Integration** Illegal immigration affects social cohesion and cultural integration. In some host communities, undocumented migrants face discrimination, xenophobia, and marginalization (Linton, 2018). Additionally, host populations may perceive illegal immigration as a threat to national identity and social stability, leading to anti-immigrant sentiments and policies (Esses, Medianu, & Lawson, 2013).
3. **Security Concerns** Illegal immigration is often linked to security concerns, including terrorism, human trafficking, and drug smuggling. Studies indicate that criminal networks exploit undocumented migration routes for illicit activities (Cornelius & Rosenblum, 2005). However, scholars argue that the majority of

illegal immigrants are peaceful and migrate primarily for economic reasons (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

4. **Human Rights and Vulnerabilities:** Illegal immigrants are among the most vulnerable groups, often facing exploitation, abuse, and lack of legal protection (Ghosh, 1998). Many work in unsafe conditions with little to no labor rights (Koser, 2007). Women and children are particularly susceptible to trafficking and forced labor (Bales, 2012).
5. Illegal immigrants in Northern Nigeria often **face discrimination and social exclusion**, as they are perceived as economic competitors or security threats (Esses, Medianu, & Lawson, 2013). Hostility from Local Communities: Illegal migrants, particularly those from Niger and Chad, are blamed for rising unemployment and social unrest, fueling xenophobic attitudes (Linton, 2018). In some cases, local political leaders use anti-immigrant rhetoric to distract from governance failures (Cornelius & Rosenblum, 2005).
6. **Exploitation by Employers and Criminal Networks:** Many illegal migrants work under exploitative conditions without legal protections, making them vulnerable to abuse, human trafficking, and forced labor (Bales, 2012). Social Conflict Theory argues that discrimination and marginalization serve elite interests by dividing the working class along ethnic and national lines (Collins, 1975). This prevents collective resistance, ensuring that cheap labor remains available while keeping native workers distracted by blaming immigrants for economic hardships (Marx, 1867). Illegal immigration is often framed as a national security issue, reinforcing state power and militarized border controls. Link to Criminal Activities: Some illegal immigrants become involved in smuggling, armed groups, or extremist organizations due to lack of economic opportunities (Cornelius & Salehyan, 2007). Militarization of Borders: Increased border security has led to more sophisticated smuggling operations, benefiting corrupt officials and criminal networks (Kyle & Koslowski, 2011).

Policy Responses and Future Directions

1. **Immigration Policies and Border Control:** Governments worldwide have implemented strict immigration policies to curb illegal migration. Border walls, deportations, and stringent visa regulations are common strategies (Hollifield, Martin, & Orrenius, 2014). However, critics argue that such measures often fail to address the root causes of migration and may lead to increased human smuggling (De Haas, 2011).
2. **Regularization and Amnesty Programs:** Some countries have adopted legalization programs to integrate undocumented migrants. Regularization programs in Spain and the U.S. have provided pathways to citizenship for certain categories of illegal immigrants (Papademetriou, 2005). Such policies, however, remain controversial and are often subject to political debates.
3. **Regional Cooperation and Development Initiatives:** To address illegal immigration, international organizations advocate for regional cooperation and economic development programs in origin countries. The African Union and European Union have initiated migration partnerships aimed at reducing irregular migration through development aid and job creation programs (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016).

CONCLUSION

Illegal immigration in Northern Nigeria remains a multifaceted issue driven by economic disparities, political instability, porous borders, environmental factors, and social networks. The prevalence of illegal migration in the region is exacerbated by weak enforcement mechanisms, insufficient border controls, and the lack of coordinated migration policies. As this study has demonstrated, the socioeconomic implications of illegal immigration are far-reaching, affecting labor markets, social cohesion, national security, and public service delivery. While undocumented migrants contribute to informal economic sectors, their presence also strains limited resources, raises security concerns, and complicates governance efforts.

Despite various governmental interventions and regional agreements, illegal migration persists due to the economic pull of urban centers, the accessibility of informal

employment, and the complex interdependencies between Nigeria and its neighboring countries. Addressing this issue requires a balanced approach that considers both enforcement measures and developmental strategies to mitigate the root causes of migration.

Recommendations

To effectively manage illegal immigration and its socioeconomic implications in Northern Nigeria, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Strengthening Border Security and Immigration Policies

- The Nigerian government should enhance border surveillance by deploying advanced biometric systems, surveillance drones, and AI-driven data analytic**s** to monitor cross-border movements effectively (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2020).
- Increased funding and training for the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) will improve their capacity to regulate migration while ensuring human rights protections (Adepoju, 2005).
- Nigeria should review and update its immigration policies to align with current migration trends and regional security concerns.

2. Enhancing Regional and International Cooperation

- Strengthening cooperation with ECOWAS member states to **improve** information-sharing on migration trends and security threats **(**ECOWAS, 2019).
- Partnering with international organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Labour Organization (ILO) to implement sustainable migration policies that respect human rights and economic realities.

3. Economic and Social Development Strategies

- Creating employment opportunities in rural and border communities will reduce the economic incentives driving irregular migration (Hollifield, Martin, & Orrenius, 2014).

- Investment in education and vocational training programs to equip individuals with marketable skills, thereby reducing reliance on migration for economic survival (World Bank, 2021).
- Strengthening microfinance initiatives and small-business support in migration-prone areas to improve local economic stability (Carling, 2007).

4. Improving Public Awareness and Legal Pathways for Migration

- Public education campaigns to inform citizens about the dangers of irregular migration, human trafficking, and exploitative labor conditions (Ghosh, 1998).
- Expanding legal migration pathways, such as work permits and seasonal labor programs, to reduce dependency on irregular migration routes (Papademetriou, 2005).

5. Addressing Security and Human Rights Concerns

- Strengthening law enforcement mechanisms to combat human trafficking, smuggling networks, and cross-border crime associated with illegal migration (De Haas, 2011).
- Implementing comprehensive support programs for migrants, including access to legal aid, healthcare, and shelter, to ensure their basic rights and dignity are protected (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016).

Addressing illegal immigration in Northern Nigeria requires a multi-stakeholder approach involving the government, international organizations, civil society, and local communities. While strict border control measures may help reduce irregular migration, long-term solutions should focus on economic development, regional collaboration, and legal migration alternatives. A sustainable migration framework will not only mitigate the negative consequences of illegal immigration but also harness the potential of migration as a driver of national and regional development.

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