THE ROLE OF THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT IN ADDRESSING IRREGULAR MIGRATION

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Abstract

Irregular migration is a major issue in Nigeria with thousands of Nigerians leaving the country each year without proper authorization or documentation, exposing them to various human security risks such as exploitation, trafficking, and abuse. The Nigerian government plays a crucial role in addressing irregular migration and promoting human security. However, policies aimed at reducing irregular migration can exacerbate the risks faced by migrants. This paper uses the human security theory to assess what the government is doing to address irregular migration and its effects on Nigerian citizens. The study found that there is a strong nexus between irregular migration and human security, with factors such as poverty, terrorism, human rights violations, and bad governance pushing people to migrate irregularly. The study recommends that the government should adopt policies that address the root causes of irregular migration and promote the dignity and safety of migrants.

Keywords: Irregular Migration, Human Security, Nigeria, Nigerian government, International Organisation

Introduction

Irregular migration refers to the movement of people across national borders without proper authorization, or documentation, or in violation of immigration laws (International Organisation for Migration, 2019). It is a growing concern in Nigeria, with thousands of Nigerians leaving the country each year in search of better economic opportunities or

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fleeing conflict and persecution (IOM, 2021). However, irregular migration exposes individuals to a range of human security risks, including exploitation, trafficking, and abuse (IOM, 2020). The Nigerian government has a crucial role to play in addressing the issue of irregular migration and promoting human security, which includes implementing policies and programs that address the root causes of migration, such as poverty and insecurity, as well as improving border control and enforcement of immigration laws (IOM, 2017). The reason governments are to take active actions in this regard is because national security policies and practices have a significant impact on the personal security of irregular migrants in any country (Boswell, 2018). This significance is due to their vulnerability to exploitation, abuse and violence because of their non-citizen status and lack of legal protections. National security policies are usually designed to control borders and reduce irregular migration, and this usually exacerbates the risks these irregular migrants face (Van Houte, M., & Ambrosini, M., 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2017). A popular example of how national security practices affect irregular migrants is the administration of heightened border control measures, such as barriers, walls and surveillance technologies. These measure pushes migrants towards more clandestine and dangerous routes, thereby increasing their risk of harm and exploitation.

These policies criminalise irregular migrants and punish those who facilitate them, thereby creating a situation of mistrust and fear, preventing migrants from seeking assistance from authorities and making them more vulnerable to exploitative criminal networks (IOM, 2020). This situation leads to serious human rights abuses (such as sexual exploitation, forced labour and trafficking). Also, policies aimed at combating terrorism and other security threats usually lead to intense profiling and discrimination against persons (irregular migrants) perceived to be associated with these threats, these results are arbitrary detention, deportation and other violations of human rights (Fakete, 2018). Unfortunately, Nigerians constitute a significant population of irregular migrants. The number of individuals entering Europe illegally in 2014 was 280,000. In the following year, the figure skyrocketed to 1.8

million. Additionally, the data reveals that the number of Nigerians migrating to Europe was 800 in 2012, 2,900 in 2013, 8,700 in 2014, 23,000 in 2015, and 22,500 between January and September 2016 (Richard, 2016). These numbers suggest a persistent growth in the number of irregular migrants from Nigeria. Hence, the reason the Nigerian government has to be concerned about protecting its citizens who engage in these journeys. Since the introduction of the concept of human security in 1994 by the UNDP, Nigeria adopted this principle in 2015. Regardless of the increasing concerns about the impact of irregular migration on Nigeria, there is limited literature on the subject, hence posing a notable challenge to efforts to address the problem (Adepoju, 2018).

The study adopted the human security theory to assess what the government is doing regarding the security of Nigerians who are knowingly or unknowingly undertaking irregular migration. The human security paradigm was introduced in 1994 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This theory aims to understand the root cause of irregular migration, protect and promote the dignity of migrants, and promote International cooperation and collaboration as regards solving the problem (Esteven, 2019). This paper aims to understudy how the Nigerian government has tried to resolve the root cause of irregular migration and the collaboration it has so far had to curb the menace. The nexus between irregular migration and human security was explored by stating how human insecurity is a push factor for irregular migration and how migrants end up facing more human insecurity in transit and destination countries. Furthermore, government activities on curbing these issues are also explored using data from government officials who are at the frontline.

Conceptual Discourse

According to Owen (2004), features of Human Security are assailed by huge debate, especially as regards its definition. Along these lines, the importance, extension, and growth credence of Human Security has been questioned on some grounds. Though some have debated that it is interactive, forward-thinking and adaptable to the activities of the

United Nations (UNDP, 2005), some also believe it is overly abstract and not applicable which is due to its complexity and misapplication by political leaders, therefore we need to be direct and specific when discussing the subject (John, 2014). The United Nations Development Programme (Human Development Report, 1994), defined human security as "Safety for people from both violent and non-violent threats. It is a condition or state of being characterized by freedom from pervasive threats to people's rights, their safety, or even their lives." Human security focuses mainly on people, different to how security was once focused on the states and the military. This people-oriented construct proposes that security should centre on the social improvement of the people; not only on military interests but likewise on economic and political sectors. Apart from the critics who contend that the human security perspectives are too broad-brimmed, advocates of human security argue, that introducing the seven dimensions of human security makes it additionally accommodating and human-oriented.

Hudson, (2005) argued that the core standards underlining Human Security are the provision of essential survival needs and the protection of the dignity of the most defenceless group (s) in the community. He believed that even though Human Security centres around the protection and promotion of human dignity the perspective is narrow or limited to those whose lives might be impeded without any of such intervention(s). As far as he might be concerned, living an honourable life is a privilege all residents merit yet since conditions may make certain individuals inclined to abuses and significant consequences, the most vulnerable ought to be focused on. The AUNCDP describes human security from the African perspective, meaning: The security of a person concerning the meeting of their basic needs. It also comprises the establishment of economic, social, political, cultural and environmental conditions essential for the survival and dignity of persons, good governance, respect and protection for human rights, and securing for individuals an opportunity and option for their total development (AUNCDP, 2005).

Apart from the AUNCDP's (2005) definition, others see human security as the freedom from threats, physical hurt, injury and maltreatment (Cilliers, 2004). Not that, one definition is more exact than the other; there are various dimensions to comprehending the concept. Human security covers all the earlier referenced because "conditions of abject poverty or powerlessness are not quantitatively different from vulnerability to physical violence during conflict" (Cilliers, 2004:8). Human security should not be restricted to a particular focus; instead, it should consider all elements that make people unsafe. it is at this point that irregular migration is an important discourse in the concept. Irregular migration is considered unsafe because of the illegality that takes place right from the origin country to the destination country. The International Organization of Migration (IOM) defines Irregular migration as migration that happens outside of the laws and procedures protecting the international mobility of people and it also extends to the methods and conditions of entering, staying and getting employment (www.iom.int). Hence, irregular migrant comprises undocumented immigrants, asylum seekers, stateless persons, overstayers, trafficking victims, refugees, and children.

The perception of irregular migration has changed over time, and the regulation of unwanted foreigners has been guided by various political discourses in different immigration countries concerning changing potential or imagined threats to society and the nation-state (Düvell, 2008a). The potential danger caused by the foreign 'Other' has been influenced by issues such as religion, social cohesion and security, particularly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York City. The construction of the 'illegal' other is closely connected to the 'us-them' dichotomy, between the established national group and the newcomers, in terms of one group (us) having (more) right(s) over the other (them). From a sociological point of view, the categorization of certain migrants as illegal, that is, as criminals, is related to a sense of social uncertainty, in which the unknown stranger is perceived as belonging to a 'dangerous' class and/or a threat to the social and political order (Düvell, 2008b). The element of danger varies from country to country depending on the type of society and labour market, which the type of

migration regime usually illustrates (Andersen, 2004). The common reaction of states to these threats is restrictive immigration policies even though the capacities of governments are rather limited, not least due to the nature of irregular migration (Castles & Miller, 2003). Increased restrictions might even result in migrants becoming further irregularities to remain hidden from the authorities. It is at this point that the nexus between irregular migration and human security is further strengthened.

Theoretical Framework

Human security theory emphasizes the importance of protecting individuals and communities from all forms of violence, including economic and environmental threats, in addition to traditional military threats (Aning, 2004). Some call this approach the 'new security thinking'. A postmodernist or 'critical human security' approach is rooted within the pluralist theory of international politics. The human security paradigm emerged in the 1990s to challenge and ameliorate the inadequacies of the realist state-centric world view which crystallized during the Cold War. It is rooted within the pluralistic tradition in international politics. Human security focuses on people's perceptions of their own /security and their articulations of opportunities and threats in their everyday lives. Human security is strongly linked to notions of values and interests. Since they may be different in different places, the concept of human security is regionally bound (Burgess, 2007:97). Thus, people may have different views on what security means for them.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (Human Development Report, 1994), human security is defined as: "Safety for people from both violent and non-violent threats. It is a condition or state of being characterized by freedom from pervasive threats to people's rights, their safety, or even their lives." Human security theory serves as a counter to the selfish pursuit of state or elite security. People become the primary referent of security (Esteven, 2019). The main point is to understand security comprehensively and holistically in terms of the real-life, everyday experiences of human

beings and their complex social and economic relations as these are embedded within global structures. It, therefore, becomes imperative to view security in terms of patterns of systemic inclusion and exclusion of people (Thomas, 2002). The twin goals of protection and empowerment: "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want" (United Nations Commission on Human Security, 2003) thus represent the core principles of ensuring survival, meeting basic needs (protecting livelihood) and safeguarding the human dignity of the most vulnerable groups in society. In this way, the emphasis shifts from a security dilemma of states to a survival dilemma of people (Hudson, 2005). The notion of human security is based on the premise that the individual human being is the only irreducible focus for discourse on security. Mac Farlane and Khong (2006) posit that the claims of all other referents (the group, the community, the state, the region and the globe) derived from the sovereignty of the human individual and the individual's rights to dignity in her or his life.

In the context of irregular migration, human security focuses on the protection and well-being of migrants, as well as the broader social, economic, and political factors that drive migration. The theory proposes that the Nigerian government can address irregular migration by adopting a human security approach that addresses the root causes of migration and prioritizes the protection and well-being of migrants. This can involve improving economic opportunities and addressing poverty, promoting social inclusion reducing discrimination, and strengthening migration governance and protection systems (IOM, 2021). Additionally, the government can work with international partners to address transnational challenges such as human trafficking and smuggling.

Finally, a human security framework provides a useful lens through which to understand the role of the Nigerian government in addressing irregular migration. By prioritizing the protection and well-being of migrants.

Methodology

The study was carried out in several institutions working on irregular migration in Nigeria such as the staff of Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), the International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies under Action Against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (FIIAPP/ATIPSOM) and United Nations on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). These institutions are directly involved in the formulation and implementation of Nigeria's 2015 immigration policy and actively working to curb the irregular migration of Nigerians. The study consisted of one hundred and twenty administered questionnaires with only ninety-seven retrieved. 6 in-depth interviews were conducted with the staff of UNODC and FIIAP and 11 interviews with NAPTIP, irregular migrants and migration experts. The researcher utilized a purposive snowballing sampling technique to choose participants, and a descriptive research design was used in the study. Both primary and secondary data were gathered. To obtain primary data, the researcher distributed 97 questionnaires to migrants through the purposive snowballing sampling technique and conducted interviews with immigration officers and migration experts through purposive sampling. Secondary data were obtained from various sources such as reports from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), NAPTIP, FIIAP, UNODC, published articles, and journals. The data collected were analyzed thematically.

Research Findings and Data Analysis

Demographic Data Analysis

Gender of Respondents

Table 1: Gender Distribution of respondents

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Male	46	47.4
Female	51	52.6
Total	97	100

Source: Research Field Survey, November 2022 - March 2023

The table shows that there are 47.4% male and 52.6% female out of the total sampled population of 97 respondents.

Table 2: Educational Distribution of Respondent

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
OND/NCE	20	20.6
HND/BSC	49	50.5
MSC/PHD	28	28.9
Total	97	100

Source: Research Field Survey, November 2022 - March 2023

The table shows that respondents with first degree and its equivalent have the highest percentage and number of people at 50.5% (49). Respondents with Master's and PhD constitute 28.9% (28) of the total number of the sample size: while respondents with OND/NCE constitute 20.6% (20) of the total respondents. This implies that the majority of the participants have a minimum of first degree as their educational qualification and this shows they are educated enough to comprehend the questions and give appropriate responses to them.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents based on length of service in the Organisation

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Less than one year	8	8
1-5 years	32	33
6-10 years	37	38
Above 10 years	20	21
Total	97	100

Source: Research Field Survey, November 2022 - March 2023

The table shows how long respondents have been working with their organization. As displayed in the table, 8% (8) of the respondents have been in service for less than a year. While 33% (32) of the respondents have been in service between one and five years. 38% (37) of the respondents have served their organization for a period of 6 to 10 years.

However, 21% (20) are respondents who have served their organization for over 10 years. However, 38% (37) of the respondents have been in service with their organization for 6 to 10 years constituting a majority. This shows that all respondents have served long enough to be knowledgeable about the subject matter. Also, the majority of the respondents are mid-level and are actively on the field dealing directly with irregular migrants.

The Nexus Between Irregular Migration and Human Security in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the nexus between irregular migration and human security is quite significant. The country is faced with a myriad of security challenges such as insurgency, terrorism, kidnapping, armed robbery, and communal clashes, among others. These security challenges have pushed many Nigerians to undertake irregular migration in search of better living conditions and security in other countries. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), there were a total of 23,848 Nigerian migrants who arrived irregularly in Italy by sea in 2015. This figure represents a significant increase from the previous year when 1,016 Nigerian migrants arrived in Italy irregularly by sea. In addition, the IOM estimated that a total of 37,000 Nigerian migrants arrived irregularly in Europe by sea in 2015. This figure includes those who arrived in Italy as well as those who arrived in Greece and Spain. The IOM also reported that 1,292 Nigerian migrants died or went missing while attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea in 2015. This figure represented the highest number of deaths or missing persons of any nationality that year. It is important to note that these statistics represent only a portion of the total number of Nigerians who migrate irregularly each year. Many Nigerians also migrate irregularly to other countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, and there are no reliable statistics available for these movements.

Furthermore, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) noted that there were a total of 37,551 Nigerian migrants who arrived irregularly in Italy by sea in 2016. This figure represents a significant increase from the previous year when 23,848 Nigerian

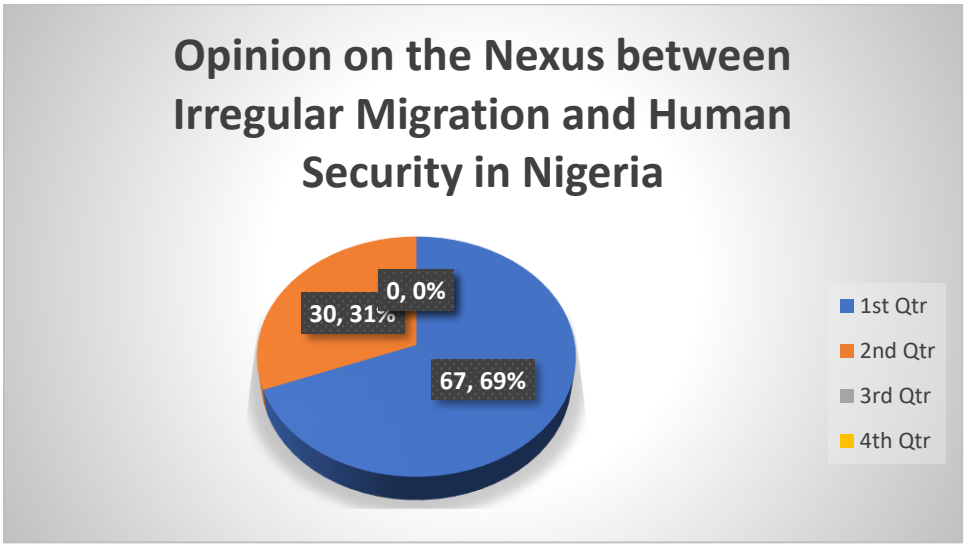
migrants arrived in Italy irregularly by sea. In addition, the IOM estimated that a total of 128,000 Nigerian migrants arrived irregularly in Europe by sea in 2016. This figure includes those who arrived in Italy as well as those who arrived in Greece and Spain. The IOM also reported that 2,869 Nigerian migrants died or went missing while attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea in 2016. This figure represented the second-highest number of deaths or missing persons of any nationality that year, after migrants from Syria. According to a report by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2017, Nigeria was the fourth largest country of origin for irregular migrants arriving in Italy by sea, with 11,009 Nigerians arriving in Italy by sea that year. This was a significant increase from 2016 when 3,620 Nigerians arrived in Italy by sea. Furthermore, the report stated that in 2017, more than 3,000 Nigerians were assisted by the IOM in returning to Nigeria from Libya, where many irregular migrants are usually stranded or held in detention centres. It's important to note that these figures represent only a portion of the total number of irregular migrants from Nigeria, as many irregular migrants travel through other routes and may not be accounted for in official statistics

Nigeria is one of the top countries of origin for irregular migrants worldwide. In 2019, over 18,000 Nigerians were reported to have arrived irregularly to Europe by sea, and over 8,000 by land. This is a significant increase from the number of irregular migrants from Nigeria in 2018, which was around 10,000 (IOM, 2019). In the same period, the number of Nigerians who died during their journey to Europe increased from 230 in 2018 to over 500 in 2019. The IOM has also reported that the majority of Nigerian migrants are young men, with 75% of those arriving by sea being male. The majority are also unmarried, with 85% of those arriving by sea being single. The increase in irregular migration from Nigeria is largely due to the country's economic and political instability, as well as an increase in poverty and unemployment. According to the World Bank, Nigeria's unemployment rate increased from 14.2% in 2018 to 27.1% in 2020. This is the highest rate of unemployment in the country since the 1980s. The number of irregular migrants from Nigeria to Europe is likely to

continue to increase in the future, as the country continues to struggle with economic and political instability.

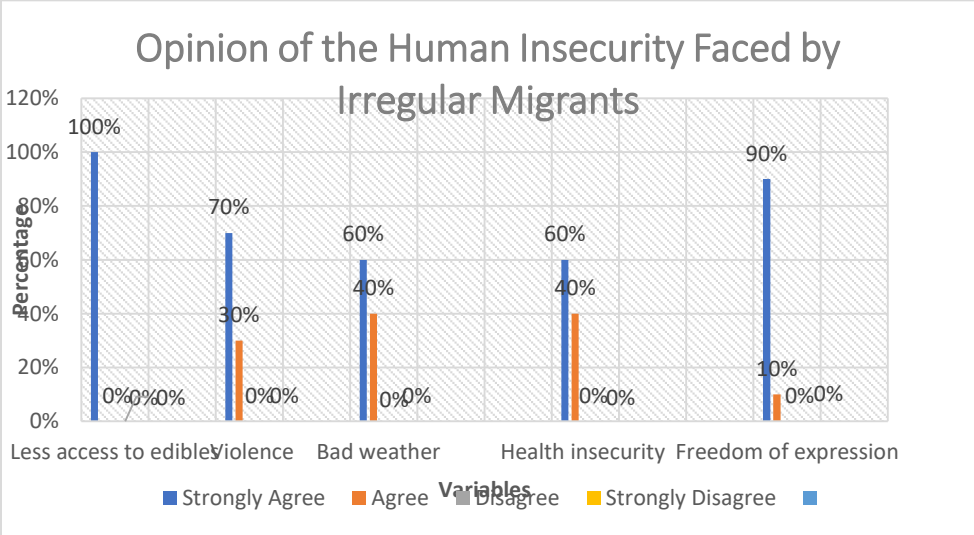
According to data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the number of irregular Nigerian migrants arriving in Europe by sea decreased from 23,370 in 2018 to 10,650 in 2019, and then increased to 13,700 in 2020, despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports that the number of Nigerian nationals detected as victims of trafficking abroad increased from 1,137 in 2018 to 1,689 in 2019, and then decreased to 1,508 in 2020. According to a study by Owoeye and Adelakun (2021), the lack of employment opportunities in Nigeria is a significant driver of irregular migration. Similarly, the rising poverty levels and insecurity in the country have also contributed to the migration trend. In addition, the study by Ajakaiye and Folarin (2018) shows that Nigerians' migration to Europe and other regions is driven by the search for better living conditions and human security. However, irregular migration exposes migrants to severe human security risks, especially during transit and in destination countries. For instance, many Nigerian migrants have died in the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea while attempting to cross to Europe. Moreover, many have also been subjected to various forms of exploitation, such as trafficking and forced labour, in their destination countries. In the report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2018), it was revealed that Nigerians are among the most trafficked nationalities in the world.

The nexus between irregular migration and human security in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. The insecurity and poverty levels in the country have pushed many Nigerians to undertake the perilous journey of irregular migration. However, in their quest for better living conditions and human security, many end up facing severe human security risks during transit and in their destination countries.



Source: Research Field Survey, November 2022 - March, 2023

According to the pie chart, it appears that all 97 respondents as displayed in the 1st and 2nd quarters agreed with the claim that irregular migration and human security in Nigeria are related. In particular, 30 respondents (31%) and 67 respondents (69%) agreed and strongly agreed respectively with the statement. This research reveals that all respondents identify a link between irregular migration and problems with human security in Nigeria. Some respondents may think that irregular migration is a factor in a number of the nation's social, economic, and political issues, such as rising crime rates, the spread of infectious diseases, and the loss of human capital.



Source: Research Field Survey, November 2022 - March, 2023

The respondents' opinions on the human insecurity faced by irregular migrants show that all respondents (100%) firmly agreed that there is less access to edibles or limited access to wholesome food and water by migrants during transit and this has a detrimental effect on the safety of those Nigerian who consider irregular migration. For violence, 70% of the respondents strongly agreed that it hurts the human security of Nigerian migrants, while 30% agreed. this indicates a relatively high level of agreement with this point. Similarly, with bad weather (conditions) and health insecurity, 60% of the respondents strongly agreed that these variables harm the human security of Nigerian migrants, while 40% agreed.

There is a strong link between human security and irregular migration in Nigeria. From the survey, it is obvious that all the respondents believe there is a strong connection between human security and irregular migration in Nigeria. It is believed that the irregular movement jeopardises the human security of migrants in many ways even those unknown to the intending migrants. According to Adebowale (NIS, 2023),

> Most don't know the extent of risk involved some of them are running away from crimes committed in Nigeria and

> therefore damn the consequences. Those who engage in this movement are often aware of the illegality of their migration but do not know the extent of punishment. It is also believed that their agents will bail them out.

Human security is fundamental to humans in the origin, transit and destination countries, it is therefore obvious that if human security is not sustained or protected in the origin country there is a high possibility that humans will seek it in other destinations. Looking at the situation in Nigeria such as heightened insecurity, violation of human rights, and increased poverty, all these serve as natural push factors out of Nigeria. This lack of resources connotes that many Nigerians would not have the financial capability to procure legal migration. Therefore, they opt for irregular migration which further exposes them to human insecurity even if they successfully reach their destination countries. At all levels, it is obvious that irregular migrants are denied access to human security, according to Abimbola (UNODC, 2022), in transit irregular migrants have "no access to food security, no access to personal security. They only have some level of community security but after getting to Libya, they are separated and left to struggle or hustle on their own." What can be deduced from this is that irregular migrants have little or no access to human security in transit or destination countries.

Furthermore, there is a divergent view on the issue of the economic security of irregular migrants. Some interviewees believe that some irregular migrants are more financially buoyant than others and those with money experience better security. "I had a friend who went through irregular migration and he told me he was able to afford some luxury, respect and access to water compared to others because he had money with him" (Ifeoma, 2022). On the other hand, Marie (UNODC, 2022), argued that "having too much money also leads to vulnerability because the money can be stolen violently and endangering the life of the migrant." She further said that for irregular migrants to have some economic power they "voluntarily or involuntarily sell their organs." This shows that human security cannot be guaranteed but many

international organisations are working to better secure irregular migrants from these vices.

It has been found that irregular migrants experience a lot of violations. The most significant problem they face is access to food and water according to the survey and this has been corroborated by several organisations that were contacted for this research. For example, Emmanuel (NIS, 2023), believes that this particular problem is because:

> these migrants are crammed in trucks or buses and do not have enough space for them to carry extra food and water. The little water carried at the beginning of the journey often gets exhausted. Also, the climatic conditions especially from Agadez to Libya, especially the passage through the Sahara Desert. Most deaths are often recorded in this location due to the high temperature and dehydration that occurs in this area.

The area or the geography of migration is important as this determines the level of danger the irregular migrant faces. According to Rasheed (NAPTIP, 2023), "the routes for irregular migration depend on why one is migrating. Most migrants going to labour and sex destination move from the south region of Nigeria to Abuja, Kano, Katsina, Republic of Niger Dirku, Naima, Libya (Tripoli), then the Mediterranean Sea to Italy." It was also said that certain routes are chosen for convenience especially those that have less security patrol. "These people prefer Libya to Europe route even though Morocco and Spain would have been a better route because it is just about 13km but Morocco has strict laws." It shows that despite the risky nature of moving from Libya to Europe most migrants still prefer the route because of the limited security and less restrictive laws in Libya. We can opine that the Mediterranean Sea route from Libya which takes several days is the preferred option for irregular migrants.

We can say that the purpose of travel and the chosen route by irregular migrants influence the impact irregular migration has on their human security. For example, despite the shortness of the distance between Morocco and Spain, which could have been an easier option,

rather the irregular migrants would prefer to ride a deflated balloon boat just to avoid the strict policies of transit and destination countries. It can be concluded then that strict border policies force irregular migrants to undertake more dangerous routes and therefore their human security is jeopardized, in 2015, the Niger Republic instituted a strict immigration policy to clamp down on criminal or trafficking rings. Using Niger as a transit route, made these criminal syndicate covertly smuggle their victims through the caved walls of Agadez residential area. This exposed irregular migrants to different harassment from locals who had control over their fates. It was either local who got what they wanted or they were reported to the security agents. An irregular migrant described his experience below:

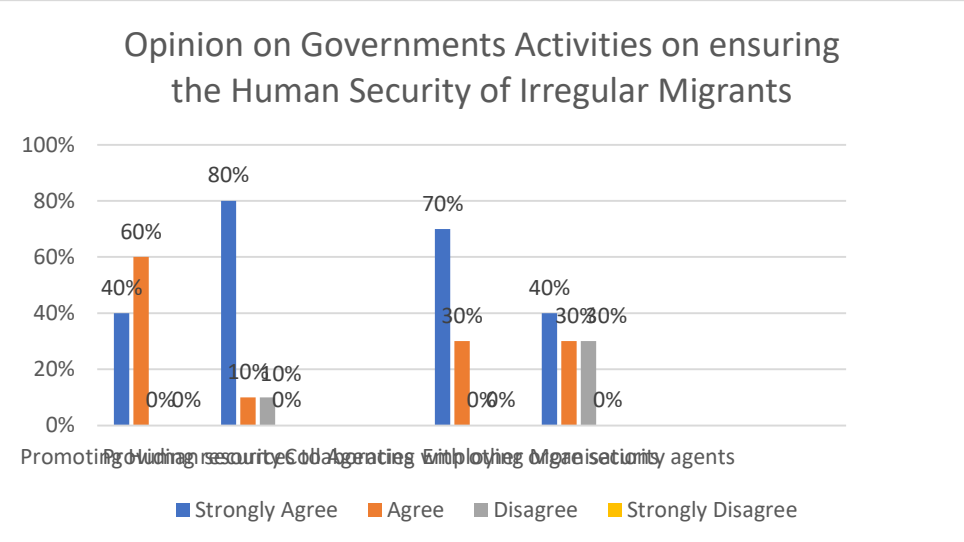
> As irregular migrants, it can be hard to find enough food and water. When we're travelling, we might not have access to enough food or water for days or even weeks. We might have to carry our supplies or search for food and water along the way. Sometimes, we have to go without food or water for a long time, which can be dangerous. It's even harder if we're travelling through dangerous areas where people might harm us or exploit us. Finding enough food and water is just one of the many challenges we face during our journey (Godwin Isaac, 2023)

It can be concluded that irregular migration has a significant impact on the human security of Nigerian migrants. All the variables in the above graph were rated as having a high impact on the human security of irregular migrants. The highest-rated variable was limited access to quality food and water in transit, indicating strong agreement that it has a significant impact on the human security of Nigerian migrants. Other variables such as violence, bad weather conditions, health insecurity, and freedom of expression also received high percentages, indicating agreement that they have a significant impact on the human security of irregular migrants. Therefore, it can be said that irregular migration comes with a lot of human insecurity threats as

the data shows that it has a high impact on the human security of Nigerian migrants.

The Nigerian Government's Activities in Curbing Irregular Migration

The Nigerian government plays a crucial role in curbing irregular migration by implementing policies and programs aimed at addressing the root causes of migration and preventing people from embarking on dangerous and illegal journeys. The government has taken various actions to strengthen border security, establish agencies such as the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), and implement economic empowerment programs. The government also works in partnership with international organizations to develop programs and initiatives aimed at curbing irregular migration. Through these efforts, the Nigerian government aims to promote human security and ensure the safety and well-being of its citizens.



Source: Research Field Survey, November 2022 - March 2023

The Bar chart shows the opinions of the respondents on what the Nigerian government is doing to protect the human security of irregular

migrants. Of the introduction of the human security concept into the National Immigration Policy 40% strongly agree and 60% agree, which indicates that the respondents agree that the Nigerian government is taking steps to protect irregular migrants through the incorporation of the human security concept into the National Immigration Policy. The second variable on the chart which is about providing resources to agencies such as Nigeria Immigration Service, NAPTIP and Diaspora Commission, has 80% strongly agree, 10% agree, 10% disagree and 0% strongly disagree, which indicates that most respondents strongly agree that the Nigerian government is providing resources to these agencies to actively curb irregular migration in Nigeria.

On collaborating with other organizations like UNODC, IOM, FIIAP, NACTAL etc., to protect irregular migrants, also has an agreement percentage of 100, which indicates that 70% of respondents strongly agree and 30% agree that the Nigerian government is collaborating with these organizations to protect irregular migrants. Finally, regarding employing more security agents to ensure the borders are guarded, 40% strongly agree, 30% agree and 30% disagree, which indicates that the respondents agree that the Nigerian government is employing more security agents to guard the borders, but not as strongly as they agree with the other variables.

The Nigerian government has put some effort into protecting the human security of Nigerian irregular migrants. The first is its introduction of the human security paradigm into its immigration policies in 2015 and the majority of respondents agree to this. The IOM has been at the forefront of this achievement and has tirelessly worked to ensure its implementation. According to Nwosu (IOM, 2022), IOM assisted the Nigerian government in reviewing its immigration policies and made the move to include the human security concept within it. After the publication of this policy, the majority of the respondents believe that NIS and NAPTIP have been working tremendously hard to implement and collaborate with other interested bodies. Furthermore, the Nigerian government has been making an effort to provide the necessary support or resources for these activities and collaborations to curb irregular migration. The migration department of the NIS has been

collaborating with different organisations and research institutes to ensure that the service can implement its policies.

The NIS officers have been trained and provided with a pamphlet on how the human security policy is to be adopted. They are been taught how to identify smugglers and traffickers. Identify victims, and how to deal with emerging situations. In regards to this, such organisations like the IOM, UNODC and FIIAP (ATIPSOM) are engaged in manpower training of government agents. Nwosu (IOM, 2022), "We have been able to give policy direction to NIS and we are fully on the ground to assist in implementing those policies." Furthermore, Abimbola from UNODC said "The collaboration with the government institutions has been successful so far and the programs we have for the next five years are ongoing. We recently had a National Dialogue on Migration on 09th December 2022." Hence, there is enough evidence that several programs are ongoing to ensure Nigerians do not undertake irregular migration, this is very connected to the basic tenets of the human security concept.

> "FIIAP has been collaborating with NAPTIP, NIS, Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and NACTAL in an operation known as the CSO (Combating Standard Operating System) that seeks to build capacity of frontline officers at interception point through training and logistics support. We also operate on the 5 Ps: Policy, Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Partnership. Omotosho & Bello (ATIPSOM, 2022),

They believe that such policies like the "Protocol and Identification, Safe Return and Rehabilitation, National Policy on Protection and Assistance to Trafficked Persons in Nigeria 2018, which will be reviewed after 5 years are some of the efforts the Nigerian government is making. Mrs Julius mentioned that the program for safe return and rehabilitation has come to stay and certain resources have been provided to ensure this, such as the nine (9) shelter homes owned by NAPTIP and also some holding centres owned by the NIS according to Mr Gama (NIS, 2023). NAPTIP's position on the government's effort gave a detailed

breakdown of its departments and how they have been designed to ensure they curb smuggling and trafficking. According to Mr Rasheed (NAPTIP, 2023),

> There are 9 zonal commands, 12 state commands, and 8 liaison offices. We have 11 departments at the headquarters and the major departments include the Investigation and Monitoring department charged with the responsibility of investigating, arresting, rescuing, seizing properties, conducting research and surveillance. The Counselling and Rehabilitation department identifies victims of trafficking provides shelter, counselling, family tracing, reintegration, monitors the progress of victims etc. The Legal and Prosecution department attends to court cases and gives legal advice on matters. The Training and Manpower department engages in capacity building of NAPTIP officers and other law enforcement agencies. The Research and Program Development department conduct research, proffer solutions and development of programs. The Public Enlightenment department engages in sensitisation through town hall meetings, community dialogue, courtesy calls, etc. in the special units, units that deal with Intelligence and International cooperation, an example is the working MOU with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. They also gather intelligence relating to trafficking by liaising with destination and transit countries based on signed MOUs. We also have Mutual Legal Assistance with countries like Cote d'Ivoire, Spain, Italy, the Republic of Benin, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Gambia. Also, we have the Rapid Response Unit and they attend to distress calls. Finally, we are still seeking more MOUs.

This exposition from NAPTIP gives a very detailed explanation of what the government is doing and what it has been able to achieve so far,

especially in its collaboration with transit and destination countries. One of the foremost pillars of human security is international cooperation and collaboration, this is predicated on the belief that these collaborations will reduce the human rights violations meted out to irregular migrants. The Nigerian government actively protecting the interest of Nigerians in transit and destination countries will protect them from further, harm compared to when such MOUs did not exist. An important country Nigeria needs to work on is its collaboration with Libya because that serves as one of the major hotspots for irregular migrants. According to Bimpe (NIS, 2023), "the IOM is working with Libya by assisting voluntary returnees." We can conclude that the interest of Nigerians is somewhat protected under the effort of the International Organization for Migration. "The Nigerian government has also promoted certain acts and regulations to protect Nigerians, and they include; the TIPPEA Act 2015, VAPP Act, 2015, Regulation on Trafficking in Person 2019 and the control of activities which gave the agency the power to give clearance for excursion, sporting activities and cultural events in other countries" (Sunday, 2023). Also, Abdul (NACTAL, 2022), noted that the "Nigerian government as a guideline for national referral mechanism for trafficked persons in Nigeria. This document talks about the treatment of trafficked persons.

This provides some evidence that the Nigerian government has taken steps to address irregular migration. Respondents generally agreed that the government has introduced the concept of human security into the national immigration policy, is providing resources to relevant agencies to curb irregular migration, and is collaborating with international organizations to protect irregular migrants. These responses suggest that the government is aware of the problem of irregular migration and is taking steps to address it.

Additionally, the data shows that the Nigerian government is collaborating with other organizations like UNODC, IOM, FIIAP, and NACTAL to protect irregular migrants, which indicates that the government is not only taking action but also seeking support from external bodies to address the issue. However, the data also highlights some areas where the Nigerian government may need to improve its

efforts. For example, the government's employment of more security agents to ensure the borders are guarded received a lower positive response, indicating that respondents were less satisfied with this approach. This suggests that the government may need to invest more resources in border security measures or explore other strategies to prevent irregular migration. Overall, while the data shows that the Nigerian government is taking some measures to curb irregular migration, there may still be room for improvement

Challenges Facing the Nigerian Government

Inadequate Resources: Government institutions face significant resource constraints, including limited funding, equipment, and personnel. This hampers its ability to effectively monitor and manage Nigeria's borders, issue and verify travel documents, and collect and manage migration data.

Corruption: Government institutions are not immune to corruption, which can undermine its efforts to curb irregular migration. Corruption can result in the issuance of fraudulent travel documents, the facilitation of irregular migration, and the compromise of border security.

Inadequate Coordination: There is a lack of coordination between agencies involved in migration management, such as law enforcement agencies, international organizations, and civil society groups. This can result in duplication of efforts and fragmentation of services, which can impede the effectiveness of migration management.

Weak Legal Framework: The legal framework for migration management in Nigeria is weak, which makes it difficult for agencies such as the NIS to effectively address irregular migration. The absence of comprehensive migration laws, as well as inconsistent and outdated migration policies, undermines the NIS's efforts to curb irregular migration.

Conclusion

This study examined the link between irregular migration and human security in Nigeria and the role of the Nigerian government in these dynamics. This paper established that there is a strong nexus between irregular migration and human security because such factors as poverty, terrorism, human right violations, bad governance etc., pushes people to engage in irregular migration. In this instance, human insecurity serves as a push factor for migrants and also on transit, these migrant experience severe human security violations that makes the issue of irregular migration a matter that needs urgent attention. this statement can be made that irregular migration is shadowed by human insecurity. It is therefore important for the government as a significant actor in the International system to address the issue. It is on this premise that the Nigerian government adopted the human security mantra in its immigration policy of 2015 and the government has so far made an effort to follow its principles by mostly collaborating with foreign and local organisations to protect Nigerians undertaking irregular migration. One of the most important precepts of human security on migration is for the government to address the root cause of migration, which the Nigerian government have not actively addressed. Therefore, the Nigerian government is required to make an effort in regards to addressing the root cause of emigration from its territory.

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