

**Impacts of Illegal Migration: Lessons for Migration Management Professionals****Yahya Muhammed Bah**

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**ABSTRACT**

Around the world illegal migration is occurring with undocumented socio-economic and political impacts and it yawns for concerted efforts at all levels to address it. Every immigrant is entitled to full protection as reaffirmed by international legal instruments of universal significance. The rationale for the systematic literature review is to examine the push and pull factors of illegal migration, share knowledge to spark and inspire processes that will usher rapid growth from all directions. A systematic review of the literatures using information collected from different sources was actuated. Google search engine and others were used to search for articles. Only peer-reviewed articles published after 2000 were selected except extracts of fundamental mileage. However, articles published by staunch international organizations working in the area for years and produced indefatigable knowledge were stealthily appraised.

The study revealed that the impacts are multifaceted and encompass: socio-cultural changes, economic growth, maltreatment and exploitation, substance abuse, criminal activities increment, conflicts and political tensions, security threats, employment opportunities, discrimination and hate, health complications, family problems; and climate change and ecological disasters. In conclusion, the impacts can be in a nutshell pooled and catalogue into social, economic, political, medical; and criminal. To address the phenomenon, it demands for the urgent implementation of a combination of well-calculated strategic preventive and remedial measures.

**Keywords:** *Illegal, migration, impacts, migrants***INTRODUCTION**

Like birth and death, the free movement of people from one nation to another, have been one of the fundamental qualities of human societies throughout history especially in a world where freedom of movement is deeply enshrined in a fleet of international legal instruments[1]. In essence people movement has always been part of human history for numerous reasons such as economic, political; and social satisfaction[2]. Of recent, the desire to migrate especially from low economic countries to developed nations by any mean including illegal migration has become more compelling particularly for the youths due to many factors such as resources scarcity, bleak future, strict immigration policies; and laws[1]. Thus, like regular migration, illegal migration can be attributed to series of factors including restrictive policies and laws limiting the legal movement of people[3].

Irregular immigration in spite of being an international problem, it does not have any globally accepted definition and solid theoretical base making it extremely hard to accurately capture the number around the globe and furthermore formulate strategic plans to eliminate it[4]. However, in the modest term it can be defined as the act of migrating from one country to another against the legal provisions of entry and/or residence in the receiving nation[3].

In recent years, it appears that there are more people on the move than it used to be some decades back attributable to many factors namely search for better living conditions and employment opportunities, growing inequalities, discrimination, human right violations, poverty, environmental degradation, conflict and violence, etc. and unfortunately the number is soaring as 15 to 20 percent of the global migrants are illegal ones [5]. Pictures on the international media of dramatic arrivals and rescue operation on the high seas have resulted to moral panic vis-à-vis invasion likewise humanitarian pleads to act on the phenomenon[6]. Irregular migrants especially from West Africa to Europe experienced multitude of life threatening problems such as abduction for ransoms, slavery, torture, among other inhuman treatments particularly in Libya[7]. Most importantly because it does not only consist of the most youthful population from the source countries, to get to the advanced world, they depend on human traffickers risking their lives[6].

Thus, with the uncontrollable increment in the phenomenon and associated human disasters it has occupied a central stage in global and state security as in some nations it is perceived to be a threat because the number of migrants are in

millions[8]. Though in reality, the correct statistics on irregular migration are notoriously hard to obtain, nevertheless, data at certain European borders manifest a four-fold soaring[9]. The unprecedented increase in spite of the mounting efforts both at the international and national level to eliminate it has made the phenomenon more a global concern[10]. In most nations especially in the developed world, the phenomenon is high on the public debate agenda with differing perspectives[11]. The Gambia, regardless of being one of the smallest countries on the globe, it is one of the largest contributors to illegal migration in terms of the number of people who make the journey across the Mediterranean[12]. In spite of all the disasters and inhumane treatments meted on the migrants the movement of the human population has been of benefit to both source countries and destinations in many ways for example, it decreases the unemployment pressures, boost up remittance, self-esteem and economic independence especially for the migrants and their families [13]. Apparently, though human movement including irregular migration is not anything new, the proper comprehension of the causes, effects; and prevention methods are not well established scientifically and understood[2].

## **METHODOLOGY**

A systematic review of the literatures using information collected from different sources was actuated. Google search engine, google scholar, web of science; and scopus databases were used to search for these articles. During the search numeration combinations of words and phrases were used to ensure articles reflect the most recent knowledge and scholarly works. The systematic searches beget varied and voluminous articles which had to be sieved not only to meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria but to ensure the fundamental objectives of the study are wrangled. Therefore, only peer-reviewed scholarly publications published after 2000 were selected except extracts perceived to be of basal mileage to the study. However, articles published by staunch international organizations known to have been working in illegal migration for years and has produced indefatigable knowledge in the area were stealthily appraised.

### **Inclusion and Exclusion Procedures**

The underneath procedures were followed in articles inclusion. That is, only:

1. Peer-reviewed scholarly articles on illegal migration.
2. Peer-reviewed scholarly articles published from 2000 to 2022.
3. Articles on international or regional perspectives on illegal migration.
4. Articles on illegal migration published by international organizations with years of meritorious experiences in migration management and illegal migration.

To exclude some articles from the review, the below captioned criteria were applied. That is:

1. Non-peer reviewed articles.
2. Articles published before 2000 unless critical and impactful.
3. Media generated articles including newspapers.
4. Articles not published in English language.

In spite of the fact that 157 articles both qualitative and quantitative were trawled, only 83 articles were qualified for reviewed which is largely due to a dearth of data. In essence, only peer-reviewed articles and publications by international organizations considered being trustworthy because they occasioned standard, ethical; and robust studies were reviewed.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

### **Impacts of Illegal Immigration**

#### **Socio-cultural changes**

The ability to move from one place to another with limited restrictions is critical in the psychological and intellectual development of a person not only by quenching his or her curiosity thirst but also allowing him or her to interact with different people from different places around the globe exposing him or her to a variety of cultures and subsequently becoming more culturally competent and sensitive[14]. With such especially in a massive movement of people like in national and international migration not only transfer of cultures, attitudes; and behavioral changes happen but some sort of new cultures are developed granting weight to: undocumented immigration has the potentials to influent development of multicultural societies, new concept of citizenship; and nations as most of the highly advanced nations have become diversified and multiethnic societies while those that are not have voluntary chosen to turned to that direction[15].

#### **Economic growth**

National development lies on the shoulders of the citizens thus, demanding for the active participation of all without discrimination. However, sometimes, the expertise needed may not all be available nationally warranting the engagement of regional and/or international experts. In some instances, citizens may not want to take certain jobs more especially in labor intensive industries such as construction, mining, agriculture and other lowing paying occupations that require unskilled or semi-skilled laborers[16] and [17]. Thus, investors in such industries will be left with no alternative but to engage people in the shadow economy including the undocumented travelers. Though they are undocumented and in some cases in the shadow economy, they are economically and socially contributing in the national development

consenting to: illegal migrants though enter and stay illegally; they are making some economic and social contributions in their respective host nations such as their labor in the informal market, working in hard-to-fill vacancies, though working in the irregular labor market they pay small tax; and finally they contribute through the consumption of services and goods resulting in the increase in demands which ultimately leads to economic growth[18]. Irregular migration increases investment, enhances task specialization of the natives; and additionally increases the demand for all categories of workers[19]. International migration leads to some economic developments in the host country including GDP growth, boosting innovation, diversity in productive skills and complementarities, capital accumulation; and increase in the employment ratio in the replacement of the aging population[20].

Similarly, the free movement of people from one country to another has the greatest potential of increasing the world's GDP by twofold[21]. Remittances in addition to boasting GDPs of sending countries, it has the potential of reducing income inequality and above all, in some poor households especially in Mexico, it contributes half the income of the poor communities[21]. Immigrants' remittances don't only increase the overall economic well-being of the countries and communities of origin but equally life and living conditions of their families particularly the children by accessing quality and relevant education[13]. While the monetary remittances increase the income of migrant families, their savings, investment power, capacity to buy new houses; and lands, the social remittances account for the huetransmission of ideas, information, knowledge, skills, attitudes, behavioral patterns, identities, culture, etc. resulting in some changes in life styles of migrants and their families[13].

In the same vein, while immigrants have the power to lower the cost of production of goods and services and the subsequent prices which ultimately result in more profit for companies and the possibility for the expansion and creation of more jobs, low-skilled immigrants slow companies' adoption of labor-saving technologies and worst of all, it has the potential to reduce the wages of the citizens[21]. Undocumented migrants plays critical roles in the socio-economic growth at federal, state; and local government level by paying taxes contributing to the stimulation of the growth of employment opportunities[22]. In spite of the contributions made by irregular migrants in the economic growth at federal, state; and local government level, they are a cost to the government especially when it comes to law enforcement, provision of healthcare services; and education[22]. Public spending on illegal immigrants often debated by politicians and lawmakers is most of the time offset by their paying tax and hardly accessing public services and other benefits[18]. While immigration has twice positive effects on the wages of the natives, the inflows of migrants have no impact on the rise of house rent[23]. Contrary, undocumented immigrants though save more money than the documented ones, they tend to spend less both on themselves and their families because of fear of premature termination of status and lack of opportunities to conduct legitimate business transactions[24]. Illegal immigration does not have any positive impacts on the United States of America[25].

### **Maltreatment and exploitation**

Though freedom of movement is highly and eloquently preached in many and highly placed international platforms, the fact remains that travelling from one place to another has never been easy particularly from the third world countries to developed nations. This is the case due to many factors such as strict immigration laws, xenophobic attitudes, security concerns, limited visas, etc.[26]. However, in spite of all these hurdles, some people are with the strongest conviction that they must travel either for their safety or for a better life and living conditions. With such determination and unsurmountable hurdles, they are consequently willing and ready to expose themselves to all types of maltreatments including commercial exploitation as documented in illegal immigration: undocumented immigrants are significantly at risk of all categories of difficult circumstances because of some tenuous legal circumstances with limited rights and protection[27]. In most European countries, irregular immigrants are more vulnerable because they lack access to basic social services, workers' rights, most of the time engage in exploitative and hazardous work; and being frequently subjected to multitude of abuses due to political controversies including deportation threats [18]. Women immigration doesn't only change their ideology and gender roles but equally put pressure on them in terms of having to perform household and child care functions for their employers' families, mothering their children in spite of the distant; and working overtime to contribute to the sustenance of the family back home as the main breadwinners[13]. Illegal immigrants in the United States of America, in addition to living in constant fear of deportation, they find it extremely hard to access some critical social services like healthcare and legal services[28].

Additionally, in some host countries while employers and governments benefit from illegal immigrants through cheap labor and payment of taxes, they hardly have access to fundamental social services including healthcare[10]. The social and economic impacts of undocumented immigration are nearly the same, any measure to eliminate the phenomenon must have highest regard for human rights and be well structured to heavily sanction human trafficking[15]. Illegal immigrants suffer in several ways such as lack of access to full employment and decent jobs, poor wages; and high immigration costs[18].

### **Drugs and substance abuse**

Drugs and other pharmaceutical products are critical in the society either to prevent or treat ailments. In certain communities, especially in the third world countries where conventional medicine is hard to afford, some people have reverted to traditional herbs to treat diseases and also to relief a mere pain possibly due to labor intensive engagements. Thus, due to the temporal relief, some people are in the habits of using such herbs, substances; and painkillers in stressful situations resulting in being hooked to them[29]. To relief some pains and also to dodge away from the rigor in illegal immigration, drugs and substance abuse is a common phenomenon in illegal immigration as authenticated: illegal immigration has some significant negative socio-economic and geopolitical impacts including the creation and expansion of shadow economy, increase in human smuggling, prostitution, drug and substance abuse, state spending on illegal immigrants who hardly contribute to the social security system, sometimes it is a challenge and threat to public security and safety, it reduces the chances of unskilled citizens getting employed, contribute to the increase in the spread of diseases because illegal immigrants are not insured, increase in crime victims since it is known that they cannot seek help from the authorities because of fear of arrest and deportation, they contribute in the acceleration of different ethnic groups, increase in xenophobic sentiment; and inequality in the quality of settlements[10]. While women migration abroad has got some positive impacts on their families and communities respectively, however, it has negatively affected their societies of origin like loss of social standing both for them and their families since in most cases they are presented as prostitutes by the social media, getting babies out of wedlock, left behind husbands hooking on to drugs and alcohol, engaging in extramarital sex to fight against loneliness, girls migrating to join their mothers after dissolving their marriages, suffering from different diseases and emotional strains because of family separation, multiple family problems because left behind men have less important roles to play in decision making at home since they are no longer breadwinners, worsening economic problems in the families especially when they have to sell properties to ferry back their women who are in trouble with the law in abroad, family breakdown; and sometimes dead of husbands because of substance and drug abuse to cope with the absence of their wives[13].

### **Criminal activities increment**

Travelling from place to another in trying moments can be extremely challenging due to numerous factors like the associated costs and physical exhaustion irrespective of the mode of transportation. This becomes more challenging in a mass exodus particularly in underdeveloped continents. Challenges such as disoriented crowd adaption and management, access to basic needs like food, shelter, water; and bad weather are tasking and frustrating most of the time. Thus, it is not uncommon to notice increase in crimes and criminal activities such as stealing, fighting, sexual abuse, drug and substance abuse, etc. as immigrants struggle to reach safe land all meant to meet some fundamental needs or to merely vent anger and frustration with the circumstances and governments[30], corroborating: illegal immigration substantially resulted in the increase of crimes such as smuggling, human trafficking, sexual abuse, theft, prostitution; and conflicts between criminals and security officers in transit and host countries[31]. Illegal immigration has been blamed for the increase in extremist groups like ISI that are posing to be a great challenge and security threat to India[31]. The immigrants, their families; and host nations bear the full brunt of the economic, social; and psychological costs of irregular immigration[4]. The principal beneficiaries in irregular immigration are the human traffickers and exploitative employers who intensively exploit immigrants to maximize profits[4]. The illegal immigrants in Texas in the United States of America, are far less likely to be involved in crime compare to the legal immigrants and US-born citizen and furthermore while the crime rate of the duo are on the increase that of the illegal immigrants are in the decrease[32].

### **Conflicts and political tensions**

To support people in difficult circumstances such as war, conflict, natural disaster, etc. has always been regarded as one of the strongest pillars in communal life as in such situations not only valuable properties including villages and towns are lost, but lives as well which if not properly management via community support can ultimately lead to many social problems including mental ill health[33]. To save lives, some will opt to run away either as internally displaced persons or refugees. Sometimes, depending on the volume of the exudes, host communities find it extremely difficult to continue the philanthropic gesture vis-à-vis their meagre resources, cultural; and ideological differences, etc. which ultimately lead to some conflicts between the host and hosted as acquiescence: illegal migration from Bangladesh to India has resulted in some negative economic impacts on the host country which include reduction in the enjoyment of agricultural produce, easy acquisition and occupation of lands, decline in forest lands, communal conflicts, depriving natives job opportunities, putting pressure on limited social services; and state incurring costs in supporting and integrating immigrants[31]. Sometimes, depending on the number of illegal immigrant arrivals, they have constantly influenced and determined the outcomes of certain elections in most districts in India[31].

### **Security threats**

People and businesses moving freely from one country, region; and continent to another is a fundamental characteristic of civilization and globalization. However, the movement of people especially in large crowd and poorly organized settlements like camps, demands to be reasonably monitored and supervised for the safety of the host countries and immigrants themselves as some are already stigmatized, badly socialized, frustrated; and angry due to encountered hurdles[34]. In the event that strong security systems are not put in place especially in highly resource constrained

countries, it can result in security threats and concerns as depicted: while illegal immigration has the capacity to positively influence the economic growth of host communities and nations, it can be a serious threat to national security, social harmony, economic and social wellbeing of citizenry; and a greater contributor to the creation of political and communal tensions; and extremist groups[31]. Immigration as a perceived threat rather an objective one is a threat to economic, social, internal; and public security[8].

### **Augmentation of employment opportunities**

Development of a nation is largely anchored on the quality of the available resources including the human capital. In most communities and nations there are two major types of economic systems namely; the conventional and non-conventional one[35]. The shadow economy because it is risky, low paying; and labor intensive most nationals wouldn't opt for a job in it leaving it for unskilled laborers mostly undocumented immigrants[36]. Because such businesses are hardly taxed and are anchored on massive exploitation, they easily generate huge profits that are pumped back into the mainstream economy contributing to the national growth domestic products and by expansion lending support to: while immigration can increase the employment opportunities in a host nation, it has other significant positive impacts on the host economy[8].

### **Discrimination and hate**

For centuries, people have been moving from one place to another and even subsequently permanently settling in their newly discovered homes adding diversity to the settlements while positively contributing to its development[37]. However, in certain communities and nations, the reception accorded to immigrants particularly the undocumented ones and from underdeveloped countries has not been pleasant as validated: there is no correlation between immigration and public insecurity and the act of labelling immigrants as criminals only leads to xenophobic and racist attitudes[8].

### **Health complications**

Travel especially the long distant one, has been a great challenge for some particularly for the elderly, children; and persons with disabilities leave alone travelling to and residing in a country without the required documentations. Domiciling in a country without the right documents especially in developed world is frustrating especially with these highly sophisticated systems capable of easily locating the whereabouts of each and every one with a mere click on a button or keyboard[38]. Thus, it is not unusual for undocumented immigrants to live in fear of being caught, prosecuted, jailed; and even deported to country of origin or other countries not only concurring with the infamous and criticized arrangement between the United Kingdom and Rwanda but also with: because of constant fear of disclosure and deportation, lack of guarantee for basic needs; and insecure living conditions, many undocumented immigrants are encountering some mental problems due to high level of depression, anxiety; and post-traumatic stress disorder[39].

### **Family problems**

The family, the most important social institution deserves to be supported and cherished by all including governments and development partners as any reverse to that can have profound negative impacts on the socio-economic and political development of a nation[40]. However, with these skyrocketing costs of living, conflicts, wars, economic meltdowns, disasters, etc. of recent, some families have witnessed some enormous problems such as domestic violence to the point of disintegrating[41]. In an attempt to rescue the situations, some had to illegally migrate for better living while creating some havocs especially when women had to, affirming: in the case of women immigrants, in addition to the pressure to adjust to the life styles of the host country, at the source country, their departure creates multiple problems such as family disruption, changes in the behaviors of children left behind, children dropping out of schools, husbands abusing substance and alcohol[13].

### **Climate change and ecological disasters**

The climate and ecological system is critical in the socio-economic and political development of all societies[42]. Thus, protecting them vis-à-vis the untold negative impacts of climate change [43], it is no longer a political wish but rather a legal obligation binding on all communities and nations as enshrined in key regional and international legal instruments. However, unmanaged mass exoduses have profoundly impacted them causing serious climate changes and ecological destabilization as validated: environmentally, illegal immigration in India has led to deforestation as a result of search for fuelwood and timber for settlement construction[31].

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

In view of the findings, the impacts of illegal migration on the countries of origin and recipients are numerous and in summation entail: socio-cultural changes, economic growth, maltreatment and exploitation, drugs and substance abuse, criminal activities increment, conflicts and political tensions, security threats, employment opportunities, discrimination and hate, health complications, family problems; and climate change and ecological disasters. In conclusion, the impacts can be in a nutshell pooled and catalogued into social, economic, political, medical; and criminal. To address the



phenomenon, it demands for the implementation of a combination of well-calculated strategic preventive and remedial measures.

### Declaration of conflict of interest

I declare that there is no conflict of interest with respect to the study, authorship and/or publication of the manuscript.

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Ethics approval was not necessary for a study of this nature and scope.

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