



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Socio-emotional Disturbances of Left behind Young Adults in Calabar Municipal in Cross River State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Globally, millions of people are migrating, and the number of left-behind children is likely to increase in most developing countries due to population buildup. This study explores the socio-emotional life disturbances of left-behind young adults. It also employs family life cycle theory to understand the dangers associated with family member's absences and finally explores their implications for social work practice. A qualitative research method was adopted in the study. An in-depth interview (IDI) was utilized to elicit data from 20 participants who were left-behind young adults aged 18 to 25 whose parents are international migrants. The participants were obtained using a multi-staged sampling procedure that includes purposive sampling, simple random, referral, and availability sampling techniques. Findings indicated that the absence of parents in the lives of young people due to international migration could render them vulnerable to negative peer-group influence, rape, poor academic performance, and drug use, among others. Also, loneliness, insecurity, and indebtedness were the socio-emotional life disturbances of young adults with international migrant parents within the study area. Social workers should enhance the social support system available to left-behind people in Nigeria. It is also advocated that the Nigerian government make a flexible migration policy to accommodate left-behind family members, especially young adults.

INTRODUCTION

Global Development for Migration and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM, 2019) noted that millions of people are migrating globally, especially from developing countries to developed nations, thereby increasing the number of left-behind family members. From 2010 to 2022, the International Organisation for Migration (2023) estimated 284 million people as global international migrants, of which 21,763,475 were from Africa. This rated Africa the third most migrating continent

globally (Ma et al., 2013). This cross-border or international migration among Africans is fueled by the desire for improved socioeconomic circumstances and the need to meet life's opportunities. In Nigeria, push factors such as unemployment, insecurity, poverty, and a poor standard of living, as well as the desire to reunite with earlier international migrants, have been the driving forces among most international and intended migrants (Antman, 2018). All family members, especially children, younger adults, wives, and grandparents, may not have the opportunity to

migrate with their parents, spouses, and children. This might be due to the cost of international migration and some strict migration policies (Dela-Garza, 2010). Consequent to this, members of the family could be left in their country of origin or birth. This category of people is referred to as left-behind family members.

Left-behind family members are those family members who may be under the care of a single parent, grandparent(s), or other family relatives as a family member(s) embark on international migration. According to Sharma et al. (2021), left-behind family members are often younger adults who are usually kept under the supervision and care of other family members in their country of birth or origin while either parents move to other countries for life adventures. The informal kinship care commonly practiced in Nigeria has placed over 70 percent of younger Nigerian adults with international migrant parents under the supervision and care of extended families (nnama2020informal, 2020). Despite being cared for by my extended family system, the majority of the left-behind younger adults in Nigeria are faced with socio-emotional, socio-cultural, and economic problems, one of which is not farfetched from advanced stereotyping (Nnama-Okechukwu et al., 2018).

Socio-emotional disturbances of some left-behind younger adults, as noted by Wen and Lin (2012), include discrimination from their peers, abuse, fear of abandonment by the international migrant, and little or no remittance to take care of their basic needs. Some scholars noted that in left-behind younger adults, socio-emotional life disturbances include psychological and emotional distress like sadness, insomnia, obsessive thinking, loneliness, and crying (Adhikari et al., 2014; TTang et al., 2019). Zhou et al. (2015) further noted that the feeling of parental absence coupled with societal discrimination against left-behind younger adults often subjects them to psychological disturbances that consequently affect their health, educational, and emotional well-being. Askarov and Doucouliagos (2020) observed that although parental international migration may improve the socioeconomic status of young people left in their country of origin or birth, there are also concerns about the emotional

injuries inflicted by parental absence on the lives of those younger adults, especially females. In addition, Zhou et al., (2020) observed that neglect and excess workload on younger adults with international migrant parent(s) by their carers have resulted in low self-esteem and poor academic productivity. Lin (2011) also found out that some left-behind younger adults, especially those with extended families, exhibit behaviors such as withdrawal and loneliness, which could be characterized as low self-esteem. Cebotari et al. (2018) observed that children, especially females, are likelier to experience poorer health and happiness outcomes when their parents migrate. Adhikari et al. (2014) indicated that a mother's international migration has been associated with mental health, emotional, and behavioral problems in some left-behind younger adults due to improper parenting and a lack of love and affection associated with parents' early international migration. Left-behind younger adults are found to be affected by somatic complaints, suicide temptation, schizophrenia, and depression (Iqbal et al., 2014; Qu et al., 2018).

Left-behind members, especially younger adults, have been reported by Ma et al. (2013) to have lower academic attainment and a higher risk of unwanted pregnancies. According to Williams (2017), left-behind younger adults suffer from a wide range of psychosocial problems, such as emotional detachment, feelings of abandonment, sadness, despondence, despair, anger, a lack of trust, low self-esteem, and an inability to concentrate. Challenges associated with being left behind can lead to anxiety and depression, psychosomatic illnesses, substance abuse, behavioral problems, vulnerability to rape, initiation into cultism, and becoming a school dropout. International migration of parents may jeopardize the education and well-being of left-behind younger adults. It may also increase the number of children who drop out of school and those who live with their grandparents, who may not have the physical and financial strength to give proper home training to their left-behind grandchildren (Edet, 2019).

There is a need for coordinated research efforts to grasp the complexities of the problem and share this knowledge to develop efficient and effective strategies to minimize the numerous negative effects of international migration on left-behind family

members, especially younger adults. In this context, this research aims to identify the particular difficulties faced by family members who are left behind in Abia State, Nigeria, as well as to create coping mechanisms that can be used to deal with these difficulties. In addition, the study will answer the following research question:

- What are the socio-emotional disturbances left-behind younger adults face in Calabar Municipality in Cross River State?
- Does the left-behind generation of young adults in Calabar Municipal experience financial challenges?
- Does international migration of parents affect the academic performances of left-behind younger adults in Calabar Municipal in Cross River State?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies have been conducted on the impact of parental migration on left-behind children. For instance, in a study by Tesfaw and Minaye (2022) on the impact of parental migration on the educational and behavioral outcomes of children left behind in Southern Wolloin, the findings revealed that children are obsessed with remittances sent by migrant parents and consequently lack desire for schooling. The findings also revealed that the behavioral outcomes of left-behind children include despair, loss of parental care, violence, intimidation, alcohol abuse, and risky sexual behaviors. Chen and Zhou (2021), in their study on parental migration and the psychological well-being of children in rural China, found that parental migration affects the psychological well-being of children due to poor companionship. ? (2015) carried out a study on left-behind dominance in children: prevalence and maternal stereotypes in a south-east Nigerian; Adhikari et al. (2014) investigated the impact of parental migration on the mental health of children left behind. Fellmeth et al. (2018) investigated the health impacts of parental migration on left-behind children and adolescents; the study revealed mental and physical health challenges among left-behind children and adolescents. Ugal and Osazuwa (2022) examined Nigerian international migrants: a qualitative discourse on fertility preferences and

outcomes. The study explored how the length of their stay abroad affected their fertility preferences, age at migration, and outcome, as well as the effect of culture on fertility preferences and outcomes. The study revealed that the length of stay changed the migrant's fertility preferences as they adopted the fertility preferences of their country of residence. Liu et al. (2023), in their study of left-behind children's positive and negative social adjustment in China, found social maladjustment manifested as depression, loneliness, poor academic performance, and a few positive adjustments manifested in coping strategies. Leskauskas et al. (2020) examined self-reported emotional and behavioral problems of left-behind children in Lithuania. The study revealed that left-behind children report more risky behaviors and emotional problems; they tend to feel more unaccepted. This was more prevalent among the 15–19-year-old participants. Carranza (2021) also studied the cost of a better life for children left behind—beyond ambiguous loss. The qualitative study in El Salvador and Nicaragua found that the family set up after parental migration did not meet the emotional needs of the left-behind children. Murphy(2022) asserts that family members who are left behind experience a wide range of psycho-social issues, including emotional distance, emotions of abandonment, grief, despondency, and despair, as well as anger, a lack of trust in others, low self-esteem, and difficulty focusing. The difficulties of being left behind can cause various problems, including anxiety and sadness, psychosomatic disorders, substance misuse, behavioral issues, rape vulnerability, cult initiation, and school dropout. Sharma et al. (2021) noted that international migration makes family members, especially left-behind children, face a multitude of extreme experiences, including but not limited to malnutrition, over-labor by carers, sexual harassment, and unwanted pregnancies. However, it is important to state that none of these studies were conducted from a social work perspective; none discussed the socio-emotional disturbances of the left-behind young people. The study, therefore, seeks to adopt family life cycle theory in exploring socio-emotional life disturbances in left-behind young adults. Family life cycle theory has not gained increased attention in the analysis of socio-

emotional disturbances in families in Nigeria. So, this contributes to the literature. Few studies adopting family life cycle theory in Nigeria focused on socio-economic disturbances affecting other family units but not left-behind young adults. Such studies are Liu et al. (2023), Booyesen et al. (2021), Van Dijk et al. (2020), Zemp et al. (2020), and Streit and Davis (2022).

Family life cycle theory

The family life cycle theory, developed by Carter and McGoldrick in 1988, refers to the emotional and intellectual stages people pass through from childhood to retirement as family members. In each stage, people face challenges that allow them to build or gain new skills. Gaining new skills helps people work through the challenges nearly every family faces. The theory views dysfunction as concerning normal functioning. It sees problems within families as a system moving through time (Carter and McGoldrick, 1988; Habiba et al., 2022).

However, not everyone passes through these stages successfully. Situations such as severe illnesses, migration, financial problems, or the death of loved ones can determine how well people pass through these stages (Rentfro, 2010; Almanfaluthi et al., 2023). Mastering the skills and milestones of each stage allows people to successfully move from one stage of development to another. In most cases, families must work together to provide guidance, information, and assistance, among other things, to successfully transition from one stage to another.

Family life cycle theory provides the present study with a framework for understanding how the international migration of a family member can inevitably bring about disruptions or negative changes in a family's organization, which may lead to negative socio-emotional outcomes on the life cycle of left-behind young adults. The absence of a family member due to international migration may create gaps or unfulfillments in the lives of those left behind, which may result in unsuccessful transitioning. This may result in diseases or emotional stress-related disorders.

METHODOLOGY

Study of area

The study area is Calabar Municipal. Calabar Municipal is a local government area of Cross River

State, Nigeria. It is situated in the southern senatorial district of the state. Calabar Municipal was the capital of the then-South Eastern State, now Cross River State. It is a tripartite town housing three ethnic groups: the Efik, the Efutu, and the Qua (Ekpe, 2016). These ethnic groups all had and still have their kings, who were later made paramount rulers for government control. The Efik have the Obong, the Efutus have the Muri Munene, and the Qua have the Ndidem. The commonality that has engulfed some cultural traits of the Efik and the Qua could be described as the unity of opposites, though diverse in certain ways, simultaneously interconnected, thereby creating a bond of co-existence (Ekpe, 2016). The Calabar people are rich in their cultural practices. Historically, Calabar is said to be one of the oldest centers for trade in Nigeria. In the 17th century, Calabar was a popular center for the slave trade and was the biggest colonial administration in Nigeria in the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries.

Population and sampling

Using a growth rate of 2.85%, the 2022 projected population of Calabar in Cross River State from the 2006 population is 371,022. According to the population breakdown, 184,757 are males, while 186,265 are females, according to the 2006 population census (National Population Commission and National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). This study's target population is male and female younger adults aged 18–25 years with international migrant parent(s). The rationale behind the choice of the age bracket is that they are mature in reasoning and can provide relevant data concerning the present study. However, they are still financially and emotionally dependent on their parents and guardians. Therefore, they are best chosen for a study that examines the socio-emotional life disturbances of younger adults with international migrant parents.

Sample techniques

The sample size for this study is 20 participants, of whom 10 were female and 10 were male. This sample was drawn from the five selected communities (5 respondents from each community) of Calabar Municipality in Cross River State, Nigeria. This sample size was chosen based on the number of people in the target population, as the study focused on people between 15 and 25 years old. Other affected

family members did not fall within the needed age bracket. The willingness to participate in the study was another determinant factor in the sample size. The communities include Etta Agbor, Ekpo Abasi, Ikot Ansa, Ikot Enebong, and Marian. The study adopted multistage sampling techniques. At first, Calabar Municipal was purposefully selected as a major city or the state capital of Cross River State. As the major city for slave trade and colonial administration, Calabar is assumed to have a lot of families with international migrants. Simple random sampling techniques using the hand drawing method were employed to select five communities for the study. The communities selected were Etta Agbor, Ekpo Abasi, Ikot Ansa, Ikot Enebong, and Marian, while community leaders from each of the selected communities aided in identifying families with international migrants. Finally, availability sampling was used to select participants aged 18–25 with an international migrant parent(s). This age category was best for the study because people aged 18–25, though adults are assumed to still be under parental care, guidance, provision, and protection.

Instruments of data collection

The researcher utilized the In-Depth Interview (IDI) guide as the instrument for data collection. The IDI guide had two parts: the first part consisted of demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as age, sex, religion, educational qualification, marital status, and occupation, among others, while the second part consisted of general questions on the issues under study. Questions were open-ended with problems. Two research assistants, who were undergraduate students from the University of Calabar, were recruited and trained for this study. The research assistant observed and took notes during the interview sessions. Ten interview sessions were held in the study participants' homes, workplaces, and business centers. Each interview session was anchored by the researcher; an informed consent form was provided for participants to indicate their willingness to participate; the aim and objective of the study were read and explained to the study participants; and participants were assured of confidentiality and non-disclosure of their real names. Only participants who consented to the study were selected. The interview sessions were moderated by the researchers.

Methods of data analysis

The researcher adopted the thematic analytic approach to data analysis, relying on Shosha et al.

(2015) guide. Both deductive and inductive data analysis methods were used in analyzing the data. Each interview audio recording was carefully transcribed by the researchers. Each transcript was painstakingly verified afterward by the researchers, who categorized each interview audio recording by gender and location to ensure accuracy. Each transcript was read thoroughly to obtain a general sense of the whole content. Significant statements pertaining to the phenomenon under study were extracted for each transcript. The statements were written on a separate sheet, noting the pages and line numbers of the source. Interpretations were given to these significant statements to identify key ideas or units of meaning in line with the major objective of the study, which is to investigate the socio-emotional life outcomes of left-behind family members in the Calabar metropolis, Nigeria. These individual interpretations were clustered and discussed under various themes representing the research objectives, while outstanding comments were discussed verbatim.

RESULTS

Table 1 reveals the distribution of socio-demographic information among the study participants. Data from the study shows that an equal number of study participants based on gender were used for the study. Study participants were between the ages of 18 and 25. Data also revealed that the majority of the participants were senior school certificate (SSCE) holders who are also pursuing higher studies; other participants are ordinary national diploma holders, higher diploma holders, and bachelor's degree holders; and one out of the twenty participants is a master's degree holder. The study participants were residents of Etta Agbor, Ekpo Abasi, Ikot Ansa, Ikot Enebong, and Marian. Data also revealed that most of the study participants were students; others were self-employed, artisans, and other forms of employment. Besides two study participants who identified with the African religion, others were Christians. Further data also revealed that most study participants indicated being left behind for four years, while others indicated three years, two years, five years, and six years as the number of years they have been left behind by either parents or a single parent.

Table 1: Socio-demographic information of the IDI participants

Socio-demographic information of the IDI participants	Age	Gender	Educational qualification	Place of resident	Occupation	Religion	Number of years spent as a left-behind
Participant 1	25	Female	NCE	Etta Agbor	Student	Christianity	6
Participant 2	20	Female	SSCE	Etta Agbor	Students	Christianity	2
Participant 3	23	Male	B.sc	Etta Agbor	Self employed	Christianity	4
Participant 4	22	Male	HND	Etta Agbor	Self employed	Christianity	4
Participant 5	22	Female	B.Sc	Ekpo Abasi	Self-employed	Christianity	3
Participant 6	20	Female	SSCE	Ekpo Abasi	Student	Christianity	4
Participant 7	21	Male	OND	Ekpo Abasi	Student	Christianity	4
Participant 8	19	Male	SSCE	Ekpo Abasi	Student	Christianity	5
Participant 9	25	Female	B.Ed	Ikot Ansa	Civil servant	Christianity	3
Participant 10	18	Female	SSCE	Ikot Ansa	Artisan	Christianity	3
Participant 11	20	Male	SSCE	Ikot Ansa	Student	Christianity	4
Participant 12	23	Male	SSCE	Ikot Ansa	Self employed	Christianity	4
Participant 13	19	Male	SSCE	Ikot Enebong	Student	ATR	2
Participant 14	19	Male	SSCE	Ikot Enebong	Student	ATR	2
Participant 15	20	Female	HND	Ikot Enesbong	Student	Christianity	4
Participant 16	25	Female	BS.C	Ikot Enebong	Student	Christianity	5
Participant 17	24	Female	SSCE	Marian	Student	Christianity	4
Participant 18	20	Female	OND	Marian	Student	Christianity	3
Participant 19	25	Male	MSc	Marian	Civil servant	Christianity	6
Participant 20	20	Male	SSCE	Marian	Student	Christianity	5

Source: Field work 2022

Participants views on emotional disturbances as left-behind family members

Loneliness: Data from the study revealed that most participants noted Loneliness as a major emotional outcome. A female left-behind young adult whose parents are international migrants explained thus: "When my parents first moved to Canada, I was enjoying leaving with my grandmother, but right now, I feel so lonely, anxious, and, in fact, I feel I have been abandoned. I return home after a rough, stressful day at school, just to be with my grandparents, who most times are not interested in my problems" **(IDI/Participant/Female/24 years)**.

Another female left-behind family also said: "You see how quiet and lonely this house is; that is how lonely my life is... All my siblings are in Germany with my dad. I can't wait to graduate and join them. The Loneliness here is frustrating, though I visit my grandparents often" **(IDI/Participant/Female/20 years)**. Yet another male participant expressed his views with a song: "Loneliness is always looking for a friend; it found me once, and since then, it has always been around. This, I guess, is the best

way to express the level of Loneliness without having your mother around. I don't think my dad feels the same way; maybe when my admission to the university is out, I may not feel this lonely again" **(IDI/Participant/Male/19 years)**.

Despite the affirming feelings of Loneliness expressed by most of the participants, a 20-year-old male participant said, "As for me, I don't think I am lonely because my dad lives abroad. I don't know about another person, but I am cool with it, and I wish it remains this way." **(IDI/Participant/Male/23years)**

Insecurity: Insecurity was another challenge expressed in various ways by the study participants. To some, it is the fear of losing the international migrant family member to someone else based on earlier agreements. Insecurity was also expressed as the fear of being kidnapped or losing material things and other valuables placed under their care or sent to them as remittance to bandits. For instance, a male participant who is 25 years old said this:

"When my mom earlier began to use the car my dad sent to her from Finland, she was kidnapped once on her way back from work. Most people whose

parents are abroad are often the target of criminals and bandits because they assume the international migrant parents can afford to pay for ransom" **(IDI/Participant/Male/25)**.

Another study participant said this:

"Few months ago, I saw a post of my dad, who lives in the UK with a white lady and a child... The posture was more like a family thing; I showed my mom, who wasn't surprised but affirmed that those were members of the dad's new family... I guess dad has abandoned us here since he now has a new family."

(IDI/Participant/Female/20)

Participants view financial challenges as left-behind family members

Indebtedness:

Another major challenge expressed by the study participants was the issue of indebtedness. This indebtedness was not only concerned with money but also with building human capacity. 18-year-old male participants said:

"My father's trip to London was his third attempt... My family really spent a lot of money before the journey became successful. We visited so many prayer houses trying to find out what was holding our own travel from being successful. We sold all our valuables till we didn't have anything left to sell, so we began to borrow from various 'isusu' groups. When we finally succeeded, the news began to spread that my brother had finally travelled out, and debtors began to call for their money, even though we hadn't received any form of remittance from him" **(IDI/Participant/Male/18)**.

Another secondary female respondent also said:

"My father was sent to China by his boss with the agreement of pulling across his boss' nephew after three years. About a year later, his boss began to send money to him to buy and import goods back to Nigeria. But for some time now, I, my mother, and my siblings have not heard from him, and we can't really explain what is going on with him. Unfortunately, his boss feels cheated and has taken up the matter. Currently, I and my children have taken up menial jobs to see to what extent we can refund him the money spent on our father's trip to China as he requested" **(IDI/Participant/Female/20)**.

Educational performance: Educational performance was another area of socio-emotional concern explored with left-behind young adults. Study participants

expressed how the international migration of their parents has affected their academic performances. The majority of the study participants associated the international migration of their parent(s) with poor academic performance. For instance, a 25-year-old participant who is also an undergraduate student narrated this:

"My dad's absence and the remittance he sends to us have exposed me, in particular, to friends who have been a very big distraction to my studies. I often follow them to the club, not minding if it's exam period or free lecture week. After which I won't be able to attend lectures on subsequent days."

(IDI/Participant/Male/25)

An 18-year-old left-behind female also said:

"My mother got a job, moved to the UK, and left me with my grandmother... Staying with her is a bit tacky because there is always something to be done. No matter how much you try to finish, there will always be more. I can no longer attend extra moral classes or read with my friends because of this."

(IDI/Participant/Female/18)

A 20-year-old left-behind female also said:

"My mom's job can't sustain the family, especially our fees, so we depend more on what our father sends from Germany. The problem is that the money doesn't come frequently and timely. Most often, going back to school is dependent on when the money arrives. In some cases, I could stay back home two months after resumption, thereby missing out on some lectures as well as assignments because I haven't had the money to return to school." **(IDI/Participant/Male/20)**.

DISCUSSIONS

Carer migration has been extensively discussed in the study of socio-emotional disturbances in left-behind young adults (Chen and Zhou, 2021; Liu et al., 2023; Tesfaw and Minaye, 2022). Despite all the provisions and interventions incorporated into so many migration programs by the Nigerian government over the last 10 years on labor migration, diaspora, and internally displaced people (IDPs), a general migration policy, and immigration legislation, the coordination mechanisms between the manifold ministries and agencies involved have been strengthened during this time. Developing migration frameworks has partly been driven by government

concerns over treating Nigerian emigrants worldwide. However, no program has been developed for left-behind family members, especially young adults (? , 2022). The absence of favorable programs for the left-behind might push some left-behind young adults with limited resources into becoming social deviants. Thus, not every left-behind person gets the financial and social support assumed by society. It is, therefore, crucial for migration policies and programs to include the left-behind, not just for financial stability but also to diminish the negative psychological, mental, and financial effects that international migration of a family member may have on the left-behind, especially younger adults.

Data from the study revealed that most left-behind young adults stressed that the absence of parents in the lives of young people due to international migration could render them vulnerable to negative peer-group influence, rape, poor academic performance, and drug use, among others. This finding corroborates the findings of Adhikari et al., 2014; Tang et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2015, among other authors. In addition to these findings, other findings also revealed that some participants lamented that parental absence due to international migration has increased household chores. This was found particularly among the younger ones or those who moved in with their grandparents. Similar findings were found in Zhou et al. (2020) and Lin, 2016. The present study discovered a negative relationship between the international migration of the parent(s) and the poor academic performance of the left-behind family members, especially young adults. This corroborates the findings of ? (2015). It becomes important to note that the finding on the socio-emotional disturbances of left-behind young adults is associated with this study's theoretical framework. The family life cycle theory is conceptualized as the disruption that may occur in the development of younger, left-behind adults due to parental international migration. This could result in poor academic performance and insecurity, among others. These challenges can lead to vulnerability, drug abuse, school dropouts, and rape. Considering the socio-emotional disturbances experienced by left-behind younger adults, there is, therefore, a need to engage social workers in dealing with these challenges.

Scholars have identified the need for social workers to work with the left-behind (Saxe Zerden et al., 2019; Orlich et al., 2012; Schuster et al., 2020). By working with the left-behinds, social workers can assess mental health challenges, substance abuse, and other challenges within and outside the home environment. Identifying these challenges enables social workers to offer home-based, school-based, and community-based interventions to overcome them (Saxe Zerden et al., 2019). Social workers are often assigned to work with people in the at-risk sub-groups, including the left-behinds. According to Surajo et al. (2020), access to education and skills can help those left behind develop effective coping mechanisms. Based on this, social workers can aid by giving the left behind access to education, skills development, religion, and other important activities, which can foster a sense of continuity, accomplishments, and friendship or companionship. Therefore, social workers provide public awareness, advocate for resources and education, organize and plan community activities, and deliver peace and reconciliation programs. Social workers have special insights to provide policymakers regarding the benefits and drawbacks of being left behind, as their field focuses on overcoming social and emotional barriers to change (Nwanna and Nmachi, 2018).

The theoretical and practical implications of the study

Theoretically, the literature reviewed shows that nothing has been done on socio-emotional disturbances in left-behind younger adults in Nigeria, thereby neglecting the challenges of left-behind youths. This research provides data for non-governmental and other agencies working with youth, especially left-behind younger adults. In addition, other researchers in youth and migration studies can use the study findings as a point of reference. Practically, this study has shown that left behind younger adults experience some socio-emotional disturbances such as poor academic performances, excess workload, fear of abandonment, anger, depression, and loneliness, among others, due to parental international migration; therefore, practical efforts should be made by social workers, especially those that work with youths and vulnerable people, to ensure that practical efforts are employed

in resolving these problems.

Limitation

The major limitation of this study is the small sample size. This was due to a small number of people within the target population in the study. The unwillingness of study participants to reveal full details due to a lack of trust that the information revealed will be used for research purposes and nothing else. Although confidentiality was assured, some were not convinced enough.

Future research directions

- Further studies could be conducted on the impact of international migration on left-behind family members in Nigeria using a larger sample size.
- Impact of International Migration on the Psychological wellbeing of Left-behind Younger adults
- Religion and the overall well-being of left-behind family members

CONCLUSION

The third gender of sustainable development goals is concerned with good health and well-being. International migration of people, especially Nigerians, will continue to increase if the Nigerian government does not swiftly address the insurgency and other social instabilities occurring within the country. Children, women, and young adults left behind by family members are seen as the most vulnerable groups that may be negatively affected by the absence of family members. Young adults constitute a vulnerable group whose socio-emotional lives should be considered of the utmost importance, especially as youthful exuberance sets in. School, family, and community social workers should enlighten, educate, and collaborate with the authorities to ensure that the international migration of parents does not distort any transition level among left-behind young adults. Distorted transitions may affect the mental health of left-behind young adults, resulting in a negative socio-emotional life outcome. Social workers should, therefore, enhance the social support system available to the left-behind and advocate that the Nigerian government make flexible migration policies to accommodate left-behind family members, especially young adults. The researchers,

therefore, recommend a comparative study on the socio-emotional life outcomes of young adults with and without international migrant parents. More research on geriatric social work practice is paramount in Nigeria.

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