

JAPA SYNDROME AND ITS CHALLENGES TO THE NIGERIA'S LABOUR FORCE: A SEARCH FOR RELIGIOUS SOLUTIONS

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Abstract

Japa syndrome which is the recent high rate of emigration of Nigerian citizens to foreign countries in search of greener pastures has become a cause for serious deliberation. It is evident that this syndrome affects the labour force of Nigeria adversely since the youth, professionals, and the skilled workers in Nigeria are predominantly involved in this mass exodus. This work employed the Stewardship Theory, the philosophical concepts of Ujamaa and Ujima, the Encyclicals of "Populorum Progressio" and "Rerum Novarum" in actualizing its aim. The qualitative method of data analysis was employed in this work; whereas both the primary and secondary means of data collection were adopted. The gathered data were synchronised via phenomenological and culture centered approach. It was discovered that owing to bad governance, unemployment, unfavourable working conditions, insecurity in Nigeria amongst other factors; the youth, professionals and the skilled workers in Nigeria resort to seeking for greener pastures in foreign countries. This poses grave threats to the Nigeria's labour force as the country is left "brain drained" with few prospective skilled workers and professionals to fill the vacuum left in various governmental parastatals and other fields of endeavour. Since all the major religions in Nigeria promote good virtues, this work proffers religious solutions to the challenges that Japa syndrome poses to the Nigeria's labour force with special reference to the Christian religious teachings.

Keywords: Syndrome, Japa, Emigration, Youth, Skilled Workers, Religion, Professionals, Labour Force.

Introduction

Emigration and Immigration are part of the means through which a country acquires more human power, accumulates wealth, garners the capacity to develop in science and technology, acquires values and further secrets for economic sustainability of her nation as well as maintaining cordial international relations for assistance and in solidifying her national sovereignty, as Bello (1989), and Lodigiani (2016), concurred. However, any tilt to either of the extreme becomes disastrous. Thus, if a nation for instance accommodates

too much immigrants, such a nation may find it hard to contain as inconveniences and problems like over-population which stimulates unemployment and equally effects a nation's general productivity stance. Same is applicable when a country experiences mass exodus of her citizens to foreign countries in search of a new lease on life; such a country is left brain drained, impoverished, backward, as well as reduction in generation productivity of the country as Jauer, Liebig, Martin and Puhani (2014), as well as Sitompul (2023), established. Little wonders former American President, Donald Trump once moved against immigration. The white house Archives, (2021), acknowledged then that:

By enforcing America's Immigration laws, President Trump made major gains toward ending the humanitarian crisis at our border; keeping criminals, terrorists, and drugs out of our country; and protecting American workers and tax payers against job loss and misuse of the welfare system (p.1)

Irrespective of the fact that a good number of scholars, including journalists, like Roger (2018), Maciag (2017), and Kapur (2015), were not in support of Trump's immigration policies tagging it impractical, not factual, vindictive, whimsical, capricious, mythical and ostentations. Donald Trump still maintained that it was to control illegal immigration and crime rate in the United States of America.

In the same vein, the mass exodus of youths, skilled workers and professionals in Nigeria referred to as "*Japa*" syndrome is affecting the country's labour force adversely. Notwithstanding, some politicians and entrepreneurs are of the opinion that it is a gainful opportunity that will effect "brain gain" for Nigeria in the future. For instance, Bill Gate (cited by Olisah, 2023), pointed out that the recent surge in the number of young professionals leaving the country for greener pastures is good and healthy for Nigeria: Nothing that completely blocking people from leaving the country is not healthy. According to Olisah, Bill Gates insisted that having a big Diaspora that includes people coming back into business and government is a very healthy thing; as some of those in Diaspora can raise money to build and establish businesses for their relations in Nigeria. Obi (cited by Oluwasanjo, 2023), endorsed the *Japa* syndrome by supporting Bill Gates stance in his statement:

I have always preached and maintained this same position that "our brain drain today will be our brain grain tomorrow".... Nigerians leaving the country may look like a loss today, but when we start doing the right things and taking the governance of our nation more seriously, the knowledge and resources from them will be critical in the building of the New Nigeria, as it happened in China, India, Ireland and other developing countries. (p. 1).

Igbinedion (cited by Sobechi (2017), pointed out that there is no greener pasture than Nigeria. Thus, contrary to Peter Obi and Bill Gate's assertion, he insisted that the young ones must endeavour to be educated, get perfected in their area of interest, be focused and make the best out of where they were primarily employed. He insisted that the "streets of Europe are not made of gold", as Sobechi recorded. Igbinedion's stance includes that one yearning to travel out must first inquire of the conditions of service and stay overseas before venturing to travel. Igbinedion declared that all his businesses and companies are done and located in Nigeria. He never considered the options of travelling abroad for greener pastures. In as much as everyone is entitled to their opinion, this work supports the stance of Igbinedion. When every skilled worker, professionals and youngsters vacate the country in mass rush for greener pastures, what exactly will become of the country? The challenges may be more than can be addressed.

The government of Nigeria ought to sit up and create a favourable environment for civil servants and business ventures in Nigeria. Igbinedion (cited by Sobechi, 2017), insisted that once the working conditions are palatable with good roads, steady power supply and stabilized economy, Nigeria will be the best country to reside for all round human endeavours. Pertinent to this, the investigations in the course of this research work unraveled that the young professionals and skilled workers are in the majority of the number of people clamouring to, as well as travelling out the most in search of greener pastures. The general consensus on reasons for such, amongst other factors, are bad governance, poor and unfavourable working conditions, unemployment, bad and crippled economy, underdevelopment and terrorism. This work utilized both the primary and secondary means of data collection. It adopted the qualitative, method of data analysis in its peculiar approach in solving the problems perceived.

The theory of stewardship, the philosophical concepts of *Ujamaa and Ujima*, the Papal Encyclicals of *Populorum Progression* and *Rerum Novarum* were adopted and employed in actualizing the purpose of this study. Since Nigeria is predominantly religious as declared by Salau (2023), Aliyu (2010), and United States Department of state (2018): whereas, all these religions in Nigeria professes love and other quality virtues; this work then proffers religious solutions to the challenges posed by the effects of *Japa* syndrome to the Nigeria's labour force with special reference to the Christian religious teachings. This work endeavoured to analyse all the gathered data via phenomenological approach.

Definition of Terms

The key words that form the topic of this study will be defined here in simple terms that will be in line with the aim of this study.

1. *Challenges*: Cambridge English Dictionary 2018 (cited by Olisa and Anowai, 2018), defined challenges as “something needing great mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully or the situation of facing this kind of effort” (p.1). Pertinent to this work, challenge is anything that serves as an obstacle; hindrance or a difficulty that will prevent further advancement, growth or development in any given setting or someone's peculiar goal.
2. *Labour Force*: It includes the totality of individuals who are capable to, and equally available for work in any given country or specified milieu. According to Castillo (2011), labour force implies all people who are already working, as well as the people who are unemployed and actively engaged in seeking for work or job opportunities. Thus, labour force is equally referred to as the workforce and can as well be said to signify the number of people already employed and actively working along with all people available and ready to be employed and paid for the services they can offer. The labour force is the workforce and power house of the country that represents qualified people that are already working; and are also ready for employment.
3. *Syndrome*: Calvo, Karras, Phillips, Kimball and Wolf (2003), defined syndrome as “a recognizable complex of symptoms and physical findings, which indicate a specific condition for which a direct cause is not necessarily understood” (p.2). Syndrome pertinent to this work is a set of actions, behaviours/attitudes or even events and conditions that occur together and suggest the presence of abnormalities. It represents problems and difficulties that create anomalies.
4. *Search*: It means a quest. To seriously seek for something. An inquiry. To look relentlessly for an answer or remedy.
5. *Solution*: It signifies remedy. A panacea. Answers to a puzzle.
6. *Religious*: That which is related to the Divine being, supernatural being or the gods and God. It represents godly virtues and principles.
7. *Japa*: Iremeka (2022), referred to it as “The mass exit from Nigeria” (p.1). However, according to Dayo (2022), “*Japa*” is a Yoruba language meaning “to run, flee, or escape”. The word according to him takes firm root in the aspiration that young Nigerians have to leave the country for good. To run, flee, escape or travel out to foreign countries in search of greener pastures is colloquially known in Nigeria as “*Japa*”.

Statement of the Problem

Migration is not a futile, burdensome, vainful, gainless or evil venture. It is actually a gainful venture, and the prospects are favourable and positively inclined. However, as it is in every life endeavour, once balance is not maintained and a peculiar venture tilts to any extreme, it backfires and suffers diminishing returns. The African center for strategic studies (2023), affirmed that contrary to the popular opinion, belief and conception, an estimated 85 percent of African migration comprises routine cross border trade and travel. This contributes reasonably to economic stability. The filling of labour gaps, and the socio-economic wellbeing of destination countries, the same equally notified that migration also benefits countries of origin through remittances that contribute to the stability of household incomes in fragile economics, improved food security, and represent an investment education in the next generation. It then appears that the gains of migration to the counties of origin tend to be futuristic assuming all things will be equal; and that is clear indication of uncertainty. OECD (2014), posited on their part that migration amongst other benefits to the host countries, accounted for instance for 47% of the increase in the workforce in the United States and 70% in Europe, effects increase in cultural diversity, infilling of skills gaps, boost to the local economy and increase in Government tax revenues.

However, inasmuch as migration is beneficial, the high rate at which Africans, especially Nigerian young professionals and skilled workers are migrating to other countries in search of better life options is not a good and favourable state of affairs. Obi (cited by Oluwasanjo, 2023), and Gates (cited by Olisah, 2023), had already declared that the *Japa* syndrome in Nigeria is for good, and will serve the country favourably in the near future. The problem is that they did not account for the gap in skills, the innumerable uncertainties, plus the chequered economic stance and other numerous adverse effects it creates in the country. They didn't expose the various challenges that these migrants face as they attempt to escape from Nigeria and in the host countries as well. They did not consider the motive behind the travels and the push factors. They equally did not realize that the rate at which the youths and the young professionals and skilled workers are leaving the country is on the increase since they form the majority in this case of *Japa* syndrome.

According to the researches carried out by Oluwaseyi and Adeosun (2020), Omonijo, Nnedum and Ezeokana (2011), and Odimegwu and Joe-Akunne (2023), they all indicated that the youth and young professionals in Nigeria fall into the highest numbers that are migrating to other countries as well as those intending to migrate. Factors such as bad governance, unemployment, unfavourable working conditions, bad economy, bad social

amenities, and insecurity amongst others comprise the push factor propelling their quest to migrate. Little wonder migration is perceived as *Japa* syndrome in Nigeria.

The Africa center for strategic studies (2023); that posited the gains of migration equally pointed out that African migration had been on a steady upward trajectory for the past two decades. According to their declaration, “The record level of over 40million African migrants represents a 30percent increase from 2010. Given continuing strong push factor, that trend can be expected to continue in 2023” (p.1). It registered that these African migrants face acute risks including; murder, torture, rape, persecution, and enslavement of migrants by traffickers, militias and even some state authorities in the so called “countries of their dream”. According to further records, it disclosed that “An estimated 15 percent of African migrants, mostly those travelling without official documentation, face high levels of vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking, either along their route or in their destination country” (p.2). Thus, Africa in their record has documented more than 9,000 migration related deaths since 2014. More than 25,000 have also disappeared crossing the waters between Africa and Europe.

Furthermore, pertaining to the alarming rate at which Nigeria's young professionals and skilled workers exit from the country; Oluwasanjo (2023), recorded that the international college of surgeons, Nigerian section, raised the alarm over the massive exodus of Nigerian doctors to the United Kingdom for better life options. He pointed out that they estimated the number of Nigerian doctors who left the country for the United Kingdom in the last six years is around 6,221, adding that Nigeria now has a ratio of one doctor to over, 4,000 patients, contrary to the World Health Organisation standard of one doctor to 600 patients. This is quite unfortunate.

In another report, a survey conducted by CLEEN foundation and Afro-Barometer (cited by Olaoluwa, 2019), released in 2018, shows that one in every three young and educated Nigerian has considered leaving the country for variety of reasons. The survey found out that 35 percent of the potential emigrants want to go abroad to find work and 24 percent say they are trying to escape economic hardship. Already 12 percent say they are taking concrete steps to leave the country while 35 percent say they plan to leave within the next year or two and 52 percent declared that they had considered emigrating but have not made specific plans yet. It was discovered in the survey that about 8 in 10 potential Nigerian emigrants are aged 35years or younger, including 45 percent who are 25 years or younger and about 35 percent have post-secondary school qualification. Olaoluwa recorded that over one million Nigerians had travelled out of the country since 2015, and the number might be ten times more than the recorded number because most of them travelled illegally without documents; while the larger percentage of legal travelers who travelled abroad as visitors absconded after the expiration of their visas, thus they are

floating: There exists no record of them. Mostly affected by this mass exodus is the private sector where bankers, medical, doctors, IT engineers, doctoral degree holders, nurses, pharmacists, lawyers and other professionals are trooping out of the country. Public sector workers are not excluded; thus, report suggests that top civil servants, even directors often resign just to travel out of the country. Several pregnant women also travel out with the aim of delivering their babies to get them foreign citizenship. Olaoluwa affirmed that the Nigerian born students currently dominates the list of foreign students in the United Kingdom as registered in a 2018 British Council report.

The significant issue in this mass exodus is the profile of those actually relocating to the overseas. They are primarily skilled youth, including doctors, nurses, IT engineers, university lecturers and technicians. They also include young people that completed their studies abroad and opted to stay back because Nigeria has nothing to offer them with regards to jobs, opportunities, or even basic safety as Dakuku (2022), lamented. Some of them have already been educated in elite universities at home and abroad. Thus Dakuku, exclaimed that “this demographic is more debilitating for our national developmental prospects” (p.1). In the same vein, Dakuku exposed that another PEW research survey reveals that about 45 percent of Nigeria’s adult population plans to relocate to another country within five years. In 2021, a survey report as Dakuku declared, posited that seven in every ten Nigerians planned to relocate if the opportunity presents itself. Recent United Kingdom’s report cited by the same source unravels that the 13,609 Nigerian healthcare workers granted working visas within 2021 were second only to the 42,966 from India. The United Kingdom’s Immigration report 2021 (cited by Dakuku), posited that Nigeria is second only to Indians in the number of visas granted to the “skilled Worker Health and Care” category, with 14 percent (13,609) of the total. Recent official data from Canadian immigration sources (cited by Dakuku), indicated that 12,595 Nigerians relocated to Canada alone in 2019. There were 4,000 applications for permanent residency by Nigerians in Canada in 2015. By 2019, the number had skyrocketed to 15,595 making a total increase of over 214.9 percent.

The state of affairs posited in these backdrops posits beyond all reasonable doubts that the *Japa* syndrome is militating against the stability, productivity, sustainability and improvement of the Nigerian Labour Force. The clear-cut indication of the age range, calibre and cadre of the majority of the people involved in this mass exodus portrays that the future of the Nigerian Labour force will be bleak if nothing substantial is done. The following puzzling questions still stand; how can these be controlled? How can Nigeria avert the impending danger lurking in the shadows in respect of the future prospects of the country’s labour force? This work attempts to address this burning incertitude.

The Stewardship Theory

According to Syahalen (2021), “the stewardship theory is a part of corporate governance and is a normative alternative to agency theory” (p.1). This theory was propounded by Donaldson Davis as he explained. In simple terms, this theory exposes that managers of corporate or public affairs prove themselves faithful and sincere when left on their own with full managerial powers bestowed on them. This theory professes that managers’ satisfaction is propelled by the success of the firms they oversee. Every decision taken under this theory by managers of both public affairs and private is done for the greater good of the firm and not to quench whimsical and capricious desires.

Syahden (2021), explained that “stewards are motivated by intrinsic rewards, such as trust, reputational enhancement, reciprocity, discretion and autonomy, level of responsibility, job satisfaction, stability and tenure, and mission alignment” (p.1.). Thus the basic principles of this theory enhance mutual trust between the leader and the follower through relational and transparent leadership qualities. Menyah (2013), explained that people employ concerted efforts towards building of the society than being individualistic under the stewardship theory. The leader views himself as a steward hence understands that he should be accountable to the very office he oversees.

Hayden (2013), underscores that the stewardship theory yields various advantages such as, creating a sanitized and disciplined structure between managers and owners to create harmonization, emphasizing the duties of the CEO as “unambiguous and unchallenged, proffering unity of direction, purpose and strong commands and motivating employees. Fritcke (2014) pointed out that in the United States of American politics, typical of the stewardship theory is wherein a president employs a leadership style based on belief that they have the duty to do whatever is required in national interest, unless prohibited by constitution. The stewardship approach in governance is often linked with Theodore Roosevelt; he perceives the presidency as a Bully Pulpit from wherein good standard and qualitative morality is exposed in all sincerity.

The principles of the stewardship theory will definitely keep the leaders of Nigeria in check by themselves if sincerely employed by them. It would always quicken them to be cautious bearing in mind that they are “stewards” and not “Lords”. This will naturally affect a free flow in governance that will be transparent, accountable, incorrupt, just and equitable. This in place, young professionals in Nigeria will be focused in their primary place of employment since ordinarily the conditions of service are conducive and favourable without thinking of “*Japa*”.

The Philosophical Concepts of *Ujamaa* and *Ujima*

Delehanty (2020), exposed that *Ujamaa* is the concept or an ideology that anchored the development plan formulated by Julius Nyerere. It is a Swahili word that can be translated as “family-hood”. Delehanty recorded that in practical terms, *Ujamaa* would take the form of collective villages in which rural peasants would voluntarily come together to form a communal farm. These new villages would be organized along the lines of a socialism that Nyerere asserted to be founded in African history and tradition.

Anderson (2005) commented that *Ujamaa* in a broader sense may mean “cooperative economics” (p.1). From the perspective of local people harmonizing to provide for the basic needs of living. According to Nyerere (1968):

In socialist Tanzania, our agricultural organization would be predominantly that of co-operative living and working for the good of all. This means that most of our farming would be done by groups of people who live as a community and work as a community. A nation of such village communities would be a socialist nation. (p. 124).

Thus, Nyerere as portrayed by Cranford (1999), employed *Ujamaa* as the stance for a national development project. He converted the *Ujamaa* ideology into the institutionalization of social, economic and political equality through the creation of a central democracy; the abolition of segregation and discrimination based on accredited positions; and the nationalization of the economy’s key sectors. The concept of *Ujamaa* assisted Julius Nyerere in achieving so much that attracted foreign interest and wielded worldwide respect for this consistency in hinging on valuable ethical principles as the platform of practical policies. Hence, Tanzania under his leadership made great strides in essential areas of social development.

The ideological concept of *Ujima* on the other hand means collective work and responsibility in the Swahili Language as explicated by *Ujima* Black cultural center in Virginia, United States of America (2023). Saba (2019), stressed that the focal point of *Ujima* is “To build and maintain our community together and make our brother’s and sister’s problem our problems and to solve them together” (p.1). Thus, this implies the following; (i) commitment to active and informed togetherness on matters of common interest; (ii) African freedom is indivisible. Hence, as long as any African anywhere is oppressed, exploited, enslaved or wounded in any way in his or her humanity, all African people are also implicated, (iii) it is based on the assumption that what one does to benefit others is at the same time a benefit to oneself. (iv) Work, both personal and collective is truly at the center of history and culture. It is the fundamental activity by which Africans create themselves and confirm themselves in the process as both persons and a people.

In lieu of the afore stated stance, it is clear that if the average citizens of Nigeria applies the philosophical concept of *Ujamaa* and *Ujima* in their daily living, *Japa* will not even be an option. The average person in Nigeria will be acquainted with the conception that without collective work and struggle, progress will be impossible and liberation will be unimaginable. They will understand that Nigeria is their destiny, duty and their identity. Thus, collective identity in the long run will result in collective future: Nigeria becomes the responsibility of all, without anyone lording it on the other. This ideology promotes the strive for all to create a context in which all can be free to enjoy the basic social amenities and various opportunities in the country devoid of escapist and abstract humanistic tendencies like *Japa*. *Ujima* and *ujamaa* promotes that all things of value are to be shared as a common good. To establish a sanitized government devoid of corruption which enhances *Japa* and gets the Nigerian labour force brain drained; everyone in the country should learn not to be aggressive or competitive, but rather to be cooperative and wield responsibilities (both in private and public offices) as a fundamental moral obligation. All the ethnic groups in Nigeria should teach and profess that harmonious living is of paramount importance.

The Central Message of *Populorum Progressio*

This encyclical was written by Pope Paul VI; and was released on 26th March 1967. *Populorum Progressio* is written on the topic of the development of peoples and that the economy of the world should serve mankind in totality and not just selected few. In his introductory statement in the Encyclical Pope Paul VI (1967), declared:

The progressive development of peoples is an object of deep interest and concern to the church. This is particularly true in the case of those peoples who are trying to escape the ravages of hunger, poverty, endemic disease and ignorance of those who are seeking a larger share in the benefits of civilization and a more active improvement of their human qualities; of those who are consciously striving for fuller growth. (p. 1).

Thus, the focal point is on building a world where every man, no matter the race, religion or nationality, can live a fully human life; freed from servitude imposed on him by other humans or by natural or unseen forces over which such a victim has no adequate control; to build a world where freedom is practical and feasible devoid of any known antagonism. It actually hinges on human development and freedom to manifest God's endowment upon him.

Akinwale (2007), elucidated that Paul VI *Populorum Progressio* redefined the trajectory of the discussion within the church and in global politics on the perpetuating and perplexing poverty afflicting human kind and the class segregation and inequality, and

human suffering to which many people were subjected, especially outside the Western World. *Populorum Progressio* postulates three important issues: (i) personal empowerment of poor people (ii) participatory leadership and joint planning (iii) discovering and challenging the root causes of poverty and oppression. It touches basic principles of catholic social teaching like the right to just wage; the right to security of employment; the right to fair and reasonably considerate working conditions; the right to join a union; and the universal destination and distribution of resources and goods.

Paul VI (1967), stressing on Humanism cited Blaise Pascal's Pensées viz:

True humanism points the way toward God, and acknowledges the task to which we are called, the task which offers us the real meaning of human life. Man is not the ultimate measure of man. Man becomes truly man only by passing beyond himself. In the words of Pascal: "man infinitely surpasses man. (p. 42).

Man is enjoined to empty himself of his ego and pride and learn to stoop and build others: He tagged this "full-bodied Humanism". Thus he enjoined that a new humanism is required: "... one which will enable our contemporaries to enjoy the higher values of love and friendship, of prayer and contemplation ... this is what will guarantee man's authentic development – his transition from less than human conditions to truly human ones" (p.20).

Populorum progression embodies all that is needed to salvage Africa and Nigeria in particular from the destructive elements of bad governance. The government of Nigeria ought to eschew from ethnicism and embrace the quickening injunctions of this encyclical. All men are equal and none is more equal than the other. The national treasures and emoluments should have equal opportunities: This will reduce Japa syndrome in Nigeria. Like the Chinese adage which states that "if you wish to plan for a year, sow seeds; if you wish to plan for a decade, plant trees; but if you want to plan for a life time, develop men": The past and present Nigerian Government had never embarked on the program of developing men. Most of them do not value Education at all. As Pope Paul VI projects, the present government of Nigeria should embark immediately in the long term and life time project of developing the youth.

Re-rum Novarum and its Precise Principles on Capital and Labour

This encyclical is an open epistle directed to all Catholic Patriarch, Primates, Archbishops, and every human government and society that addressed the condition of the working classes. It was written by Pope Leo XIII on 15th May 1891. The Latin meaning translated implies of revolutionary change or of rights and duties of capital and labour.

In the introductory part of this encyclical, Pope Leo XIII (1891), lamented that not engaging religious principles on the conditions of the working class had turned the hearts of employers and human governmental heads around, hardening them and making them insensitive to the plight of the Employees. Thus, he affirmed:

For the ancient workingmen's guilds were abolished in the last century, and no other protective organization took their place. Public institutions and the laws set aside the ancient religion. Hence, by degrees it has come to pass that working men have been surrendered, isolated and helpless, to the hardheartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition. This mischief has been increased by rapacious usury, which, although more than once condemned by the church, is nevertheless under a different guise, but with like injustice, still practiced by covetous and grasping men. To this must be added that the hiring of labour and the conduct of trade are concentrated in the hands of comparatively few, so that a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the laboring poor a yoke little better than that of slavery itself. (p. 3).

Pope Leo XIII condemned heavy taxation, tagging it injustice as it will not enhance appreciation of workers and just wage as Greaney (2022), noted. According to Stichel (2016), the Pope declared that the role of the state is to promote justice through the protection of rights, while the church must always speak out on social issues to teach correct social principles and ensure class harmony, thus calming class conflict. He equally emphasized that the free operation of market forces must be tempered by moral considerations. *Rerum Novarum* suggested the formations of trade union, payment of just wages and the introduction of collective bargaining, particularly as an alternative to state intervention amongst others as the remedies for unrestricted capitalism and subjugation of workers.

The harsh treatment meted on trade unions and civil service unions by the immediate past and present government in Nigeria under the APC political party can be tagged as inhuman. The last Academic staff union of universities (ASUU) strike that lasted for 8 months resulted in massive exodus of young lecturers out of Nigeria because the government refused to pay the ASUU members. The negotiations which ended in a court case was characterized by witch-hunting, lies, prejudice, truncating of justice, indiscipline, vendetta and corruption on the part of the federal government. The contents of *Rerum Novarum* if employed to the Nigerian case will restore sanity and discipline in the Nigerian Civil and public offices. This will definitely help in containing the mad rush and resort to foreign shores in search of better opportunities.

The Challenges of Japa Syndrome on the Nigeria's Labour Force

The findings from this work portrays that Japa syndrome affects the labour force of Nigeria via the following modes:

1. *Discouragement of the younger generation in striving to be educated:* The mass exodus of young professionals and skilled workers from Nigeria to foreign shores as a result of unemployment and bad condition of services has made the upcoming generation to perceive education as a futile venture in Nigeria. The cost of getting quality education in Nigeria is actually outrageous. The reality that getting unemployed after so many years of spending so much money makes the younger generation forfeit education while resorting to illegal means of wealth acquisition and survival.
2. *Zero motivation:* Some educated persons like graduates with BA, MA, MSc and even some Doctorate degree holders are no longer interested in seeking for state and federal government employment since the salary is nothing to write home about. Some resort to other businesses; even getting into public transport services. Thus, most government parastatals lack qualified workers; yet Nigeria produces so many graduates every year. Ukazu (2021), for instance noted that each academic year, universities and polytechnics admit close to 2million students and produce about 600,000 graduates. She noted that on 10th November 2020, the National Youth Service Corps mobilised 66,000 Nigerian graduates for its mandatory one-year service to the country as registered by the vanguard media. This practice has been ongoing since 22nd May 1973 as an avenue for the reconciliation, reconstruction and rebuilding of the nation after the civil war. Wikina and Asiegbu (2022), recorded on their part that Nigeria produces 500,000 graduates annually; whereas Aririah (2022), reported that as at 2019, there are 134 recognised polytechnics and 174 universities including federal, state and privately owned in Nigeria. They all admit about 2 million students and release about 600,000 graduates each year.
3. *Over dependence on Imported Products:* Whereas the skilled workers and professional are travelling in great numbers out of the country, Nigeria lacks enough qualified personnels in most industries and factories of production. The resultant effect is opting for finished products imported from other countries: The state of affairs created by bad governance cannot enhance creative intelligence.
4. *Japa Syndrome Leaves Nigeria "brain drained":* Young (2023), posited brain drain as a "slag term indicating substantial emigration or migration of individuals... It, causes countries, industries, and organisations to lose a core

portion of valuable individuals” (p.1). Docquier and Rapoport (2006), defined brain drain as “the international transfer of human resources and mainly applies to the migration of relatively educated individuals from developing to developed countries”. (p.2.). This work still upholds that brain drain is detrimental to the Nigeria's Labour force because it leaves the less qualified behind to wield responsibilities and head offices that they are not qualified to man.

5. *Perceiving of Nigeria as inferior without future prospects and remedy:* The young professionals and skilled workers in Nigeria believe that Nigeria has already gone down then drain and there is no more remedy for the country. They perceive that there are no future prospects that Nigeria can offer. The 2023 election that was obviously rigged which produced a president that the masses refused to give their mandate and was forced on them is another straw that broke the Camel's back in this perception. Nigeria is now perceived by the young generation as being inferior to other countries; and equally has no tangible options to offer. Most youngsters had vowed never to vote nor participate in any form again in Nigeria elections.
6. *Perception of Nigeria as a dead zone:* Youngsters and young professionals/skilled workers in Nigeria believe that Nigeria is a dead zone. Thus, any seed planted in Nigeria bears no fruit. A good number of mechanics and panel beaters; cum other skilled workers are travelling outside the country believing that staying in Nigeria will render you a perpetual beggar. O. Ikechukwu and E. Okonkwo (personal communication, January 15th, 2023), declared that up to 30 of their friends that were mechanics in Awka town travelled in December 2022 to Ghana.
7. *Making Nigeria a dumping ground for useless foreign imported products and merchandise:* Since Nigeria depends so much on imported products owing to the government discouragement of creative intelligence. Most of the second-hand products, merchandise and other commodities imported into Nigeria are not even in good shape. Thus, Nigeria becomes a dumping ground for such useless imported goods.
8. *Emergence of illiterates and corrupt persons as political leaders in Nigeria:* The state of affairs created by *Japa* syndrome in the Nigeria labour force encourages rigging of elections. Elections are rigged courtesy of gluttony, religious bigotry and ethnicism in Nigeria. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) officers are ready to falsify figures because they are seeking for better life options. Qualified persons supposed to be working in INEC are not employed. What will be evidenced when less qualified and unqualified persons are working

in INEC? The resultant effect will be striving to produce a leader without the people's mandate to maintain corruption statusquo in the various Nigerian governmental parastatals; in order not to lose their jobs should a responsible person emerge as the president and decides to sanitize the system.

9. *Low Standard of Education in Nigeria:* Most teachers and lecturers travel out of the country in search of better life prospects. The gap they leave in the various education sectors of the country are seldom filled. This affects the education system of Nigeria adversely and the end point is low standard of education. When Geography teachers are employed in History department and Chinese department in a peculiar institution, what then will be the fate of the students? Most students resort to bribing lecturers knowing that they are under paid and being owed several months of salary arrears; in order to scale through exams. Some lecturers have no option than to receive such bribes after all, the election in Nigeria are always rigged thus bribery and corruption is already endorsed from the presidency and those at the helm of affairs in Nigeria.
10. *Encourages Swindling and Fraudulent Activities:* Japa syndrome in Nigeria effects this in the sense that the youngsters perceiving that after several years of education in Nigeria one is juxtaposed with either unemployment or underpayment in one's place of work; seeing young professionals and skilled workers travelling out in large numbers out of the country creates panic. They resort to seeking for ways to get rich quick which facilitates yahoo, yahoo, yahoo plus and various forms of internet fraudulent activities: After all, the end justifies the means as they maintain. Young people from various villages in Eastern region for instance, travel to the cities to learn yahoo yahoo (internet fraudulent activities) as apprentices under top internet fraudsters that have been in the game for long. Wikina and Asiegbu (2022) in lieu of this observed that Nigerians are educated but largely unemployed or underemployed. Thus, the combined number of employed persons who are extremely or moderately poor in Nigeria is 67 percent in 2022. This discovery made them to exclaim that "Nigerians are formally educated but informally employed". (p.1).
11. *Raising Lazy Youngsters:* Young people are no longer ready to neither be educated nor learn skilled work for a living. They are only interested in making money quick as those that have strived and labored through legal means are neither influential nor wealthy in the society. Laziness is now endorsed since one can sit in the comfort zone of one's bedroom and be swindling someone in America of thousands of Dollars. Lazy youngsters affect the work force of a nation adversely.

12. *Encouraging the Notion that the End Justifies the Means:* Since there is no plan in place by the government to improve the working conditions of the labour force; since the upcoming generation perceives that those serving the country are wallowing in pains and penury; and since one can make fast money via swindling: The thought that the end justifies the means gets established and enthroned
13. *It makes Nigeria a laughing stock in the face of other Nations:* Bad governance which facilitates the factors that provokes *Japa* syndrome in Nigeria brings shame to the country. A country that is brain drained and the remaining ones are equally looking forward to travel at any lightest opportunity will be recording low output or productivity. *Japa* syndrome impoverishes the countries of origin like Nigeria and enriches the host countries. This situation attracts mockery from other foreign countries. How many foreigners are resident in Nigeria as students, or are employed in the various Nigerian governmental parastatals? Nigeria does not even possess the capacity to accommodate immigrants.

Religious solutions to the challenges of *Japa* syndrome on the Nigeria's Labour Force

It is obvious that the adverse effects of *Japa* syndrome on the Nigeria's labour force are actually affecting the entire country negatively. Thus, what affects the country's labour force provokes a corollary negative effect on the entire nation. The effect of *Japa* syndrome on the Nigeria's labour force does not end with the labour force alone but transcends to the socio-economics, socio-political and the socio-religious segments of Nigeria. The labour force is the power house of every Nation, hence once the labour force of the nation is struck negatively, the nation collapses all round. The following religious solutions are proffered to contain and address the negative effects of *Japa* syndrome to the Nigeria's labour force, viz:

- Pope Paul VI in his *Populorum Progressio* emphasized amongst other good virtues on human development: The Nigerian government should embark on development of her citizens. One hardly forgets, nor abandons a government that invested in their life. The government of Nigeria should engage in the qualitative capacity building of her citizens.
- Conducive working conditions should be created and promoted by the government of Nigeria. Pope Leo XIII amongst other points highlighted in his *Rerum Novarum* that workers are not only entitled to just wages but should be afforded the opportunity to bargain on their conditions of service. The Nigerian government should not be lording it over civil and public servants. They should always be appreciated, encouraged and promoted with equitable increment in the

wage when necessary. No worker should be denied of their rights, benefits or emoluments.

- The philosophical concepts of *Ujamaa* and *Ujima* hinges on being human. The government of Nigeria must treat their subjects as one and equally. Every wall of caste system, nepotism, ascribed status, segregation and ethnicism should be confiscated. Every citizen should have equal access to the wealth of the Nation and the basic welfare services cum social amenities that the government provides. Those in the helm of the affairs in Nigeria must learn to treat their subjects with love, respect and as “human beings” and not “human doings”
- The government of Nigeria should employ the theory of stewardship in their governance. They must perceive themselves as stewards of whom major duty amongst others is to be accountable, just, equitable, responsible, sincere and transparent. Decisions taken by the government must be for the good of the nation and not for narcissistic purposes and vain glorification.
- The citizens of Nigeria must discipline themselves and learn to be patriotic. Every person must be sincere and just in carrying out their duties in their primary place of responsibility. They must learn to be patient with their government. They must believe in Nigeria as a work in progress with bright future prospects. They must dismiss from their mindset that the destiny of Nigeria is bleak.
- The Christian churches should engage in building and empowerment of their members and not just construction of mighty edifices that serves no economic purposes. Gbolahan Ayodele (cited by Salau, 2023), stressed too that the Christian churches in Nigeria should engage in raising funds to support the government (assuming the government should be sincere and accountable) as well as bringing national issues to the consciousness of the people. This work equally suggests that the same should be employed by various religious groups in Nigeria.
- Asaju (cited by Salau, 2023), in a lecture titled “The imperative of integrity: Transparency and Trust in Leadership”, declared that it was high time Nigerians returned to discipline. In trying to proffer pragmatic solutions to Nigeria’s multiple challenges, he urged key Christian church leaders in Nigeria to convene a round table meeting with the Nation’s leaders in bringing urgent solutions to Nigeria’s problem, before things finally gets out of hand.
- Moral instructions must be brought back and differentiated from the religious studies in the primary and post primary schools because they are not the same as Abayomi Ogunfidodo, a cleric with the Redeemed Christian Church of God (cited by Akutu, 2017), insisted.

- The average person in Nigerian must learn to be ones brothers keepers, as well as getting interested in what they “do and don’t”; since it would rub off on all eventually and instill the curtailing of excesses; as Ogunfidodo (cited by Akutu, 2017), suggested.
- Sudden riches or wealth must not be celebrated because it denigrates hard work according to Ogunfidodo (cited by Akutu, 2017).
- The bible upholds punishments for crimes (Ezra 7:26, Deuteronomy 25:2-3 and Ecclesiastes 8:11): Hence wherever a case of economic crime has been proved, punishments to show that crimes does not pay must be meted out as Ogunfidodo (cited by Akutu, 2017), added.
- Core traditional values of respect for elders, love for the kin and human kind, hard work, sincerity, sanctity of life, the idea of “a good name is better than wealth”, and lending of helping hands amongst people; which are promoted by the African Traditional Religion must be reintroduced into the society. Taboos and abominations directed at evil acts and behaviours must be re-institutioned into the society as this will aid in curtailing the crazy money rituals of “*Isa It*”, and *Igbu Ozu*”. Amongst the youth in Nigeria in recent times.
- Nigerians should learn to practice religion with faith and not the other way round as Aliyu (2010), exclaimed. Nigerians must learn to believe in God and act and behave responsibly towards one another. The liberty to behave irresponsibly towards one another must be abolished from the average Nigerian citizen since they proclaim to be highly religions.

Conclusion

The factors that breed *Japa* syndrome in Nigeria is a product of Nigerian citizens. It is neither a curse nor a foreign product. Every Nigerian citizen must engage in contributing their best to making Nigeria the actual giant of Africa as evidenced in theory.

Those at the helm of affairs must learn to stop wasting the countries resources on frivolities and empty pursuits. When a political leader moves in convoy of 150 cars without considering the amount of money spent in fueling, maintaining and acquiring those cars that is share irresponsibility and rascality. Such should not be evidenced in the face of mass unemployment, hunger, lack of basic social amenities, poverty and the fact that Nigeria is still undeveloped.

Nigerians should rise up against rigging of elections and stand for justice when such occurs. This work insists that the Nigerian judiciary should declare the truth with regards to the actual winner of the 2023 presidential elections and restore the president that wields

the peoples mandate in power. Good government will quell all the factors that propels *Japa* syndrome and its consequent challenges to the Nigeria's labour force.

Recommendations

This work proffers the following recommendations in lieu with the religious solutions to the challenges of *Japa* syndrome to the Nigeria's labour force viz:

Aliyu (2010) once pointed out that the Nigerian mindset is “essentially but deviously secular” (p.2.). God is often restricted to the centers for worship. Muslims and Christians alike in Nigeria attend to God only under the conception or idea that irrespective of what one does, he is always forgiving. God is often expelled from the minds of average Nigerians when they come to commit one crime or the other. This work enjoins the Muslims, Christians, and the traditional religious adherents to start practicing what they preach. Their religiosity should not be professed only but practiced. Their religion must be powered with morality as Afunugo, Onah and Mokwenye (2019), declared.

National fasting and prayer should be declared by the Government of Nigeria for a period agreed on in conjunction with the various religious heads in Nigeria. The aim will be to seek the face of God to help the nation turn away from corruption and other vices as Badejo (2018), explained. He insisted that the need for this spiritual exercise which he tagged a thereapy is borne out of the fact that “there is overtly religiosity in Nigeria but sadly the religious character is largely lacking” (p.3). People needs to be sensitized and made to understand that being religious is not the end. As he declared, “The need to cultivate a character that will match the tenets of our religious beliefs is an imperative ingredient for our salvation” (p.3).

This work finally appeals to the religious leaders in Nigeria to lead by examples. They should not be preachers of harkens to my message but do not mind the way I leave after all we are all miserable offenders and there is no health in us. Like St. Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians 11:1-2 as attested in the bible, religious leaders especially Christian religious leaders must learn to practice and express the virtues they preach and uphold. This will help to be convincing the younger generation the more on uprightness and the government on sincerity. The evil maxim that the “church is a scam” today is gaining ascendancy because Christian religious leaders hardly practice what they preach and profess. Once the religious leaders in Nigeria starts leading by examples, the pulpit will become a place to bully evil, right wrongs, challenge the government and the youth, as well as disseminate quality messages that will influence the citizens of Nigeria for the best.

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