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# Religion and Human Migration: A Socio-Cultural Investigation

Francis Felix Edet

Department of Religious and Cultural Studies, University of Calabar, Nigeria

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## Introduction

Human Migration is specifically the movement by people from one place to another, with the intention of settling permanently or temporarily in a new location. Migration statistics, according to the International Organization for Migration's World Migration Report 2010, were estimated at 220 million in 2013, for the number of international migrants. It is obvious that if this number continues to grow at the same pace as during the last 20 years, it could reach 405 million by 2050. Countries with higher prevailing wage levels, such as France, the USA, Germany, Italy, Canada and the U.K are net recipients of immigrants from lower-wage member countries.

Migration has a number of theories, as well as the reasons why people migrate. There are also a number of advantages and disadvantages of migration. Significantly, there is a tremendous relationship between religion and human migration. Migration is a situation that cannot be avoided in the world. Sometimes, people move from very cold regions to warmer areas during winter. They also go back when weather conditions improve in their home countries or environment. Also, people move from rural areas to urban areas to enjoy social amenities like pipe borne water, electricity and medical services, which may not be readily available in rural areas. People can also move because of the need for good formal education. Parents now understand the importance of formal education and as a result send their children to places where they can enjoy good education. These are the issues which form the basis of investigation of this paper.

One major component of population and census-taking in any environment is migration. Several factors warrant people to migrate or move from one place to the other. This paper shall discuss these factors, as well as the theories of migration. Significantly, the paper will also establish the relationship between human migration and religion.

Human migration is invariably the movement by people from one place to another, with the intention of settling in the new location. The movement is typically and predominantly over long distances and could be from one country to another. Migration may relate to individuals, family units or larger groups.

Nomadic movements are usually not regarded as migration, as there may be no intention to settle in the new place permanently and because the movement is generally seasonal. Similarly, the temporary movement of people for the purpose of travelling, tourism, pilgrimage and so on, in the absence of an intention to settle in the new location is not also considered as migration.

Migration can be voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary migration is within one's region, country or beyond. Here, a person moves around willingly and without duress. Involuntary migration may include political asylum seekers, slave trade and even human trafficking. In such cases, people are moved from one place to another against their will. People who move from their countries to other countries to settle for some time or permanently are called immigrants, while people who move out of their countries to other countries are known as emigrants. Apparently, the place where people move from is the source region, while where they move to is the receiving region (Jacqueline 10).

### Migration Theories and Factors that Instigate Migration

There are several factors that motivate or warrant people to migrate from one community or country to another. These factors are also regarded as push and pull factors. The "push" factors may include: shortage of jobs, few opportunities for realisation of life goals, primitive conditions, famine or drought, fear of political persecution, slavery or forced labour, poor medical facilities, loss of fortune, natural disasters, threats of extermination of self and families, lack of political freedom or religious persecution, poor housing, pollution, grave domestic problems, discrimination, protracted civil strife and wars. "Pull" factors, on the other hand, are the positive and attractive conditions that motivate migration. So, while the push factors are the unattractive conditions scaring people away from where they previously were, pull factors are the favourable conditions that motivate the movement. The pull factors may include: job opportunities, better working and living conditions, political and religious freedom, entertainment, educational opportunities, good medical facilities, attractive climate, security and even better chances of getting married (Patrick 6).

There are a number of theories that can be used in explaining the flow of people from one country to another. The following are some of them:

*Noe-classical economic theory* - This theory of migration states that the main reason for labour migration is wage difference between geographical locations. If for instance, people are lowly paid in Africa and highly paid outside for similar jobs, this could explain the reason for mobility of labour from such lowly-paid areas to the highly paid ones. Labour tends to flow from low-wage areas to high-wage areas.

*Dual labour market theory*: This theory states that migration is mainly caused by pull factors in more developed countries. It assumes that migration from less developed countries into countries with more developed economies as a result of a pull created by a need for labour in the developed countries in their markets.

*The world system theory* - This theory looks at migration from a global perspective. It explains that interactions between different societies can be an important factor in social change within societies. Trade with one country, which causes economic decline in another, may create incentive to migrate to a country with a more vibrant economy (Bauger 18).

### Migration, Immigration and Emigration: A Conceptual Clarification

The terms migration and immigration are sometimes confused by native English speakers and language learners alike; as are the words immigration and emigration. All these are related to the movement of peoples between countries, but they are all subtly different.

Migration is a noun that is used to describe the movement of people between countries. It is an umbrella term under which both immigration and emigration fall. Immigration refers to people coming into a country, while emigration refers to people leaving one country for another country (Rainer 12).

Migration often entails a seasonal movement of location but can also be a permanent change of location. Understanding the definitions and uses of the three terms above can help in multiple situations, including when studying human geography, when filling out visa application forms and when learning about international relations and politics.

Migration occurs because individuals search for food, sex, entertainment and security outside their usual habitation. The improved relationship among human beings and improved technology, further conditioned by the push and pull factors, all interact to cause or bring about migration and higher concentration of individuals into towns and cities other than their native homes.

### Forms of Migration

Migration can take different forms, some of these are:

*Rural - urban migration* - This is the commonest kind of migration in our society today. It is a situation where people move from rural areas or villages to urban areas or towns and cities.

*Rural - rural migration* - This is when people move from one rural area to another rural area.

*Urban-rural migration* - This is when people move from town or city to rural areas and for various reasons.

*Urban-urban migration* - This is when people move from one town or city to another town or city.

*International migration* - This is when people move from one place to another during a particular season. A good example of this is when the Fulani move their cattle during dry season in the north to the southern areas where they have pastures, or even across borders of country to country (Diamond 12).

### Advantages and Disadvantages of Migration

Migration has a number of advantages which include:

Movement for agricultural purposes provides employment opportunities for those who need it. It makes food available because labour is readily available.

When those who migrated for employment purposes begin to end a living, they send money back to where they came from thereby increasing available capital for development.

Migration also promotes cultural integration. This is because many people who move oftentimes meet their marriage partners in their new homes.

The disadvantages on the other hand may include:

When people move to the receiving area, very often, the cost of living goes up. Also, when people move to the receiving area, population from the source area reduces.

Increases in population in the receiving area bring a lot of pressure on services like housing, medicare, electricity and even education. Large influx of migrants can also enhance the spread of diseases like HIV/Aids and so on. Cases of robbery and other forms of violence may also increase. International migration can also lead to brain drain; that is a situation where one country loses her best brains to another (Williams 3).

## Religion and Human Migration

Migration also affects religion. This is a veritable fact because when people migrate to a new vicinity or location, they invariably alter routines of daily life; and new experiences inevitably act upon even the most tenaciously held religious traditions. Conversely, religion often inspires migration. A great deal of people move from one place to another, just to satisfy their religious convictions. Organised religious groups may decide to migrate to an area where their pursuit of holiness will not be challenged by any authority.

Obviously among Christians and Muslims, though this is not always prominent in other religions, migration has played a dominant role in the propagation and defending of the faith. Personal and private pursuit of holiness has often inspired innumerable pilgrims to visit places where their religion originated or had its earliest efflorescence. Christians in this direction visit Jerusalem, while Muslims visit Mecca. The thousands of pilgrims who travel to Mecca each year all over the Muslim world is a clear-cut example of religion and human migration. Religiously, inspired migrations offer the most dramatic manifestations of how human mobility and religiosity interact. The goal of the migrants is to find a place where God can be perfectly worshipped. It could also be the desire to keep one's spirit in tandem with the will of the object of veneration.

For the Muslims, the annual ritual of high mobility to Mecca and Medina is a compulsory religious obligation that must be accomplished by every believing Muslim, at least once in a lifetime. Indeed, pilgrimage to Mecca, or Hajj, as it is called, is the fifth pillar of the Islamic faith. Hajj in literary Arabic means "the visit" or "going out", which means the visit or pilgrimage to Mecca. This annual practice stems historically from the visit of the Prophet Mohammed to Mecca from his new home in Medina, after having been forced out from Mecca on voluntary exile. It must be stated, however, that this fifth pillar of Islam, is the only one with a condition: "to those who can afford the means".

For the Christians, however, although it is not expressly a biblically enjoined obligation, annual visits to Jerusalem, Rome, and other holy sites have become commonplace among adherents of the Christian faith.

In their work titled "la crise d'identité des immigrés africains en Europe dans *Labyrinthe des sentiments* de Tahar Ben Jelloun "(The crises of identity among African migrants in Europe in Tahar Ben Jelloun's *Labyrinths of sentiments*), Ohanyere Lilyan Onyinye and Bassey Oben (147 – 160) raised the problem of the grave crises of identity suffered by African migrants in Europe. According to the work, Africans who flee the stark economic realities of their home countries to Europe, hardly have what it takes to secure genuine legal instruments authorising their travels. They often end up on the wrong side of the law and become fugitives, even as refugees in their countries of reception.

## Conclusion

In the world at large, as population increases along with migratory flows, religious intermingling and interactions will intensify. The future history of human kind will revolve around the clash of religion and culture that is taking place around us. In this sense, there will always be a relationship between migration and religion. People may migrate as individuals, as family units or as large groups. A person who moves from his home because of natural disaster or civil disturbance, may be described as a refugee, or especially within the same country, a displaced person. A person seeking refuge from political, religious or other forms of persecution from his home country, is usually described as an asylum seeker. People who

leave their own countries to live in other countries are called immigrants. The process itself by which people come to live in a country is called immigration.

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