

## Assessment of youth migration on political and socioeconomic growth in Nigeria

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### Abstract

The study assessment of youth migration on political and socioeconomic growth in Nigeria. The study adopted a quantitative survey research approach. The population consisted of literate Nigerian youths aged between 22 and 45 years. Due to the impracticality of surveying the entire population and the absence of precise figures for the target group in Nigeria, Cochran's formula for an infinite population was employed to determine the appropriate sample size, resulting in 384 and stratified sampling technique was used to select the respondents for this study. The study employed questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The data collected for the study was analyzed using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS 3.0 software. The study found that youth migration has negative and statistically significant effect on both political and socioeconomic growth in Nigeria at 5% level of significance. Based on the findings, the study concludes that youth migration negatively and significantly influences political and socioeconomic growth in Nigeria. The study thus recommended that Nigeria government should prioritize the creation of sustainable employment opportunities and entrepreneurial support systems tailored for young people. Policies should focus on skills development, access to affordable financing for youth-led businesses, and improving infrastructure to attract private sector investment in sectors with high youth employment potential. Additionally, strengthening vocational education and linking it with market demands will equip young Nigerians with relevant skills that can reduce the push factors driving migration. By making the domestic economy more inclusive and supportive of youth aspirations, Nigeria can retain its youthful workforce, thereby bolstering socioeconomic growth.

**Keywords:** Growth; Migration; Political; Socioeconomic; Youth

### 1. Introduction

Political and socioeconomic growth remains a critical concern globally, as nations strive for stable governance, economic prosperity, and social inclusion. Worldwide, advancements in governance structures, economic diversification, and inclusive development policies have been central to driving sustainable growth (World Bank, 2024). Countries that foster political stability and socioeconomic inclusivity often experience faster economic growth and better living standards for their citizens. For example, according to the World Bank (2024), politically stable and inclusive economies like Mauritius and Botswana in Africa maintain average annual GDP growth rates of over 4.0%, coupled with low levels of inequality and poverty reduction initiatives. Conversely, in Africa, while there have been strides in democratic governance and regional integration with over 70% of countries holding regular elections (AfDB, 2024) significant challenges persist. The African Development Bank (2024) reports that youth unemployment remains critically high at around 37%, with sub-Saharan Africa recording the highest rates globally. Additionally, political instability affects at least 21 African nations, including South Sudan, Mali, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as highlighted in the Fragile States Index (2024). Income inequality also remains stark, with the World Inequality Report (2024) indicating that the richest 10% of Africans capture over 50% of total income, further constraining inclusive and sustainable development across the continent (Adepoju et al., 2024; Olayemi & Nwankwo, 2023). Nigeria, as Africa's most populous nation and largest economy, reflects this dual reality. While the country has made strides in democratic

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consolidation and infrastructural development, it continues to face significant challenges such as high youth unemployment, poverty, insecurity, and policy inconsistencies that undermine political cohesion and economic advancement (Adebayo & Olamide, 2024; Eze & Okoye, 2023).

Amid these dynamics, youth migration has emerged as a significant factor influencing Nigeria's political and socioeconomic landscape. Driven by limited economic opportunities, political disenchantment, and social instability, many young Nigerians seek better livelihoods abroad or in urban centers, resulting in a phenomenon commonly referred to as the "youth exodus" (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2024). This migration trend has multifaceted implications: while it contributes to remittances and skill acquisition abroad, it simultaneously leads to brain drain, labor shortages in key sectors, and potential political disengagement among the youth population (Okafor et al., 2024). Consequently, understanding the impact of youth migration on Nigeria's political processes and socioeconomic development is essential for crafting responsive policies that address its root causes and harness its potential benefits.

Youth migration has become an increasingly critical issue in Nigeria, where rising unemployment, insecurity, and poor governance have pushed many young people to migrate either internally or internationally in search of better opportunities. According to the International Organization for Migration (2024), over 60% of Nigerian migrants are between the ages of 18 and 35, reflecting a troubling trend of youth exodus that drains the nation's human capital. Existing studies have extensively discussed the economic consequences of migration, focusing largely on remittances and labor market dynamics (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2024; Okafor et al., 2024). However, there is a notable gap in literature concerning how youth migration shapes political participation, governance outcomes, and the broader socioeconomic development of Nigeria. Specifically, while scholars like Adepoju et al. (2024) have linked migration to brain drain and economic stagnation, few have explored the dual impact of migration on both political engagement and economic growth from an integrated perspective.

Furthermore, most existing studies have relied heavily on secondary data and macroeconomic indicators, with limited use of primary data that captures the lived experiences and perceptions of migrating youth (Musa & Lawal, 2024). This methodological gap limits the depth of understanding regarding the motivations behind youth migration and its nuanced impacts on political processes such as voter apathy, civic disengagement, and social accountability. Similarly, the socioeconomic consequences are often generalized without disaggregating the specific effects on sectors such as education, health, and entrepreneurship development. Without addressing these gaps, policymakers may continue to implement fragmented strategies that fail to curb youth migration or leverage its potential benefits for national growth. Therefore, this study seeks to fill these critical gaps by providing an empirical assessment of youth migration's impact on both political dynamics and socioeconomic growth in Nigeria.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the impact of youth migration on political and socioeconomic growth in Nigeria. This study hypothesizes as follows:

- **H<sub>01</sub>:** Youth migration has no significant impact on political growth in Nigeria.
- **H<sub>02</sub>:** Youth migration has no significant impact on socioeconomic growth in Nigeria.

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## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Political Growth

Political growth can be defined as the progressive improvement and strengthening of political structures, institutions, and governance quality within a state (Weiner, 2019). According to Mtiraoui (2024), political growth encompasses the establishment and enhancement of governance quality indicators such as voice and accountability, government effectiveness, and regulatory quality, which are critical in ensuring political stability and institutional performance. Kraay, and Mastruzzi (2003) have argued that good governance plays a pivotal role in political growth as it ensures transparency, rule of law, and effective public service delivery, which together build citizens' trust and the legitimacy of the political framework (Mtiraoui, 2024). Therefore, political growth can be seen as a systematic enhancement of governance mechanisms that ensure political stability, promote public accountability, and encourage inclusive political participation essential for socio-economic progress.

Political growth involves creating an enabling environment where political stability reduces the risk of conflicts and promotes social cohesion, which in turn supports economic prosperity and mitigates forced migration (Weiner, 2019). Cherif and Hasanov (2019) link political growth to efforts in addressing youth unemployment and inclusive policy-making, stressing that equitable participation in political processes is crucial for sustainable national development.

## 2.2. Socioeconomic Growth

Socioeconomic growth refers to the simultaneous advancement of a nation's economic performance and the improvement of social conditions that enhance the quality of life for its citizens. Nweke and Enyosiobi (2023) describe it as the process where a society maximizes its inherent potentials through human capacity development, effective resource management, and technological progress, aiming to increase per capita income and improve standards of living. Similarly, Omogbemi (2020) emphasizes that migration-driven labor mobility can positively contribute to socioeconomic growth by filling labor market gaps and enhancing technological adoption, especially in host economies such as those in the European Union, where migrants significantly augment the workforce and stimulate innovation.

Furthermore, according to Prince et al. (2018), socioeconomic growth should not only target GDP expansion but also inclusiveness and equitable participation, addressing issues like youth employment, social cohesion, and structural reforms to ensure that the benefits of growth are broadly shared. According to Nweke and Enyosiobi (2023), socioeconomic growth signifies a transformative change that enables individuals and communities to realize their potential, facilitated by better education, healthcare, social services, and inclusive governance. Obani and Odalonu (2023) stress that socioeconomic growth must include policies addressing insecurity, unemployment, and poor governance in Nigeria to reduce mass emigration and harness local potential for development. In essence, socioeconomic growth means fostering an environment where economic policies are human-centered, migration is managed to maximize benefits, and social development is prioritized alongside economic targets to achieve a balanced and inclusive national progress.

## 2.3. Youth Migration

Youth migration refers to the movement of young people, typically between the ages of 18 and 45, across internal or international boundaries, primarily in search of better socio-economic opportunities, educational prospects, or due to political and environmental pressures. According to Hoxha (2022), youth migration encompasses both voluntary and involuntary movements influenced by multiple push and pull factors such as economic hardship, insecurity, cultural aspirations, and prospects for personal development. Iheanacho and Ughaerumba (2015) further define migration as the relocation of individuals across geographical and political boundaries with the intent of establishing a permanent or semi-permanent residence, emphasizing that for youth, this often correlates with the pursuit of education, employment, or escape from conflict situations.

The meaning of youth migration extends beyond the mere physical relocation of young people to encompass the broader socio-economic, cultural, and psychological dimensions associated with the migratory experience. Omogbemi (2020) posits, youth migration represents not only a response to domestic unemployment and poverty but also a significant contributor to the socio-economic growth of destination countries through labor participation, innovation, and remittances that sustain families and communities back home. UNICEF (2014) highlights that youth migration is both a structural and permanent phenomenon, driven by global disparities in labor demand and opportunities, which result in a substantial portion of global migration flows comprising young individuals seeking economic activity and personal advancement.

Hoxha (2022) expands this understanding by pointing out that many young migrants perceive migration as an opportunity rather than a risk, with intentions shaped by factors such as family influence, existing diaspora networks, and anticipated improvements in socio-economic status. Furthermore, Adhikari et al. (2021) observe that in Nigeria, youth migration is shaped by a growing youth population amidst domestic unemployment, coupled with increasing demand for mid-skilled labor in Europe, making migration a critical and inevitable pathway for many young Nigerians.

## 2.4. Empirical Review

### 2.4.1. Youth Migration and Political Growth

Helbling and Morgenstern (2023) examines how people's perceptions of their political, economic and social structural environment affect their migration aspirations and to what extent these perceptions are determined by the objective situation in a country. Accounting for individual perceptions is important because individuals may be affected by structural factors to different degrees, and their knowledge of the objective situation may vary. Perceptions may also be affected by individuals' norms and values as well as people's different expectations. This study was based on data from Round 7 of the Afrobarometer survey, fielded between 2016 and 2018 in 34 African countries. The study found that positive perceptions of the structural environment are related to lower migration aspirations and that this relationship is only partly dependent on the objective situation in a country.

Hoxha (2022) empirically examined the determinants of youth migration in Kosovo, focusing on how economic, social, and political factors influence young people's propensity to migrate. The study adopted a quantitative research design, conducting a survey among 500 students from the University of Prishtina and University of Peja. Data were collected using structured questionnaires that explored variables such as age, gender, migration intentions, family income, educational background of parents, and migration perceptions. The analysis was carried out using the Pearson Chi-square test to determine the relationship between migration propensity and these factors. The findings revealed that 59% of respondents expressed a willingness to migrate, predominantly to Germany, Switzerland, and North America, driven largely by economic motivations, cultural aspirations, and security concerns. Alarming, only 16% had participated in formal migration programs, but a significant 43.8% indicated they would return home if their migration-related issues were resolved. Despite its insightful conclusions, the study's limitations include its restriction to university students, which may not fully capture the migration dynamics of non-student youth populations in Kosovo, and its reliance on self-reported intentions rather than actual migration behavior.

Etling et al. (2018) examined the effect of several political indicators on young people's intention to move abroad. The quantitative analysis is based on a unique survey data set from four Arab Mediterranean countries (Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia), comprising information on about 8000 respondents aged between 15 and 29. Applying a multinomial logistic regression model, we show that political discontent significantly increases the intentions of young people to migrate. Among others, the perception of democracy and the ability to shape government policies are important determinants of migration intentions. Moreover, the found that the perception of corruption and the experience of violence in everyday life are particularly important in young people's decision-making process. The cultural and contextual differences between the four countries might affect how young people perceive political conditions, yet the study does not fully disaggregate the analysis to account for country-specific variations.

Prince et al. (2018) conducted a policy-oriented investigation into the links between economic growth, youth unemployment, and political and social instability in the post-Arab Spring countries of Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, and Tunisia. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study combined policy analysis with quantitative econometric techniques, including fixed-effects panel regression and panel-corrected standard error estimators, based on data spanning from 1990 to 2013. The research reviewed national policies, IMF Article IV reports, and secondary data sources such as the World Bank to assess the impact of growth-oriented policies on youth labor force participation. The study found that despite modest GDP growth, youth labor force participation remained stagnant or declined, pointing to structural weaknesses in labor markets and the inadequacy of market-led growth strategies. Promising developments were observed in Morocco's emerging social solidarity economy and Tunisia's constitutional reforms addressing youth employment, while IFI policy constraints and regional instability continued to limit policy effectiveness across all countries. However, the study is constrained by its dependence on secondary data, which may not fully capture real-time policy impacts or the nuances of informal labor markets.

Tuccio et al. (2016) explored the influence of international migration on the transfer of political and social norms in Morocco, particularly assessing whether returnees and households with current migrants display different political attitudes compared to non-migrants. The research employed a mixed-method design, utilizing a nationally representative survey of 1,200 households across Morocco, incorporating non-migrant families, households with current migrants, and those with returnees. Data collection involved the "Investigation on the Impact of International Migration on Development of Morocco" survey conducted between August and October 2013. Analysis was conducted using a multi-equation mixed system model, addressing endogeneity and selection biases into emigration and return migration. The findings indicated that households with returnees, especially from Western Europe, exhibited stronger demands for political and social change, influenced by exposure to more democratic environments abroad. Conversely, households with migrants in non-Western countries were less likely to demand such changes, highlighting the role of destination context. Despite its robust methodology, the study is limited by its reliance on household-level perceptions, which may not fully capture individual behavioral changes, and its focus on Morocco alone, which restricts generalizability to other settings.

#### *2.4.2. Youth Migration and Socioeconomic Growth*

Mтираoui (2024) explored the interaction between migration, unemployment, and economic growth within the context of political instability in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The study utilized a quantitative research design and applied a simultaneous equation model covering data from 1990 to 2020. The population included countries within the MENA region, but specific sample size details were not provided. Data were collected from secondary sources, such as international economic databases and previous empirical studies. Analytical techniques involved advanced econometric modeling, particularly focusing on the complex, reciprocal relationships among the variables. Findings revealed that political instability significantly mediates the relationship between migration and economic performance,

with migration alleviating labor market pressures in the short term but exacerbating brain drain and economic vulnerabilities in the long term. A limitation of the study is its broad regional scope, which may obscure country-specific nuances and policy differences within MENA

Nweke and Enyosiobi (2023) provided a philosophical exploration of migration's impact on Nigeria's development, analyzing socio-economic and psychological dimensions. The authors used a qualitative critical analysis approach, relying on secondary data, including philosophical texts, migration theories, and development literature. The study did not specify population or sample size, as it was conceptually driven. The method of analysis was philosophical reasoning and content analysis. Findings highlighted that mass migration from Nigeria, driven by unemployment, insecurity, and poor governance, reinforces negative stereotypes and results in severe brain drain, particularly affecting sectors like health and education. While offering deep theoretical insights, the study's limitation is its abstract nature and lack of empirical field data, making it less actionable for policy implementation.

Obani and Odalonu (2023) critically investigated the impact of rising migration on Nigeria's socio-economic development from 2015 to 2022, focusing on how brain drain affects national progress. Utilizing a descriptive research design, the authors relied on secondary data sources, including government reports, scholarly articles, and migration statistics. There was no specified population or sample size, as the study employed a documentary review method. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis. The study found that escalating migration, especially among skilled professionals like doctors, academics, and engineers, has led to significant loss of human capital, impeding Nigeria's socio-economic transformation. The authors argued that poverty, insecurity, and governance failures are key drivers of this exodus. The study's main limitation lies in its reliance on secondary data, which may not fully capture the lived experiences of migrants or real-time migration patterns.

Omogbemi (2020) examined the economic and social impacts of international youth migration and unemployment in Nigeria and selected European Union countries, aiming to explore how migration trends relate to unemployment and economic output. The study adopted a qualitative research design, relying primarily on a systematic literature review of existing scholarly works and reports rather than primary data collection. The research did not specify a target population or sample size since it synthesized secondary sources. Data were analyzed through qualitative content analysis. The findings revealed a positive correlation between unemployment and youth migration, highlighting that migration significantly contributes to the social and economic growth of host countries through labor participation, remittances, and cultural diversity, despite common misconceptions. However, a notable limitation of the study is its exclusive dependence on secondary data and lack of empirical field evidence, which may limit its applicability for policy intervention in the Nigerian context.

Adedokun and Karzanova (2019) analyzed the impact of internal and international migration on Nigeria's economy, focusing on trends affecting labor markets and remittances. The study employed a descriptive research design, using secondary data sources from official migration statistics, economic reports, and development literature. There was no direct population or sample size involved as the analysis was literature-based. Data analysis utilized qualitative descriptive analysis to interpret migration trends and economic outcomes. The study concluded that migration plays a dual role in Nigeria's economy: while it relieves local labor market pressures and boosts foreign earnings through remittances (which now surpass foreign direct investments), it simultaneously drains Nigeria's skilled labor force. A critical limitation is that the study largely depends on macro-level analysis, thus neglecting the microeconomic impacts of migration on individual households and communities.

#### *2.4.3. Theoretical Framework*

This study is anchored to Human capital theory and Push-Pull Migration Theory. Human Capital Theory was originally developed by Gary S. Becker in 1964, building upon earlier works by Theodore Schultz in the late 1950s. Becker (1964) posited that individuals and societies derive economic value from investments in human capital, such as education, skills acquisition, health, and mobility. The theory asserts that just as physical capital enhances productivity, human capital accumulation increases individuals' productive capacity, thereby fostering economic growth and development. Schultz (1961) emphasized education as a key driver of productivity improvement, while Mincer (1974) demonstrated the link between educational attainment and earning potential. Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (2018) provided empirical support showing positive returns to education globally. Similarly, Hanushek and Woessmann (2020) argued that cognitive skills, more than years of schooling alone, are critical to national growth. In the African context, Olayemi and Nwankwo (2023) highlighted that skill acquisition among youth enhances employability and mitigates migration pressures, while Ibrahim and Yusuf (2024) connected human capital deficits in Nigeria to the growing trend of youth migration and its socioeconomic implications.

Despite its widespread application, Human Capital Theory has faced several criticisms. Critics argue that the theory tends to overemphasize economic returns while underestimating social, cultural, and structural barriers that affect human capital development and utilization (Brown et al., 2022). For instance, even well-educated individuals in Nigeria may still face unemployment due to poor governance and a lack of institutional capacity, challenging the assumption that investment in human capital always leads to economic advancement (Eze & Okoye, 2023). Furthermore, the theory overlooks the political consequences of human capital flight, especially in the context of youth migration where brain drain diminishes civic engagement and weakens political participation. Nonetheless, Human Capital Theory remains highly relevant to the study on assessment of youth migration on political and socioeconomic growth in Nigeria, as it provides a foundational lens for understanding how the migration of young, educated Nigerians depletes the country's labor force, undermines political vibrancy, and slows socioeconomic development. By applying this theory, the study can better explain the dual realities of migration as both an individual strategy for capital enhancement and a national challenge with long-term developmental consequences.

The Push-Pull Migration Theory was first articulated by Everett S. Lee in 1966 in his seminal work *A Theory of Migration*. Lee (1966) explained that migration decisions are influenced by push factors (negative conditions that drive people away from their place of origin) and pull factors (positive attractions drawing people to new locations). Push factors include unemployment, poverty, political instability, and insecurity, while pull factors include better job opportunities, higher living standards, political freedom, and social stability. Building on Lee's foundation, scholars like Todaro (1976) expanded the theory by integrating expected income differentials between rural and urban areas. De Haas (2010) further nuanced the model by highlighting that migration decisions are not only economic but also shaped by social networks and cultural ties. Castles and Miller (2020) emphasized the role of globalization in intensifying migration flows. Adepoju (2024) applied the theory to the African context, identifying youth unemployment and governance deficits as major push factors. Ibrahim and Yusuf (2024) demonstrated that in Nigeria, youth migration is primarily driven by insecurity and limited economic prospects. Additionally, Okafor et al. (2024) highlighted that political disenfranchisement serves as both a push and pull dynamic, motivating youth to seek better governance environments abroad.

Despite its usefulness, the Push-Pull Migration Theory has faced several criticisms. Critics argue that the model oversimplifies migration by presenting it as a linear response to environmental factors, neglecting the complex interplay of personal agency, policy constraints, and historical contexts (Bakewell, 2014). It also underrepresents structural inequalities, such as restrictive immigration policies and global labor market segmentation, which influence migration outcomes (Castles, 2010). Furthermore, the theory assumes rational decision-making based on clear-cut advantages and disadvantages, overlooking instances where migrants move despite marginal benefits or heightened risks (De Haas, 2021). Nevertheless, the Push-Pull Theory remains highly relevant to the study on Assessment of Youth Migration on Political and Socioeconomic Growth in Nigeria, as it provides a clear framework to understand the underlying factors compelling Nigerian youth to migrate. By identifying the socio-political and economic pressures that push young Nigerians out of the country, as well as the opportunities that pull them elsewhere, the theory helps explain how these migration flows impact Nigeria's labor force, civic participation, and long-term socioeconomic development.

#### *2.4.4. Research Methodology*

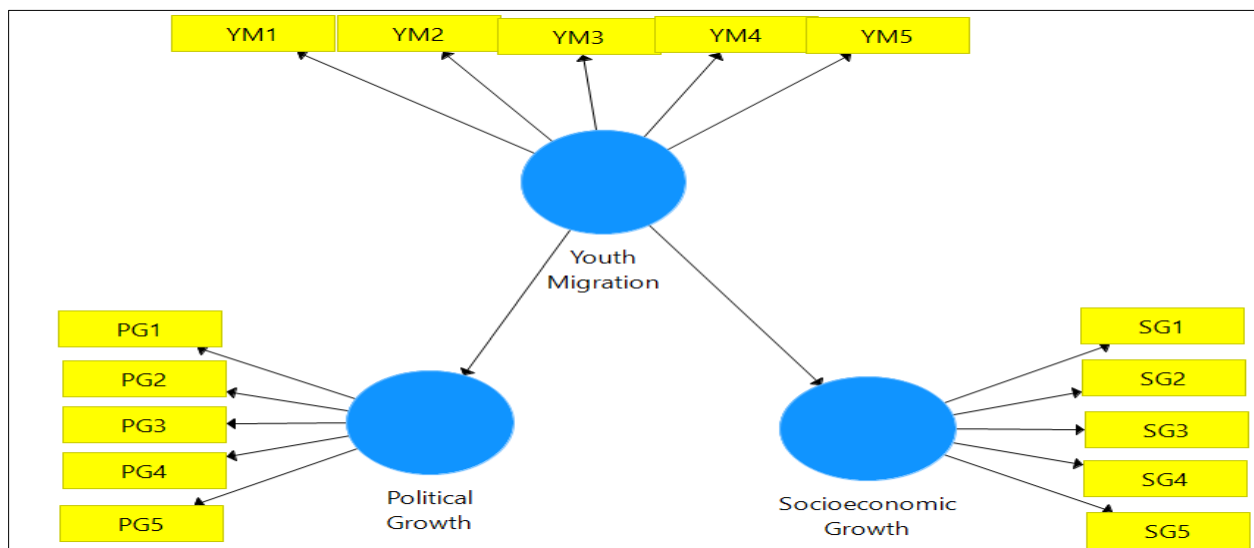
For this study, a quantitative survey research design was adopted. This approach enabled the collection of data on a broad scale, allowing for the examination of relationships between variables using numerical data that could be systematically analyzed through statistical methods. Quantitative methods are particularly valuable for generalizing findings to a larger population, offering empirical insights that can inform policy actions aimed at addressing youth migration and its implications (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additionally, the use of structured survey instruments ensured consistency in data collection, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings — critical for crafting evidence-based interventions (Hair et al., 2014). The target population consisted of literate Nigerian youths aged between 22 and 45 years. This demographic was selected because it represents the most economically active, mobile, and politically aware segment of the population, typically having completed formal education and actively participating in the labor force. Moreover, literate youths within this age range are more likely to make informed migration decisions, engage in political processes, and meaningfully influence socioeconomic development, making them well-positioned to provide insightful data for assessing the impacts of youth migration on Nigeria's growth trajectory.

Due to the impracticality of surveying the entire population and the absence of precise figures for the target group in Nigeria, Cochran's formula for an infinite population was employed to determine the appropriate sample size, resulting in 384 respondents (Cochran, 1977). To account for potential non-response or attrition, an additional 30% was added following the recommendations of Singh and Masuku (2014) and Muritala and Ajetunmobi (2019), adjusting the final

sample size to 499 respondents. Stratified sampling technique was applied to ensure proportional representation across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones: North Central, North East, North West, South East, South South, and South West. For balance, the sample was rounded up to 510, distributing 85 questionnaires to each zone. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire, which was physically administered with the assistance of six trained research assistants. To ensure clarity and contextual appropriateness, a pilot test involving 30 questionnaires was conducted across the six zones, and feedback from the pilot phase informed necessary revisions to the instrument.

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's alpha, with values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming the instrument's internal consistency (Hair et al., 2014). Out of 510 administered questionnaires, 423 were successfully retrieved, yielding an 83% response rate, and all were deemed valid for analysis. The data collected were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS 3.0 software. This analytical method is recognized for its robustness in evaluating measurement and structural models, and for effectively testing hypotheses, particularly in social science research with complex, non-normal data distributions (Hair, Henseler, & Sarstedt, 2021; Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015; Sarstedt, Ringle, & Hair, 2022). The analysis followed a two-step procedure: first, assessing the measurement model for reliability and validity, and subsequently evaluating the structural model to explore the impact of youth migration on Nigeria's political and socioeconomic development.

Throughout the research process, strict adherence to ethical standards was maintained. All participants were informed of the study's purpose and voluntarily provided consent. They were assured of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence, and their responses were treated with strict confidentiality. The data were anonymized and securely stored, ensuring privacy and protection of respondent information in line with ethical research guidelines (Resnik, 2020). The model for the PLS-SEM is depicted pictorially below:



Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

**Figure 1** Model Specification

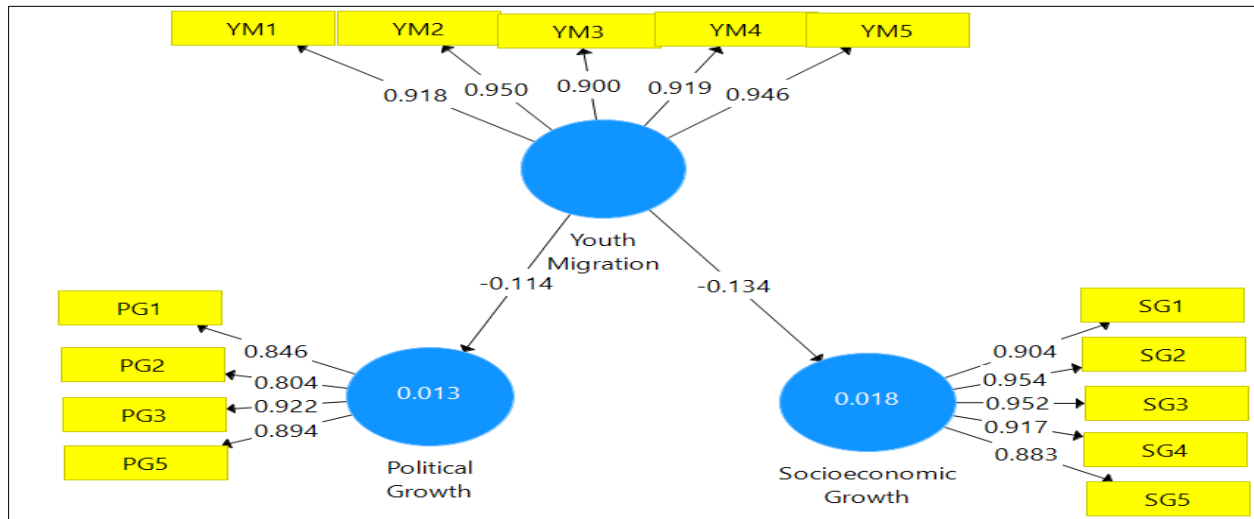
### 3. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1. Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model was evaluated using convergent validity, which assesses the extent to which indicators of a construct share a high proportion of variance. This evaluation involved examining factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct, following the guidelines recommended by Hair et al. (2014). All constructs achieved acceptable factor loadings above 0.7, except for questionnaire item four (PG4) under the Political Growth construct, which was deleted due to a low factor loading. The CR values for all constructs exceeded the threshold of 0.7, and the AVE values were all above 0.5, indicating satisfactory convergent validity.

The deletion of PG4 was necessitated by its low factor loading, which indicates that the item did not adequately represent the Political Growth construct. In structural equation modeling (SEM), it is common practice to remove items

with low factor loadings to enhance the measurement model's reliability and validity. According to Hair et al. (2014), items with loadings below 0.7 may be considered for removal if their exclusion leads to improved AVE and CR values. This approach ensures that each construct is measured by indicators that reliably reflect the underlying latent variable. This practice aligns with the recommendations of Fornell and Larcker (1981), who emphasized the importance of retaining items that contribute significantly to the construct's validity. The above is shown in the fig. 2 and the table 1 below



Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

**Figure 2** Measurement model of the study constructs and indicators

**Table 1** Convergent validity

| Variables            | Indicators | Loadings | Cronbach's alpha | rho_A | Composite Reliability | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|----------------------|------------|----------|------------------|-------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Youth Migration      | YM1        | 0.918    | 0.959            | 0.967 | 0.968                 | 0.859                            |
|                      | YM2        | 0.950    |                  |       |                       |                                  |
|                      | YM3        | 0.900    |                  |       |                       |                                  |
|                      | YM4        | 0.919    |                  |       |                       |                                  |
|                      | YM5        | 0.946    |                  |       |                       |                                  |
| Political Growth     | PG1        | 0.846    | 0.890            | 0.898 | 0.924                 | 0.753                            |
|                      | PG2        | 0.804    |                  |       |                       |                                  |
|                      | PG3        | 0.922    |                  |       |                       |                                  |
|                      | PG5        | 0.894    |                  |       |                       |                                  |
| Socioeconomic Growth | SG1        | 0.904    | 0.956            | 0.976 | 0.966                 | 0.850                            |
|                      | SG2        | 0.954    |                  |       |                       |                                  |
|                      | SG3        | 0.952    |                  |       |                       |                                  |
|                      | SG4        | 0.917    |                  |       |                       |                                  |
|                      | SG5        | 0.883    |                  |       |                       |                                  |

Source Smart PLS Output, 2025

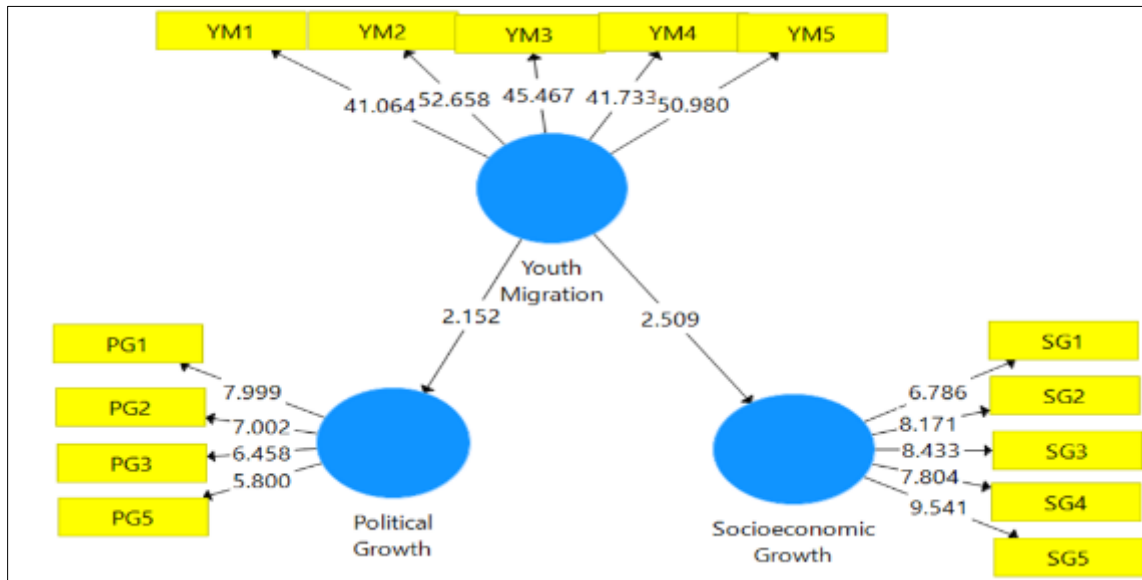
value of 0.959 and rho\_A of 0.967 both exceed the acceptable cut-off of 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency reliability. Furthermore, the composite reliability is remarkably high at 0.968, reflecting the consistency of the construct indicators. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) stands at 0.859, which is well above the minimum threshold of 0.50,

confirming that the construct explains a substantial portion of the variance in its indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Collectively, these results confirm that the measurement of Youth Migration is both reliable and valid for the purposes of this study.

For Political Growth, the convergent validity indicators also reveal satisfactory measurement adequacy. Indicator loadings vary between 0.804 and 0.922, all of which are above the recommended 0.70 threshold, indicating strong item reliability (Hair et al., 2021). Cronbach's alpha is recorded at 0.890, and rho\_A at 0.898, both confirming the internal consistency of the scale. The composite reliability of 0.924 exceeds the minimum requirement of 0.70, ensuring that the construct is measured reliably. Importantly, the AVE value is 0.753, indicating that over 75% of the variance in the observed variables is accounted for by the construct, which affirms its convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). These results support the robustness and soundness of the Political Growth construct within the structural model.

Similarly, the construct Socioeconomic Growth displays excellent convergent validity and internal consistency. The indicator loadings are notably high, ranging from 0.883 to 0.954, well above the standard benchmark of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2021). Cronbach's alpha of 0.956 and rho\_A of 0.976 indicate outstanding internal consistency reliability. The composite reliability is also exceptionally strong at 0.966, further confirming the measurement reliability. With an AVE of 0.850, the construct explains a significant proportion of variance in its indicators. Table 1 presents the result of convergent validity. The assessment of convergent validity for the construct *Youth Migration* demonstrates excellent measurement model quality, as evidenced by high indicator loadings ranging from 0.900 to 0.950, surpassing the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2021). The Cronbach's alpha, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50 and thereby substantiating its convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Therefore, the measurement model for Socioeconomic Growth is deemed highly reliable and valid for this research. This result is seen in fig.2 and table 1.

### 3.2. Structural Model and Hypotheses Testing



Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

**Figure 3** Structural Model and Hypotheses Testing

**Table 2** Results of the Structural Model Analysis (Hypotheses Testing)

| Hypotheses      | Relationship | Beta ( $\beta$ ) | Standard Error | T Statistics | P value | Decision |
|-----------------|--------------|------------------|----------------|--------------|---------|----------|
| H <sub>01</sub> | YM->PG       | -0.114           | 0.053          | 2.152        | 0.032   | Rejected |
| H <sub>02</sub> | YM->SG       | -0.134           | 0.054          | 2.509        | 0.012   | Rejected |

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

The Figure 3 and table 2 above show that standard beta and the corresponding t-values were used in assessing the structural model in this study. It was done through the bootstrapping procedure.

The bootstrapping result from the Smart PLS reveals that path coefficient of youth migration and political growth (YM->PG) is negative and statistically significant with a negative low beta ( $\beta$ ) value of -0.114 (11%), t-value of 2.152 with its corresponding p-value of 0.032 ( $\beta$ -value = -0.114, t-value = 2.152 and p-value = 0.032). This result has not provided sufficient ground for accepting the null hypothesis one of this study which state that youth migration has no significant effect on political growth in Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. And the study revealed that youth migration has negative and statistically significant effect on political growth in Nigeria at 5% level of significance.

The analysis examined the relationship between Youth Migration (YM) and Political Growth (PG). The path coefficient ( $\beta$ ) is -0.114, indicating a negative association between youth migration and political growth. The t-statistic of 2.152 exceeds the critical value of 1.96 at the 5% significance level, and the corresponding p-value of 0.032 is less than 0.05, which confirms statistical significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, suggesting that increases in youth migration negatively impact political growth. This finding implies that as youth migration intensifies, political growth is adversely affected, possibly due to the loss of youthful participation and engagement in political processes, which are crucial for political development and representation in the community.

From a real and practical point of view, this result means that as more young people migrate out of their communities or even out of the country, the political landscape at home suffers in very tangible ways. Youth are typically the most active demographic in political engagement they participate in protests, vote in elections, advocate for reforms, and often push for change in governance and policy. When they leave in large numbers, there is a noticeable decline in grassroots political activities and civic participation, which weakens the political structure and slows down growth. This migration drains the local talent pool and reduces the energy and innovation that young people bring to political discourse. Practically, this can lead to aging political leadership with less pressure for accountability and reform, voter apathy, and reduced advocacy for policies that address the needs of the younger population. In the Nigerian context, where youth make up a significant proportion of the population, their absence due to migration means fewer voices demanding political inclusion, transparency, and development, ultimately stalling political progress at local, regional, and national levels.

The result indicating a significant negative relationship between youth migration and political growth ( $\beta$  = -0.114,  $t$  = 2.152,  $p$  = 0.032) can be explained through the lens of Human Capital Theory and Push-Pull Migration Theory. Human Capital Theory posits that individuals, particularly the youth, represent valuable assets with skills, knowledge, and innovative potential essential for political participation and leadership development (Becker, 1964). When young people migrate, especially from politically developing regions, they take away their human capital, leading to diminished political engagement and reduced capacity for political innovation and growth. Similarly, Push-Pull Migration Theory explains that adverse conditions such as unemployment, insecurity, or political instability in home regions push youth to migrate, while attractive opportunities elsewhere pull them away (Lee, 1966). This outflow results in a political vacuum where the absence of young voices undermines grassroots political activities and reduces pressure for political reforms, ultimately stalling political growth. Thus, the negative impact of youth migration on political growth observed in the study aligns with these theoretical perspectives, highlighting how the loss of human capital through migration erodes the foundations necessary for robust political development.

For the second hypothesis (H02), the relationship between Youth Migration (YM) and Socioeconomic Growth (SG) was assessed. The bootstrapping result from the Smart PLS reveals that path coefficient of youth migration and socioeconomic growth (YM->SG) is negative and statistically significant with a negative low beta ( $\beta$ ) value of -0.134 (13%), t-value of 2.509 with its corresponding p-value of 0.012 ( $\beta$ -value = -0.134, t-value = 2.509 and p-value = 0.012). This result also has not provided sufficient ground for accepting the null hypothesis one of this study which state that youth migration has no significant effect on socioeconomic growth in Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. And the study revealed that youth migration has negative and statistically significant effect on socioeconomic growth in Nigeria at 5% level of significance.

The path coefficient ( $\beta$ ) is -0.134, signifying a negative relationship between the two variables. The t-statistic of 2.509 exceeds the critical threshold of 1.96, and the p-value is 0.012, which is well below the 0.05 level of significance, confirming that the result is statistically significant (Hair et al., 2021). Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that youth migration significantly and negatively affects socioeconomic growth. This outcome suggests that increased migration of young people may hinder socioeconomic development, likely due to a reduction in the local labor force, entrepreneurial activity, and economic participation necessary for sustainable growth.

From a real and practical point of view, this result clearly shows that when young people migrate in large numbers, the socioeconomic growth of their home communities and even the country at large suffers. Youth form a significant part of the productive workforce; they drive innovation, start businesses, support local economies, and contribute to both

skilled and unskilled labor markets. When they leave, local businesses lose energetic workers and potential entrepreneurs, which weakens economic activities and slows development. This outflow leads to labor shortages, declining productivity, reduced consumer spending, and fewer tax contributions, all of which are critical for socioeconomic growth. In Nigeria, where the economy heavily depends on the energy and creativity of its youthful population, mass youth migration means fewer start-ups, less agricultural productivity in rural areas, and a weakened informal sector that typically sustains local economies. Additionally, social structures also suffer as families are fragmented, community development projects stall, and there is less civic engagement to support social services. Altogether, this finding reflects the reality that the continued migration of young Nigerians undermines efforts to achieve inclusive economic growth and sustainable development goals.

The negative and significant relationship between youth migration and socioeconomic growth ( $\beta = -0.134$ ,  $t = 2.509$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ) aligns closely with Human Capital Theory and Push-Pull Migration Theory. According to Human Capital Theory, young people embody essential skills, education, creativity, and entrepreneurial energy that drive economic productivity and development (Becker, 1964). When they migrate, they take these valuable resources with them, leading to a depletion of the human capital needed for socioeconomic progress in their home regions. Similarly, Push-Pull Migration Theory explains that unfavorable socioeconomic conditions such as unemployment, poverty, and limited opportunities push youth to leave, while better prospects abroad pull them away (Lee, 1966). This migration drains the labor force, reduces local business innovation, and diminishes consumer spending, thereby stalling socioeconomic growth. In the Nigerian context, the exodus of the youth means fewer participants in both the formal and informal economy, which hampers efforts to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic development.

### 3.3. R Square

The essence of R Square ( $R^2$ ) in research, particularly in structural equation modeling, lies in its ability to indicate the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables in the model. It serves as a key measure of the model's explanatory power, helping researchers understand how well the predictors account for changes or variations in the outcome variable. R Square result of this study is presented in table 3.

**Table 3** R Square

|                      | R Square | R Square Adjusted |
|----------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Political Growth     | 0.438    | 0.431             |
| Socioeconomic Growth | 0.570    | 0.569             |

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

The R Square ( $R^2$ ) values in the model indicate how well youth migration explains the variance in both political growth and socioeconomic growth. For *Political Growth*, the R Square value is 0.438, meaning that youth migration accounts for approximately 43.8% of the variation in political growth, while the remaining 56.2% is explained by other factors not included in the model. The adjusted R Square of 0.431, which slightly corrects for the number of predictors in the model, still confirms a moderate explanatory power. For *Socioeconomic Growth*, the R Square value is higher at 0.570, indicating that youth migration explains 57% of the variance in socioeconomic growth, suggesting a substantial explanatory power (Hair et al., 2021). The adjusted R Square is very close at 0.569, reinforcing the robustness of this finding. These results imply that youth migration significantly influences both political and socioeconomic dimensions, with a stronger impact on socioeconomic growth, highlighting the critical role of retaining youth for sustaining development in Nigeria.

## 4. Conclusion

The study concludes that youth migration exerts a negative and statistically significant impact on political growth in Nigeria, as confirmed at the 5% level of significance. This finding underscores the reality that the continuous outflow of young Nigerians deprives the nation of critical political capital, as youth represent a vibrant and essential demographic for political engagement, advocacy, and leadership renewal. The absence of young voices weakens democratic participation, erodes political accountability, and stifles progressive reforms that are typically championed by the youth. Consequently, the depletion of this demographic through migration undermines the political stability and institutional development necessary for Nigeria's democratic consolidation and governance advancement.

The study also concludes that youth migration has a negative and statistically significant effect on socioeconomic growth in Nigeria, verified at the 5% level of significance. This outcome reflects the critical role of the youth population in driving economic activities, fostering entrepreneurship, and contributing to social development initiatives. The loss of

young, productive Nigerians through migration exacerbates labor shortages, diminishes innovation, and reduces consumer spending, all of which are essential components of economic vitality. Moreover, the social fabric of communities weakens as families are separated, and local development efforts suffer setbacks.

### *Recommendations*

Based on the findings and conclusion drawn from this study, the following recommendation are proposed

- Nigeria government and relevant stakeholders should implement robust youth engagement programs that actively involve young people in political processes and leadership development at local, state, and national levels. These can be achieved through creating platforms for civic education, political mentorship, and inclusive policy-making, young Nigerians can be empowered to see meaningful participation in governance as a viable alternative to migration. Additionally, incentives such as youth advisory councils, political leadership scholarships, and deliberate inclusion in decision-making bodies can foster a sense of belonging and responsibility among the youth, thereby strengthening political growth and reducing the allure of migrating for perceived better political environments.
- Nigeria government should prioritize the creation of sustainable employment opportunities and entrepreneurial support systems tailored for young people. Policies should focus on skills development, access to affordable financing for youth-led businesses, and improving infrastructure to attract private sector investment in sectors with high youth employment potential. Additionally, strengthening vocational education and linking it with market demands will equip young Nigerians with relevant skills that can reduce the push factors driving migration. By making the domestic economy more inclusive and supportive of youth aspirations, Nigeria can retain its youthful workforce, thereby bolstering socioeconomic growth.

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### **Compliance with ethical standards**

#### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

There is no conflict of interest to be disclosed by authors.

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