



Original Article

Native Centric Ethics Constraining Illegal Migration in Nigeria

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Abstract: The fact that young people from Nigeria and Asia make up the largest populations of illegal immigrants overseas is no longer news. The rationale for illegal migration is structural injustice and individual decision-making. Migration has led to increased cultural variety but has also contributed to segregation, racism, and cultural disputes. Stress on the infrastructure, sadness, and anxiety in the host community, and the resurfacing of violence-related post-traumatic disorder attributed to illegal migration. The typical methods for limiting illegal immigration have been nationwide border closures and the repatriation of illegal immigrants. These methods failed to address the issue. Using the method of philosophical analysis, this study maintains that migration has strengthened the economies of many nations and promoted global citizenship and cosmopolitanism, but has led to the deaths of many young Nigerians. The Indigenous Moral Theory of Native-Centric Ethics (togetherness) will be applied to advance and comprehend the causes of illegal immigration as well as potential solutions. Native-centric ethics is the moral of togetherness based on the principles of reciprocity, mutual respect, and working towards the common good. This study concludes that Native-centric ethics should be used by policymakers so that citizens can have faith in their leaders. Of course, this would aid in lowering international unlawful migration.

Keywords: Junzi, Migration, Good Governance, Igwebuiké, and Native-Centric Ethics

Introduction: Migration affects the demand and supply of housing, which spurs residential investment¹. Illegal migration has led to underdevelopment, capital flight, and the migration of skilled manpower, but integrated development has led to an increase in remittances, cheap and surplus labor, urban

services, and social infrastructure under stress, stricter immigration norms, a multi-ethnic society, increased tolerance, xenophobia, and closing gaps in skills and cultural dilution². Illegal migration has led to human trafficking, smuggling, and the overstaying of territories with expired

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documents. Since 2010, Europe, the US, and many other nations have seen an increase in the number of undocumented immigrants from Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and other regions looking for asylum. The surge of approximately 1 million asylum seekers between 2010 and 2017 increased the population of sub-Saharan migrants in both the U.S. and Europe. In 2017, there were 4.15 million migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, up from 3.73 million in 2010 (an increase of about 420,000). According to estimates, 1.55 million sub-Saharan African immigrants resided in the United States in 2017, an increase of around 325,000 from the previous year's estimate of 1.22 million^{3,4}. The mind-boggling question is: Why are these youths deciding to leave Nigeria illegally? Do they have any information about the dangers associated with illegal migration? Illegal migration is a serious problem, and Nigeria's economy is in a state of comatose. These are the drivers of economic migration." Economic realities, coupled with other variables such as political instability, rising waves of conflict, and now the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, have led to an increasing number of youth in certain categories illegally leaving Nigeria for other countries perceived to hold greater promise⁴. High level of unemployment among the youths and a push for greener pastures abroad. In 2020, the Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics reported that 53.4% of Nigeria's youth populations were unemployed⁴. Although migration increases cultural diversity among nations, the negative implications include segregation, discrimination, and cultural clashes. Migration increases investment and productivity¹. The study aims to demonstrate the role of "native-centric ethics" in constraining illegal migration around the world. We hope that the suggestions of this study will be implemented by the Nigerian government to provide a durable solution to the problem of illegal migration.

Methodology: This study adopts the method of philosophical analysis. The research technique of analysis is most commonly adopted by researchers in the analytic tradition to "break down" and analyze concepts and terms used in research to gain insights into conceptual contents as expressed. The

research sources were gathered "from published books, journal articles, and online web sources. It would also help to address questions like why migration is such a critical issue and if applied.

Illegal Migration on an Inclusive Scale: Unauthorized border crossing is common around the world, and it is a trivial issue facing the global community. The illegal migration of Asians to Northern America and Europe has increased to about 46 million migrants in 2020⁵⁻⁶. Chinese and Vietnamese have the highest number of illegal migrants in Hong Kong. The political cataclysms in China, economic recessions, and labor shortages in Hong Kong have caused an increase in illegal Chinese migrants searching for jobs in Hong Kong. The increased number of illegal Vietnamese who travel by boat since 1988 was due to bad governance, which resulted in the reclassification of illegal migrants into Hong Kong⁷. In the US, the number of illegal immigrants from Mexico has been considerably increasing in the last three decades. Despite increases in border controls to dissuade potential migrants from Mexico and others from crossing the border illegally, statistics show that the number of Mexican legal immigrants in the United States is higher than that of undocumented immigrants^{8, 9}. Australia, a country with no land borders, also has its share of illegal immigrants. Statistics have shown that about 60,000 aliens are living illegally in Australia, and by 2021, that number will have increased to more than 100,000¹⁰.

In Canada, despite all the borders, they were naturally protected from almost all migrant routes¹¹. How illegal migrants' arrivals into the country are 'problematized. Illegal migration into Canada has led to a discursive crisis that centers on risk avoidance' and grounds of inadmissibility for migrants¹². In France, thousands of African migrants, especially Comorans, try to get in touch with the Indian Ocean island territory of Mayotte illegally every year. These deadly crossings were mostly carried out with the help of "kwassakwassa" (small fishing boats) used by smugglers, who are often shipwrecked and lack the fitness for travel¹³. Although the French government

razed makeshift settlements on the Indian Ocean island of Mayotte after overnight unrest sparked by government plans to clear slums and send illegal migrants back to neighboring Comoros, this was a forced return. However, we argue that these efforts have not solved the problem of illegal migration.

This study adopts the method of philosophical analysis. The research technique of analysis is most commonly adopted by researchers in the analytic tradition to "break down" and analyze concepts and terms used in research to gain insights into conceptual contents as expressed^{14,15}. The research sources were gathered "from published books, journal articles, and online web sources that deal with the foundations of migration and how to propose solutions"¹⁵. It would also help to address questions like why migration is such a critical issue and, if applied, Native-Centric Ethics would solve the problem of illegal migration around the world. However, this research approach may not provide a final answer to the problem because of some structural factors that deal with the dynamic nature of man. Nonetheless, in-depth studies and an understanding of moral issues concerning migration would help propose solutions for the common good of humanity¹⁴

Causes of illegal migration: The rationale for illegal migration in Nigeria is a lack of strategic governance². The structural forces are "push" and "pull" factors, have led to loss of togetherness in the hierarchy of being. Scholars may argue that Nigerian youth leave their homeland when conditions (economy, lack of good governance) are no longer satisfactory and when conditions in another area are more attractive¹⁶. Structural barriers, economic hardship, unemployment, bad governance, and other vices have been identified as factors responsible for the migration of Nigerian youths to European countries¹⁷. Economic progress, job competition, and the free flow of foreign workers could be an advantage of illegal migration, but it has deteriorated the job market, which affects domestic workers and could lead to violence in the host community¹⁸. Illegal migration is a resurgence of the slave

trade. Seeking a greener pasture abroad may not be the best alternative for survival; the best alternative is an expulsion order because the original number of people who set out on dangerous journeys across the Mediterranean Sea may not live to tell their story. Illegal migration has led to xenophobia and hostility toward migrants, which are common in the region, and in some countries (e.g., South Africa), they can involve physical attacks on non-nationals. This is unethical because international law recognizes the rights of migrants. Human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and all rights holders, including states, have the obligation to migrants to respect, protect, and fulfill their human rights"¹⁹. The discretionary forms of protection linkages between migrants and refugees contradict international law on human rights. The idea of nondiscrimination as a fundamental principle has been questioned by pundits who claim that illegal migrants violate the sovereignty of their host country by entering without permission or requiring documents²⁰. The question is: can states maintain a right to control their borders, and if so, to what extent? How can states care for displaced people? In a critical analysis of ethical dilemmas for or against illegal migration, none were able to address the cause of illegal migration.

In Thailand, for instance, thousands of illegal migrants from Myanmar cross the border every day. The twin crises of a pandemic-hit economy and the political turmoil in that country triggered the crossing of over 8,000 illegal migrants into Thailand, and they were detained as of January 11, 2013, near the border with Malaysia^{21,22}. However, approaches like detention, repatriation, or expulsion orders have failed to address the root causes of illegal migration²³. It is imperative to reawaken indigenous practices to reduce illegal migration. This study will explore the role of native-centric ethics in constraining illegal migration.

Native-Centric Ethics: Native-Centric Ethics has no book, but it is written in the minds of the indigenous people and can be learned and studied through indigenous songs, myths,

idioms, and symbols¹⁵. It is an ethical, practical, and meditative reason for togetherness that the native people adhere to for the common good of the people. The native-centric act of togetherness is the rethinking of indigenous ways of life and cultural beliefs such as communalism and hospitality to reestablish family ties among the people and their government. The family tie is togetherness, which stands for the communal interests and happiness of the whole²⁴. Native-centric ethics "values by specifying set rules or policies that would guide human behavior in the environment. The centric paradigm is rethinking the indigenous networks and can be transmitted from generation to generation through storytelling, folklore, myths, and many others"¹⁵. It is a moral standard for measuring and assessing human actions in terms of what society holds to be right or wrong^{15,25}. The moral principle of the Native Centric ethics guides human conduct in determining what ought to be done or not done and the right actions that human beings should follow. It is a distinction between right and wrong through the analysis of human actions, and human behavior is judged morally correct or incorrect while expressing a sense of duty and obligation²⁶.

The African worldview of togetherness is the same as the Asian philosophy of junzi because human nature and human experience are similar all over the world, and the tendency to philosophize is part of human nature. Monday cites Karl Jaspers, saying that "every person, at one time or another in the course of his life reflects on some of the fundamental philosophic questions about human life or the physical universe... However, in the strict sense of the word, a philosopher devotes a good deal of his time to reflecting on these questions and frequently and habitually does this. There are such people all over the world; they are found among all peoples, in all civilizations, and in every part of the globe. It is not only in the Western world that men reflect on the fundamental questions about human life or the universe"²⁷ Although there may be significant differences in the thought system of the Chinese and that of Africa, particularly as they relate to the ontological or metaphysical

account of a person, the "Five Virtues of Confucius ethics include "benevolence, righteousness/appropriateness, wisdom, and trustworthiness," are the same with views of native-centric ethics because Chinese and Africans share a common world view on the relationship between the individual and society or community²⁷.

The adoption of native-centric ethics means that the Nigerian government must bridge inequality (structural injustices), create employment, and guarantee security for its population so that young people do not want to leave. Office holders have no reason to be selfish; harmonization of the individual is a significant element for the state in restraining illegal migration²⁸. In this sense, Native American ethics is committed to reconstructing moral agency and civil society in a way that would characteristically provide leaders who do not ignore their duty. The problem with leadership around the world is humans' inability to maintain unblemished character. We argue that leaders have a role in educating youths on the dangers and pitfalls of irregular migration⁴. These attitudes must be displayed in the interest of all citizens. In this same vein, African belief in "righteousness or appropriateness" is another virtue of native-centric ethics¹⁵. "Rightness" is an act of "setting things appropriate or fit. It is an act of rightness that does not fall on the leader alone; it is expected that all people be moral in their dealings to understand the drivers of migration. Being moral means that an action is appropriate to justify what is good for the public^{29,30}. The properness of migrants means the government should make the whole population live together in accordance with peace and unity. This would help to avoid structural injustice, which has led to illegal migration. "Propriety" has a similar worldview, just like the Igbo (South-East Nigerian people) concept of 'Igwebuiké, which provides an ontological horizon of the relational character of mutual relations²⁴.

The native-centric ethics of Igwebuiké rest on the African principles of solidarity and complementarities, which require critical analysis to judge, create, think, and provide

good leadership for the common good of all. Igwebuiké is an Igbo composite word and metaphor. It is a combination of three words. The three words involved are: "Igwe is a noun that means number or population, usually a huge number or population. Bu is a verb, which means is. Ike is another verb, which means strength or power"²⁴. Thus, a combination of these words means 'number is strength' or 'number is power', that is, when human beings come together in solidarity and complementarily, they are powerful or can constitute an insurmountable force or strength, and at this level, no task is beyond their collective capability²⁴. Native centric ethics is an act of reasoning while things go wrong or right²⁴. It guides individual and leaders of society to analyze vulnerable migration patterns and possible policy solutions. This philosophy demystifies both the life of an irregular migrant and the reality of living in destination countries to get information on the rights of migrants and international migration procedures⁴. A wise leader should be able to deeply understand issues as they concern illegal immigration and profess solutions. The native-centric ethics is "sincerity." Sincerity refers to honest, trustworthy behavior and duty-based ethics commanded by the power of sincerity. Governments must act to gain the confidence of their citizens. The Nigerian government must promote and build a youth-friendly economy where enterprising young people are given the financial and practical support they need. Each of these interventions is vital to ensuring that the country retains the army of skills and capacities embodied in its youthful population.

Conclusion: The core of this study is applying Native American ethics to curbing illegal migration. The migration of individuals into a nation or area without the necessary documentation raises ethical debates about the right and wrong of administrative detention of migrants. Legalizing the status of illegal immigrants encourages the cheap supply of foreign workers, reducing the cost of production. Various arguments regarding illegal immigration were discussed in the study, but none of the debates offered a solution to the problem. The study suggested

proper implementation of indigenous ways of life (Native Centric Ethics) to prevent illegal immigration and maintain peaceful, morally-based communities. The adoption of Native American ethics by decision-makers would serve as a framework for guiding immigration decisions and have a positive influence by preventing illegal immigration.

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