

Japa Syndrome and Its Perceived Socio-Economic, Security, and Academic Implications: Evidence from Youths at Adekunle Ajasin University, Nigeria

Oluwatoyin Olusegun OLOWO

Department of Social Science Education, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria

Email: oluwatoyin.olowo@aaua.edu.ng

Received: 30 October 2025

Revised: 30 November 2025

Accepted: 29 December 2025

Abstract:

In recent years, the phenomenon popularly referred to as Japa syndrome has become a defining feature of youth migration in Nigeria, reflecting growing dissatisfaction with domestic socio-economic, security, and academic conditions. Increasing numbers of Nigerian youths, particularly university students and graduates, express strong intentions to migrate abroad in search of improved living standards, safety, and educational stability. Despite expanding scholarly attention to migration and brain drain, limited empirical research has systematically examined youths' perceptions of the multidimensional implications of Japa syndrome within the Nigerian university context. The purpose of this study was to examine Nigerian youths' perceptions of the socio-economic, security, and academic implications of Japa syndrome, using Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, as a case study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. Data were collected from 250 university youths using a structured questionnaire, and analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations. The findings reveal that youths perceive Japa syndrome as having moderate to high implications across security and socio-economic domains, and particularly high influence on academic decisions. Academic instability, frequent strike actions, limited job opportunities, poor infrastructure, and insecurity were identified as major factors shaping migration intentions. Employment creation, good governance, national reorientation, and youth-focused development programs were perceived as effective strategies for reducing Japa syndrome. The study concludes that Japa syndrome is a multidimensional structural challenge rooted in institutional instability rather than individual preference alone. The research contributes to migration scholarship by providing perception-based empirical evidence and underscores the need for integrated policy responses targeting education, governance, security, and youth employment in Nigeria.

Keywords: Japa Syndrome, Youth Migration, Brain Drain, Socio-Economic Implications, Security Challenges, Academic Instability

Abstrak:

Dalam beberapa tahun terakhir, fenomena yang populer disebut sebagai sindrom Japa telah menjadi ciri khas migrasi pemuda di Nigeria, yang mencerminkan meningkatnya ketidakpuasan terhadap kondisi sosial-ekonomi, keamanan, dan akademik di dalam negeri. Semakin banyak pemuda Nigeria, khususnya mahasiswa dan lulusan universitas, menyatakan niat kuat untuk

bermigrasi ke luar negeri untuk mencari peningkatan standar hidup, keamanan, dan stabilitas pendidikan. Meskipun perhatian akademis terhadap migrasi dan brain drain semakin meluas, penelitian empiris yang secara sistematis meneliti persepsi pemuda tentang implikasi multidimensional sindrom Japa dalam konteks universitas Nigeria masih terbatas. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk meneliti persepsi pemuda Nigeria tentang implikasi sosial-ekonomi, keamanan, dan akademik sindrom Japa, dengan menggunakan Universitas Adekunle Ajasin, Akungba-Akoko, sebagai studi kasus. Desain penelitian survei deskriptif diadopsi. Data dikumpulkan dari 250 pemuda universitas menggunakan kuesioner terstruktur, dan dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, termasuk penghitungan frekuensi, persentase, skor rata-rata, dan deviasi standar. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kaum muda memandang sindrom Japa memiliki implikasi sedang hingga tinggi di berbagai bidang keamanan dan sosial-ekonomi, dan pengaruhnya sangat besar terhadap keputusan akademis. Ketidakstabilan akademis, seringnya aksi mogok, terbatasnya peluang kerja, infrastruktur yang buruk, dan ketidakamanan diidentifikasi sebagai faktor utama yang membentuk niat migrasi. Penciptaan lapangan kerja, tata kelola pemerintahan yang baik, reorientasi nasional, dan program pembangunan yang berfokus pada kaum muda dianggap sebagai strategi efektif untuk mengurangi sindrom Japa. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa sindrom Japa adalah tantangan struktural multidimensional yang berakar pada ketidakstabilan kelembagaan, bukan hanya preferensi individu semata. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kajian migrasi dengan memberikan bukti empiris berbasis persepsi dan menggarisbawahi perlunya respons kebijakan terintegrasi yang menargetkan pendidikan, tata kelola pemerintahan, keamanan, dan lapangan kerja kaum muda di Nigeria.

Kata Kunci: Sindrom Japa, Migrasi Pemuda, Pengurusan Bakat, Implikasi Sosial-Ekonomi, Tantangan Keamanan, Ketidakstabilan Akademis

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the term “Japa” has emerged as a popular expression in Nigeria to describe the increasing desire of citizens—particularly youths—to migrate abroad in search of improved living conditions. Although originally a Yoruba word meaning *to flee* or *to escape*, the expression has transcended its linguistic roots and is now widely used across Nigeria to describe contemporary migration aspirations. Okunade and Awosusi (2023) define “Japa” as the migration of Nigerians seeking better opportunities outside the country. This usage reflects the growing inclination of both skilled and unskilled youths to leave Nigeria in pursuit of perceived economic stability, security, and personal advancement. Scholars have noted that, beyond its literal meaning, “Japa” has come to symbolise a broader social phenomenon driven by dissatisfaction with prevailing conditions within the country (Liu, 2024; Makwudo & Nwakwudo, 2025; Otegbale et al., 2025). King and Kuschminder (2022) describe the concept as an act of fleeing without a clear intention of returning, while Adeniran (2020) clarify that, in its original Yoruba context, the term does not simply imply migration but rather an urgent escape from threatening or unbearable circumstances. This interpretation underscores the depth of frustration and insecurity that increasingly shape migration intentions among Nigerian youths.

Nigeria is currently confronted with persistent socio-economic and security challenges, including high unemployment, poor infrastructure, rising inflation, and widespread insecurity. These conditions have contributed significantly to youths’ discomfort and declining confidence in local opportunities. Uddin (2013) observes that Nigerian youths, who constitute a substantial proportion of the national population, are increasingly inclined to leave the country, a trend with serious implications for labour supply, demographic balance, and social cohesion.

The sustained outflow of young and educated individuals has raised concerns about long-term national development, particularly in relation to human capital depletion. It is important to situate the Japa phenomenon within the broader context of human mobility. Migration has historically been a defining feature of human societies, driven by economic necessity, environmental conditions, conflict, and the search for improved quality of life (Manning & Trimmer, 2020). Contemporary global data support this reality and report that, as of 2019, approximately 272 million people worldwide were living outside their countries of birth, representing a significant increase from previous decades (Chamie, 2020; McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021). Within Nigeria, survey evidence further indicates strong migration aspirations, with a majority of citizens expressing willingness to migrate if given the opportunity (Alabi & Olajide, 2023; Okeke-Ihejirika & Odimegwu, 2023). Empirical studies reveal that Japa syndrome's increasing prevalence in Nigeria is primarily driven by economic hardship, as unemployment and scarce income opportunities compel youths to seek better livelihoods elsewhere (Adeyemju et al., 2024; Yusuf et al., 2023). Insecurity, including violent conflict, terrorism, and communal unrest, has further intensified migration intentions, particularly among working-age youths (Menashe-Oren, 2020). These pressures are compounded by policy instability and declining public confidence in governance structures, which collectively weaken young people's attachment to the national socio-economic system.

Beyond economic and security concerns, education has emerged as a critical dimension of the Japa syndrome. Frequent industrial actions in Nigerian higher institutions, coupled with inadequate funding and infrastructural deficiencies, have disrupted academic calendars and undermined educational outcomes. Altbach et al. (2019) report that academic instability significantly influences youths' decisions to pursue education abroad, where programmes are perceived as more predictable and globally competitive. Eke et al. (2024) similarly note that many Nigerian youths migrate primarily to access better-quality education and enhance future career prospects. Evidence of declining academic performance, such as the 2024 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination results, further reinforces perceptions of systemic weakness in Nigeria's education sector (Moses et al., 2025). The consequences of Japa syndrome are multidimensional. On one hand, large-scale emigration has contributed to brain drain, particularly in critical sectors such as healthcare and education, resulting in skill shortages and weakened service delivery (Agboola, 2025; Lamid et al., 2025). On the other hand, some scholars acknowledge potential benefits, including remittances, skill acquisition, and knowledge transfer from the diaspora, which may support innovation and entrepreneurship if effectively harnessed (Mueller, 2022; Ughulu, 2024). These contrasting outcomes highlight the need for empirical assessment rather than normative judgment. Given the scale and complexity of the phenomenon, understanding how Nigerian youths perceive the socio-economic, security, and academic implications of Japa syndrome is essential. Youth perceptions shape migration intentions, influence national human capital trajectories, and provide insight into the push factors driving emigration. This study examines Japa syndrome from a perception-based perspective, focusing on

Nigerian youths' views regarding its causes and implications across socio-economic, security, and academic domains.

In recent years in Nigeria, there has been a noticeable increase in youth migration to foreign countries, a trend popularly described as the "*Japa syndrome*." Empirical reports indicate that a growing proportion of Nigerian youths are actively seeking opportunities outside the country, largely in response to persistent socio-economic hardship, unemployment, insecurity, and limited prospects for personal and professional advancement (Okorie et al., 2024; Ita & Bassey, 2022; Virk et al., 2023). This sustained migration trend has raised serious concerns about the country's ability to retain its youthful and productive population, which is critical for national development. Existing studies suggest that the continuous outflow of young and skilled Nigerians has contributed to human capital depletion, commonly referred to as brain drain, with potential consequences for labour supply, service delivery, and long-term economic growth (Akaeze, 2024; Egbule, 2023). Moreover, evidence shows that many Nigerian youths who have migrated abroad exhibit low intentions of returning, while a significant number of those still within the country express strong desires to emigrate when opportunities arise (Alabi & Olajide, 2023; Ojo et al., 2023). These patterns indicate a deepening disconnection between Nigerian youths and domestic socio-economic and institutional structures.

Despite the growing body of literature on migration and brain drain in Nigeria, there remains a notable gap in empirical research that systematically examines how Nigerian youths themselves perceive the socio-economic, security, and academic implications of the *Japa syndrome*. Much of the existing discourse focuses on macro-level outcomes or policy debates, with limited attention to youth perceptions that shape migration intentions and decisions. Yet, understanding these perceptions is essential, as they influence individual choices, reinforce migration trends, and reflect broader societal conditions. Furthermore, the academic dimension of *Japa syndrome* – particularly concerns related to unstable academic calendars, declining educational quality, and limited local opportunities – has not been sufficiently integrated into analyses that also consider socio-economic and security factors. This lack of a comprehensive, perception-based approach limits the ability of policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to design informed interventions aimed at youth retention and national development. In light of these concerns, there is a clear need for an empirical investigation into the perceived socio-economic, security, and academic implications of *Japa syndrome* among Nigerian youths. Addressing this gap will provide evidence-based insights into the factors sustaining youth migration aspirations and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon within the Nigerian context.

This study is guided by a set of research questions that focus on youths' perceptions of the phenomenon commonly referred to as *Japa syndrome* at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko. **Firstly**, what are the perceived security implications of *Japa syndrome* among youths within the university context? **Secondly**, what are the perceived socio-economic implications of *Japa syndrome* as understood by university youths? **Thirdly**, what strategies do youths

at Adekunle Ajasin University perceive as effective in reducing the prevalence of Japa syndrome in Nigeria? Through these sequential questions, the study seeks to generate a comprehensive understanding of both the implications of Japa syndrome and the youth-informed strategies that may contribute to mitigating its impact.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because it allows for the systematic collection of data from a defined population to describe existing conditions, attitudes, and perceptions as they naturally occur. In line with the objectives of the study, the descriptive survey design enabled the researcher to examine Nigerian youths' perceptions of the socio-economic, security, and academic implications of Japa syndrome without manipulating any variables. The study was conducted at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. The institution was considered suitable for the study because it hosts a large population of youths within the active schooling and working-age bracket, who are directly affected by issues related to migration intentions, employment prospects, security concerns, and academic experiences. The population of the study comprised youths at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State. These youths were considered appropriate for the study because they represent a demographic group that is most affected by, and actively engaged in, the Japa phenomenon, either through actual migration or strong intentions to migrate in search of better socio-economic, security, and academic opportunities. A total of 250 respondents were selected for the study.

The respondents were drawn using a convenience sampling technique, based on accessibility and willingness to participate. This technique was adopted due to time constraints and the exploratory nature of the study, while still allowing for adequate representation of youth perceptions across gender, age, and educational backgrounds. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was designed to elicit information relevant to the research questions and was divided into five sections: Section A contained items on respondents' demographic characteristics, including gender, age, marital status, and educational qualification. Section B comprised items measuring respondents' perceptions of the security implications of Japa syndrome. Section C contained items assessing the perceived socio-economic implications of Japa syndrome. Section D focused on the perceived academic implications of Japa syndrome. Section E addressed respondents' perceptions of strategies for reducing Japa syndrome among Nigerian youths. Responses in Sections B to E were structured on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity. Experts in social science education and research methodology examined the instrument to ensure clarity, relevance, and adequate coverage of the variables under investigation. Their observations and suggestions were incorporated to enhance the appropriateness and quality of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument

was determined using the test-retest method. A pilot study was conducted among respondents with similar characteristics to the study population but who were not included in the final sample. The responses obtained from the two administrations were correlated, and the result indicated that the instrument was reliable for data collection. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the respondents at Adekunle Ajasin University. Before administration, the purpose of the study was explained to the respondents, and their informed consent was obtained. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and informed that participation was voluntary. Completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately to ensure a high response rate.

Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations. Mean scores were used to answer the research questions. For decision-making, a criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted. Mean values below 2.50 were interpreted as low perception, values between 2.50 and 3.00 as moderate perception, and mean values above 3.00 as high perception. The demographic characteristics of the respondents were analysed to provide background information necessary for understanding the socio-demographic composition of the study sample and for contextualising their perceptions of Japa syndrome. The gender distribution revealed that 101 respondents (40.4%) were male, while 149 respondents (59.6%) were female, indicating a higher proportion of female respondents. In terms of marital status, 21 respondents (8.4%) were married, while 229 respondents (91.6%) were single, showing that the majority of respondents were unmarried youths. Regarding educational qualifications, 12 respondents (4.8%) possessed NCE/ND certificates, 20 respondents (8.0%) held HND qualifications, and a dominant majority of 205 respondents (82.0%) had Bachelor's degrees (B.A/B.Sc/B.Ed). In addition, 8 respondents (3.2%) held Master's degrees, while 5 respondents (2.0%) possessed PhD qualifications, indicating that the sample largely comprised well-educated youths. The age distribution showed that 179 respondents (71.6%) were between 18 and 25 years, 47 respondents (18.8%) were aged 26–35 years, 13 respondents (5.2%) were between 36 and 45 years, and 11 respondents (4.4%) were between 46 and 55 years. No respondent fell within the category of 56 years and above. This confirms that the majority of respondents were within the youthful age bracket relevant to the focus of the study. Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, respondents' anonymity was maintained, and all information obtained was used solely for academic purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis of the data collected are used to answer the research questions raised. Findings derived from the analysis were also discussed. On the research questions, the mean score is 2.5. A mean score below 2.5 is considered low, a mean score between 2.5 and 3.0 is considered moderate, while a mean score above 3.0 is considered high. The results were presented in tables.

Research Question 1: What are the perceived security implications of Japa syndrome among youths at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko?

Table 1 Perceived Security Implications of Japa Syndrome Among Youths (N = 250)

S/N	Item	SAf (%)	Af (%)	Df (%)	SD f (%)	M	SD
1	Human rights and personal security are better guaranteed abroad.	125 (50.0)	96 (38.4)	16 (6.4)	13 (5.2)	3.33	0.81
2	Nigeria is not safe to live in.	47 (18.8)	90 (36.0)	86 (34.4)	27 (10.8)	2.62	0.91
3	Lives and property are at risk in Nigeria.	76 (30.4)	77 (30.8)	73 (29.2)	24 (9.6)	2.82	0.97
4	Insecurity discourages investment in Nigeria.	126 (50.4)	87 (34.8)	18 (7.2)	19 (7.6)	3.28	0.89
5	Migrating abroad reduces concern for Nigeria's security issues.	93 (37.2)	24 (9.6)	62 (24.8)	71 (28.4)	2.55	1.25

Grand Mean = 2.92

Note. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. Criterion mean = 2.50. Mean values above 2.50 indicate moderate to high perception.

Table 1 presents the responses of youths at Adekunle Ajasin University on the perceived security implications of Japa syndrome. The mean scores range from 2.55 to 3.33, all above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating moderate to high agreement with the listed security concerns. The highest mean score (M = 3.33, SD = 0.81) was recorded for the statement that human rights and personal security are better guaranteed abroad, suggesting a strong perception that foreign countries provide safer environments. Similarly, respondents agreed that insecurity discourages investment in Nigeria (M = 3.28, SD = 0.89), reflecting concerns about national stability and economic confidence. Moderate agreement was observed regarding the perception that lives and property are at risk in Nigeria (M = 2.82, SD = 0.97) and that Nigeria is not safe to live in (M = 2.62, SD = 0.91). The item suggesting that migrating abroad reduces concern for Nigeria's security issues recorded the lowest mean (M = 2.55, SD = 1.25), although it still exceeded the criterion mean, indicating moderate perception. The grand mean of 2.92 shows that respondents generally perceive Japa syndrome as having notable security implications. Overall, the findings suggest that security concerns constitute an important factor shaping migration intentions among the youths surveyed.

Research Question 2: What are the perceived socio-economic implications of Japa syndrome among youths at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko?

Table 2 Perceived Socio-Economic Implications of Japa Syndrome Among Youths (N = 250)

S/N	Item	SAf (%)	Af (%)	Df (%)	SD f (%)	M	SD
6	Japa is a means of avoiding economic hardship.	89 (35.8)	83 (33.2)	58 (23.2)	20 (8.0)	2.96	0.95
7	Better job opportunities can be secured outside Nigeria.	95 (38.0)	133 (53.2)	15 (6.0)	7 (2.8)	3.26	0.69
8	It is difficult to achieve economic success in Nigeria.	73 (29.2)	79 (31.6)	70 (28.0)	28 (11.2)	2.78	0.98

9	Studying and working abroad promote migration intentions.	126 (50.4)	59 (23.6)	36 (14.4)	29 (11.6)	3.12	1.04
10	Migrating abroad reduces my economic obligation to Nigeria.	76 (30.4)	34 (13.6)	77 (30.8)	63 (25.2)	2.49	1.16
11	Poor infrastructure makes life difficult for Nigerian youths.	137 (54.8)	82 (32.8)	25 (10.0)	6 (2.4)	3.40	0.76

Grand Mean = 3.00

Note. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. Criterion mean = 2.50. Mean values of 2.50 and above indicate moderate to high perception.

Table 2 presents the responses of youths at Adekunle Ajasin University regarding the perceived socio-economic implications of Japa syndrome. The mean scores range from 2.49 to 3.40. Except for one item (M = 2.49), all mean values exceed the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating moderate to high agreement with the socio-economic issues identified. The highest mean score was recorded for the statement that poor infrastructure makes life difficult for Nigerian youths (M = 3.40, SD = 0.76), suggesting strong agreement that infrastructural challenges contribute significantly to migration considerations. This was followed by the perception that better job opportunities can be secured outside Nigeria (M = 3.26, SD = 0.69), indicating that employment prospects abroad are viewed as more favourable. Respondents also agreed that studying and working abroad promotes migration intentions (M = 3.12, SD = 1.04) and that Japa serves as a means of avoiding economic hardship (M = 2.96, SD = 0.95). Moderate agreement was observed for the perception that it is difficult to achieve economic success in Nigeria (M = 2.78, SD = 0.98). The statement suggesting that migrating abroad reduces economic obligation to Nigeria recorded the lowest mean (M = 2.49, SD = 1.16), slightly below the criterion mean, indicating lower agreement relative to other items. The overall grand mean of 3.00 indicates that respondents generally perceive Japa syndrome as having substantial socio-economic implications. The findings suggest that economic hardship, limited job opportunities, and infrastructural deficiencies are key socio-economic factors influencing migration intentions among the youths surveyed.

Research Question 3: What strategies do youths at Adekunle Ajasin University perceive as effective for reducing the prevalence of Japa syndrome in Nigeria?

Table 3 Perceived Strategies for Reducing Japa Syndrome among Nigerian Youths (N = 250)

S/N	Item	SAf (%)	Af (%)	Df (%)	SD f (%)	M	SD
12	Encouraging national pride and a positive view of Nigeria can reduce Japa syndrome.	123 (49.2)	88 (35.2)	20 (8.0)	19 (7.6)	3.26	0.90
13	Parents helping youths value local opportunities can curb Japa syndrome.	96 (38.4)	118 (47.2)	25 (10.0)	11 (4.4)	3.19	0.78
14	Providing better local jobs and career	150 (60.0)	57 (22.8)	39 (15.6)	4 (1.6)	3.41	0.80

	opportunities will discourage youths from leaving Nigeria.						
15	Ensuring transparent and accountable leadership will rebuild youths' trust in Nigeria.	135 (54.0)	61 (24.4)	45 (18.0)	9 (3.6)	3.28	0.88
16	Developing long-term youth-focused programs can make Nigeria a better place for youths to stay.	94 (37.6)	60 (24.0)	48 (19.2)	48 (19.2)	2.80	1.14

Grand Mean = 3.01

Note. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. Criterion mean = 2.50. Mean scores ≥ 2.50 indicate moderate to high perceived effectiveness.

Table 3 presents the perceptions of youths at Adekunle Ajasin University regarding strategies for reducing the prevalence of Japa syndrome in Nigeria. The mean scores for all items ranged from 2.80 to 3.41, all exceeding the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating moderate to high agreement that the identified strategies could effectively mitigate youth migration intentions. The strategy with the highest mean score was providing better local jobs and career opportunities ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.80$), suggesting that respondents strongly perceive employment creation and economic empowerment as the most effective means of discouraging youth migration. This finding underscores the central role of unemployment and limited career prospects in driving the Japa syndrome. Similarly, ensuring transparent and accountable leadership recorded a high mean score ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 0.88$), indicating that good governance and trust in political institutions are perceived as critical factors in retaining youths within the country.

The strategy of encouraging national pride and a positive perception of Nigeria also received strong support ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 0.90$), reflecting the importance of national identity and psychological attachment in migration decisions. In addition, respondents agreed that parental guidance in helping youths value local opportunities could help curb Japa syndrome ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.78$), highlighting the influence of family socialisation on youths' aspirations and decisions. Although developing long-term youth-focused programs recorded the lowest mean score ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 1.14$), it still exceeded the criterion mean, indicating moderate agreement that sustained developmental initiatives are relevant in addressing youth migration pressures. Overall, the grand mean of 3.01 indicates that respondents generally perceive the proposed strategies as effective in reducing Japa syndrome. The findings suggest that addressing youth migration in Nigeria requires a comprehensive approach that combines economic reform, good governance, national reorientation, parental involvement, and sustained youth development programs.

Research Question 4: What academic influences does the Japa syndrome have on Nigerian youths at Adekunle Ajasin University?

Table 4 Perceived Academic Influences of Japa Syndrome among Nigerian Youths (N = 250)

S/N	Item	SAf (%)	Af (%)	Df (%)	SD f (%)	M	SD
17	I prefer to study abroad in order to complete my course of study on time.	165 (66.0)	60 (24.0)	20 (8.0)	5 (2.0)	3.54	0.72
18	Studying in foreign countries will provide me with better academic and life opportunities.	136 (54.4)	92 (36.8)	15 (6.0)	7 (2.8)	3.42	0.73
19	Frequent strike actions in Nigerian higher institutions cause academic delays.	157 (62.8)	57 (22.8)	20 (8.0)	16 (6.4)	3.42	0.88
20	I prefer to study abroad to help reduce economic hardship in my family.	147 (58.8)	57 (22.8)	32 (12.8)	14 (5.6)	3.34	0.90
21	Studying abroad is more academically stable than studying in Nigeria.	156 (62.4)	62 (24.8)	12 (4.8)	20 (8.0)	3.41	0.90

Grand Mean = 3.43

Note. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. Criterion mean = 2.50. Mean scores ≥ 2.50 indicate moderate to strong academic influence.

Table 4 presents the respondents' perceptions of the academic influences of Japa syndrome on Nigerian youths at Adekunle Ajasin University. The mean scores for all items ranged from 3.34 to 3.54, all well above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating a high level of agreement that Japa syndrome significantly influences academic decisions among the youths. The highest mean score was recorded for the statement that respondents prefer to study abroad in order to complete their course of study on time ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 0.72$). This suggests that academic stability and timely graduation are major factors motivating youths to consider foreign education. Closely related to this was the perception that studying abroad is academically more stable than studying in Nigeria ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.90$), reflecting dissatisfaction with the unpredictability of academic calendars in Nigerian higher institutions. Respondents also strongly agreed that frequent strike actions in Nigerian universities cause academic delays ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.88$), reinforcing the view that institutional disruptions play a critical role in shaping migration intentions. In addition, the belief that studying in foreign countries provides better academic and life opportunities recorded a high mean score ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.73$), indicating that international education is perceived as offering superior long-term benefits. Furthermore, respondents agreed that studying abroad is viewed as a means of alleviating family economic hardship ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.90$), suggesting that academic migration is closely linked to broader socio-economic aspirations. The grand mean of 3.43 indicates that respondents generally perceive the academic influence of Japa syndrome as high. Overall, the findings reveal that academic challenges—particularly unstable academic calendars, frequent industrial actions, and perceived limitations in educational quality strongly influence Nigerian youths' inclination toward studying abroad. These results suggest that improving academic stability, infrastructure, and educational quality within Nigerian institutions may significantly reduce

education-driven migration intentions among youths.

Discussion

This study examined Nigerian youths' perceptions of the socio-economic, security, and academic implications of the Japa syndrome, using Adekunle Ajasin University as a case study. The findings reveal that respondents perceive Japa syndrome as having moderate to high implications across all examined dimensions, with academic factors emerging as the most influential, followed by socio-economic and security considerations. Specifically, the results show that youths strongly associate Japa syndrome with better security conditions abroad, including enhanced personal safety, stronger protection of human rights, and a more stable investment climate. Socio-economically, respondents perceive migration as a response to economic hardship, unemployment, and infrastructural decay, with better job opportunities viewed as more attainable outside Nigeria. Academically, the findings indicate a high level of dissatisfaction with Nigeria's higher education system, particularly due to frequent strike actions, unstable academic calendars, and delays in graduation, which significantly shape migration intentions. Furthermore, respondents identified employment creation, good governance, national reorientation, and youth-focused development programs as effective strategies for reducing the prevalence of Japa syndrome.

The findings of this study are largely consistent with existing empirical literature on youth migration and brain drain in Nigeria. The strong perception that security and human rights are better guaranteed abroad aligns with the observations of Menashe-Oren (2020), who links insecurity and conflict to heightened youth migration intentions in sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, Okunade and Awosusi (2023) report that insecurity and uncertainty play a significant role in shaping Nigerians' decisions to migrate, reinforcing the current study's security-related findings. In the socio-economic dimension, the perception that better employment opportunities exist outside Nigeria corroborates earlier findings by Yusuf et al. (2023) and Adeyamju et al. (2024), who identify unemployment, economic hardship, and infrastructural deficiencies as primary drivers of youth migration. The high mean score associated with poor infrastructure is also consistent with Virk et al. (2023), who argue that weak public infrastructure exacerbates youth unemployment and economic frustration. The academic findings strongly support previous studies emphasising the role of educational instability in youth migration. The high agreement that frequent strike actions and unstable academic calendars influence migration intentions aligns with Altbach et al. (2019), who note that academic predictability is a major factor driving international student mobility. Eke et al. (2024) similarly observe that Nigerian youths increasingly pursue education abroad to secure better academic outcomes and future career prospects. The present study reinforces these findings by demonstrating that academic considerations constitute one of the strongest motivations for Japa syndrome among youths. However, a notable divergence emerges in respondents' relatively low agreement that migration reduces their economic obligation to Nigeria. This contrasts with some diaspora-focused studies (e.g., Mueller, 2022; Ughulu, 2024), which emphasise remittances and continued

transnational engagement. This discrepancy suggests that, while youths aspire to migrate, many do not necessarily perceive migration as a complete detachment from national responsibility, highlighting a more nuanced understanding of migration intentions.

The findings of this study signify that Japa syndrome represents more than a migration trend; it reflects a crisis of institutional confidence among Nigerian youths. The high perceptions of insecurity, economic instability, and academic disruption suggest that youth migration is deeply embedded in broader structural and governance challenges. Rather than being driven by individual ambition alone, Japa syndrome appears to be a rational response to systemic constraints that limit youths' ability to achieve personal, economic, and professional fulfilment within Nigeria. In a broader socio-demographic context, these perceptions align with global patterns of youth mobility, where young people increasingly migrate from environments characterised by instability toward societies perceived as offering security, opportunity, and predictability (Chamie, 2020; McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021). Within Nigeria, the concentration of migration aspirations among educated youths raises concerns about long-term human capital depletion, particularly in critical sectors such as education and skilled labour. The academic findings are especially significant, as they suggest that instability within the education system not only undermines learning outcomes but also actively accelerates the outflow of young talent. The results also reflect a psychological dimension of migration: declining national attachment and optimism. When youths consistently perceive foreign systems as superior across security, economic, and academic domains, migration becomes normalised as a survival or advancement strategy rather than an exceptional choice. This normalisation has implications for national identity, social cohesion, and intergenerational development trajectories.

The findings of this study have important implications for policy, education, and national development. First, the strong influence of academic instability on migration intentions implies that reforming Nigeria's higher education system is critical to addressing Japa syndrome. Ensuring stable academic calendars, minimising industrial actions, and improving educational infrastructure could significantly reduce education-driven migration. Second, the socio-economic findings highlight the need for youth-centred economic policies, particularly job creation, skills development, and infrastructural investment. Without meaningful improvements in employment opportunities and living conditions, migration pressures are likely to persist regardless of national reorientation efforts. Third, the perceived effectiveness of transparent and accountable leadership underscores the role of good governance in youth retention. Rebuilding trust in public institutions may strengthen youths' confidence in Nigeria's future and reduce the appeal of migration as an exit strategy. Finally, the study implies that addressing Japa syndrome requires a multidimensional and integrated approach, rather than isolated interventions. Economic reform, educational stability, improved security, and positive national reorientation must be pursued concurrently. Failure to address these interconnected factors risks sustaining a cycle of youth disengagement and

outward migration, with long-term consequences for Nigeria's development.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated Nigerian youths' perceptions of the socio-economic, security, and academic implications of the Japa syndrome, using Adekunle Ajasin University as an empirical case. The findings reveal that Japa syndrome is perceived as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by interrelated structural challenges rather than by isolated individual aspirations. One of the most notable findings that distinguishes this study from much of the existing literature is the comparative strength of academic factors in shaping migration intentions. While prior studies have predominantly emphasised economic hardship and unemployment as the primary drivers of youth migration, this study demonstrates that academic instability particularly frequent strike actions, unpredictable academic calendars, and delayed graduation exerts an even stronger influence on youths' inclination to migrate. The consistently high mean scores recorded across all academic items indicate that educational concerns are not secondary but central to the Japa phenomenon among university youths. Another distinctive finding is the relatively low perception that migration reduces economic obligation to Nigeria, which contrasts with assumptions in some migration discourses that equate youth emigration with disengagement from national responsibility.

This suggests that many youths perceive migration not as abandonment of the country but as a strategic response to systemic constraints. Additionally, the study reveals that youths perceive good governance and employment creation as more effective deterrents to Japa syndrome than moral persuasion alone, underscoring the primacy of structural reforms over individual-level interventions. The study makes several important contributions to the literature on youth migration in Nigeria. First, it advances understanding of Japa syndrome by adopting a perception-based and multidimensional framework that simultaneously examines socio-economic, security, and academic dimensions. This integrated approach provides a more comprehensive explanation of youth migration intentions than studies that focus on a single factor. Second, the study contributes empirically by providing context-specific evidence from a Nigerian public university, a population that is directly affected by academic instability and employment uncertainty. By foregrounding youths' own perceptions, the research offers insights that are directly relevant for policymakers, educational administrators, and development planners seeking to design youth-retention strategies. Third, the findings extend the academic discourse on brain drain by highlighting the role of institutional instability within the education sector as a key push factor. This underscores the need to view migration not only as an economic issue but also as an outcome of governance and institutional performance in higher education.

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research employed a descriptive survey design and relied on self-reported perceptions, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships between Japa syndrome and its perceived implications. Second, the

use of convenience sampling and the focus on a single university restricts the generalizability of the findings to all Nigerian youths. Third, the study did not incorporate qualitative methods, which could have provided deeper insight into the motivations and lived experiences underlying migration intentions. Future research should address these limitations by adopting mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to examine how perceptions of Japa syndrome evolve and translate into actual migration behaviour. Comparative studies across multiple universities, regions, or socio-economic groups would also enhance the external validity of findings. Additionally, future studies could explore the perspectives of policymakers, educators, and diaspora youths to provide a more holistic understanding of the structural and institutional dynamics sustaining Japa syndrome in Nigeria.

REFERENCES

- Adeniran, A. I. (2020). *Migration Crises in 21st Century Africa*. Springer Singapore.
- Adeyemju, F., Alao, B., Opakunbi, O., & Ajibade, T. (2024). The 'japa' syndrome of Nigerian youths as a survival strategy: A socio-economic perspective. *African Journal of Stability and Development (AJSD)*, 16(1), 124-140.
- Agboola, K. M. (2025). Impact of Artisans' Prosopography on Apprentice Interest in Learning-Trade in Ondo Southern Senatorial District. *Al-Hikmah Journal of Education*, 12(1), 381-395.
- Akaeze, C. (2024). *Strategies for Reducing Brain Drain to Sustain Quality Higher Education in Nigeria* (Doctoral dissertation, Concordia University Chicago).
- Alabi, T., & Olajide, B. (2023). Who wants to go where? Regional variations in emigration intention in Nigeria. *African Human Mobility Review*, 9(1), 76-101.
- Altbach, P. G., Reisberg, L., & Rumbley, L. E. (2019). *Trends in global higher education: Tracking an academic revolution* (Vol. 22). Brill.
- Chamie, J. (2020). International migration amid a world in crisis. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 8(3), 230-245.
- Egbule, P. O. (2023). The Effects of Labour Migration and Brain Drain Syndrome on Human Capital Formation in Nigeria. *IAAJAH-IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 9(4).
- Eke, C., Obisike, C. K., Udoka, C. N. I., & Ugoji, P. C. (2024). Robotic Technology Empowerment: Mitigating Youth Migration for Nigerian Prosperity. *International Journal of Engineering and Modern Technology (IJEMT)*, 10(3), 83-93.
- Ita, V. E., & Bassey, J. E. (2022). Rising youth unemployment and the socio-economic realities in Nigeria: the Akwa Ibom State Experience. *International journal of development and Economic Sustainability*, 10(10), 1-14.
- King, R., & Kuschminder, K. (2022). Introduction: definitions, typologies and theories of return migration. In *Handbook of return migration* (pp. 1-22). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Lamid, K. F., Edino, F. O., Attah, E. Y., Onalo, S. M., & Simon, O. P. (2025). Brain Drain and Development in Africa: Challenges, Opportunities, and

- Mitigation Strategies. *International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research (IJAMR)* 9(10), 67-80.
- Liu, J. J. (2024). Middle-class youth fleeing Nigeria: rethinking African survival migration through the Japa phenomenon. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 50(16), 4021-4040.
- Makwudo, K. K., & Nwakwudo, A. E. (2025). Escaping the cave: A Platonic analysis of "Japa" as the philosopher's journey from darkness to light. *Trinitarian: International Journal Of Arts And Humanities*, 1(1).
- Manning, P., & Trimmer, T. (2020). *Migration in world history*. Routledge.
- McAuliffe, M., & Triandafyllidou, A. (2021). Word migration report 2022. **International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Switzerland.**
- Menashe-Oren, A. (2020). Migrant-based youth bulges and social conflict in urban sub-Saharan Africa. *Demographic Research*, 42, 57-98.
- Moses, G. I., Omaliko, J. C., & Onwuama, O. P. (2025). Special Examination Centres: Use, Motivations, and Perceived Effects on Later Academic Performance among Undergraduate Students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. *Journal For Family & Society Research*, 4(2).
- Mueller, C. (2022). Diaspora return and knowledge transfer. In *Handbook of Return Migration* (pp. 331-343). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Ojo, T. O., Oladejo, B. P., Afolabi, B. K., Osungbade, A. D., Anyanwu, P. C., & Shaibu-Ekha, I. (2023). Why move abroad? Factors influencing migration intentions of final year students of health-related disciplines in Nigeria. *BMC Medical Education*, 23(1), 742.
- Okeke-Ihejirika, P., & Odimegwu, I. (2023). Managing the rising tide of Nigerian migrants to the West—A policy vacuum or a structural challenge?. *International Migration*, 61(1), 10-22.
- Okorie, C. O., NWOSU, C. P., Nwaigwe, H. C., Atukpa, E. I., Onele, S., & Nwigwe, C. N. (2024). Youth-Related Crises and the Dynamics of Public Sector Management in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Social Psychology*, 7(2).
- Okunade, S. K., & Awosusi, O. E. (2023). The Japa syndrome and the migration of Nigerians to the United Kingdom: an empirical analysis. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 11(1), 27.
- Otegbale, E. S., Onemena, O. G., & Olowolagba, C. C. (2025). Japa (Migration) Syndrome in Nigeria Palace: A Reading of Selected Francophone and Anglophone Literature. *NIU Journal of Humanities*, 10(3), 51-58.
- Uddin, P. S. O. (2013). Causes, effects and solutions to youth unemployment problems in Nigeria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Economics and Management Sciences*, 4(4), 397-402.
- Ughulu, J. (2024). The Role of Diaspora Entrepreneurship in Economic Development: A Case Study of Nigeria. *International Journal of Economics, Business and Management Research*, 8(04), 09-21.
- Virk, A., Nelson, E. U., & Dele-Adedeji, I. (2023). The challenge of youth unemployment in Nigeria. *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy*, 39(3), 319-329.
- Yusuf, F. A., Adewale, P. S., Jimoh, M., Ogunlana, R. E., & Eebo, T. O. (2023). Japa syndrome: Environmental and socio-economic factors as drivers of mass

emigration of Nigerian youths. *Journal of Education in Black Sea Region*, 9(1), 53-60.