THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN MITIGATING YOUNG PROFESSIONALS' MIGRATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Driven by push factors such as unemployment, insecurity, and poor infrastructure, the emigration of young Nigerian professionals has become a growing concern with significant socio-economic consequences. This study examines the mediating role of public libraries in mitigating the migration of young professionals in Nigeria. Adopting a descriptive survey design and a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach, the study integrated quantitative and qualitative data from 892 participants across eight professional sectors: medical doctors, nurses, pharmacists, accountants, lawyers, engineers, librarians, and journalists. Participants were recruited using a snowball sampling technique via WhatsApp platforms of professional associations. Data were collected using a selfadministered Google Forms questionnaire with both closed- and openended items. Descriptive statistics and narrative analysis were used to analyse the data. Findings revealed that 74.8% of respondents had considered migrating abroad, citing job opportunities, income potential, and insecurity as key drivers. However, 67.2% had accessed public libraries within the past year, primarily for study, career development, and internet use. Importantly, 74% believed that libraries could help reduce youth migration by providing opportunities for skill-building and empowerment. The study concludes that public libraries, if strategically modernised and integrated into national development

frameworks, can serve as vital institutions for professional empowerment and local talent retention in Nigeria.

Keywords: Public   libraries,   Migration,   Youth   empowerment, Professional retention, Nigeria, Mediating role

LE ROLE MEDIATEUR DES BIBLIOTHEQUES PUBLIQUES DANS LA REDUCTION DE LA MIGRATION DES JEUNES PROFESSIONNELS AU NIGERIA

Résumé

Sous l'effet de facteurs de poussée tels que le chômage, l'insécurité et la faiblesse des infrastructures, l'émigration des jeunes professionnels nigérians devient une préoccupation croissante aux conséquences socioéconomiques notables. Cette étude examine le rôle médiateur des bibliothèques publiques dans l'atténuation de la migration de ces jeunes professionnels au Nigeria. En adoptant une approche méthodologique mixte convergente et un plan d'enquête descriptive, l'étude a recueilli des données quantitatives et qualitatives auprès de 892 participants issus de huit secteurs professionnels : médecins, infirmiers, pharmaciens, comptables, avocats, ingénieurs, bibliothécaires et journalistes. Les participants ont été recrutés selon la méthode d'échantillonnage en boule de neige, à travers les plateformes WhatsApp des associations professionnelles. Les données ont été collectées à l'aide d'un questionnaire Google Forms auto-administré, comportant à la fois des questions fermées et ouvertes. L'analyse a été effectuée à l'aide de statistiques descriptives et d'une analyse narrative. Les résultats ont révélé que 74,8 % des répondants avaient envisagé de migrer à l'étranger, invoquant les opportunités d'emploi, le potentiel de revenus et l'insécurité comme facteurs déterminants. Toutefois, 67,2 % avaient fréquenté des bibliothèques publiques au cours de l'année écoulée, principalement pour des raisons d'étude, de développement professionnel et d'accès à Internet. De manière significative, 74 % estimaient que les bibliothèques pouvaient contribuer à réduire la migration des jeunes en offrant des opportunités de formation et d'autonomisation. L'étude conclut que les bibliothèques publiques, si elles sont modernisées de manière stratégique et intégrées dans les cadres nationaux de développement, peuvent jouer un rôle crucial dans l'autonomisation des professionnels et la rétention des talents locaux au Nigeria.

Mots-clés : Bibliothèques publiques, Migration, Autonomisation des jeunes, Rétention professionnelle, Nigeria, Rôle médiateur

INTRODUCTION

Public libraries, traditionally viewed as repositories of books and silent reading spaces, are increasingly recognised as dynamic agents of change within modern societies. In the context of professional migration, particularly among young Nigerians, public libraries hold significant potential to serve as localised interventions that mitigate the drivers of emigration. As institutions committed to knowledge access, public engagement, and lifelong learning, libraries provide critical services such as digital literacy training, career development resources, entrepreneurship support, and access to online certifications. These services are essential in equipping young professionals with the skills and opportunities needed to thrive locally, thereby addressing some of the socioeconomic pressures that contribute to outward migration. [103]In Africa, particularly Nigeria, the migration of young professionals is largely attributed to limited economic opportunities, poor infrastructure, insecurity, and weak institutional support.[104] Within this context, public libraries can play a transformative role by offering inclusive and accessible services aimed at professional empowerment. For instance, public libraries can function as community hubs that facilitate job search activities, host career mentoring sessions, and offer digital platforms for remote learning and certification. [105] These interventions not only enhance employability but also foster a sense of agency and belonging among youth, reducing their reliance on

[103] Isch, E. The Public Library and Intersections of Houselessness in Two Small Cities of Interior British Columbia. Master's thesis, University of British Columbia, Okanagan, 2025. https://open.library.ubc.ca/media/download/pdf/24/1.0447689/4.

[104] Adegoke, D. "'Japa': An Exploratory Study of the Roles of Social Media in an Out-Migration Trend in Nigeria." Social Media + Society 9, no. 4 (2023): 0563051231203691.

[105] Igwebuike, E. C., Udeh, S. N., and Okonkwo, O. M. "Effects of Financial Deepening on Economic Growth of Nigeria (1981–2016)." International Academy Journal of Business Administration Annals 7, no. 1 (2019): 54–67.

international migration as a pathway to success. Globally, other developing nations are beginning to explore the strategic repositioning of public libraries in response to similar challenges. For example, India has invested in modernising public libraries to support digital access and youth entrepreneurship, while Brazil utilises

community libraries to foster social inclusion and skill-building among marginalised groups.[106] Migration has historically been a cornerstone of global demographic shifts, but in recent decades, the movement of young professionals has emerged as a distinct and accelerating trend. In Europe, countries such as Germany and the United Kingdom have seen significant inflows of skilled labour, largely due to favourable immigration policies, labour shortages, and robust economic infrastructures. [107] Simultaneously, nations in Eastern Europe like Romania and Bulgaria are experiencing a "brain drain," as their young professionals migrate westward in search of better salaries and career advancement opportunities. [108] This east-to-west migration dynamic reflects broader patterns across the continent, highlighting a widening divide between source and destination countries regarding economic opportunity and institutional support. Asia presents a contrasting yet equally compelling narrative. In countries like India, the Philippines, and China, large cohorts of young professionals migrate annually to Western nations, driven by limited domestic employment opportunities, political instability, or the allure of higher education and competitive job markets abroad. [109] The Gulf States also attract significant numbers of Asian professionals, particularly in engineering, medicine, and IT fields. However, these migratory trends are often marked by exploitative labour practices and limited social integration, complicating the migration experience.[110] Thus, while migration offers

[106] Haryanto, H., Laugu, N., and Zulaikha, S. R. "Public Libraries as Incubators for Social Inclusion and Entrepreneurship for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): A Progressive Transformation." Jurnal Kependidikan: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian Dan Kajian Kepustakaan Di Bidang Pendidikan, Pengajaran Dan Pembelajaran 10, no. 2 (2024): 760–770.

[107] Nar, M. Ş., and Nar, M. "Examining the Relationship between Globalization and Sustainable Migration in OECD Countries." Problemy Ekorozwoju 20, no. 1 (2025): 129–142.

[108] Chonevski, A. The Balkan Brain-Drain in Cosmopolitan Society: A Narrative Approach. Doctoral dissertation, Barry University, 2024.

[109] Castles, S. "The Forces Driving Global Migration." In Human Trafficking, edited by Maggy Lee. Routledge, 2017.

[110] Konan, E. R. U. Circular Migration and Unequal Treatment of Third-Country Nationals: An

a route to socioeconomic mobility, it also presents structural challenges both to sending and receiving nations.

In North and South America, the United States and Canada continue to be prime destinations for skilled migrants, bolstered by strong

educational institutions and innovation-driven economies. Latin American professionals, especially from countries like Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina, often seek refuge from economic crises and political turbulence by relocating to North America or Europe.[111]

Meanwhile, Australia's immigration strategy prioritises skilled migrants, with its points-based system attracting professionals from across Asia and Africa.[112] Despite welcoming policies, many migrants still face integration barriers, including underemployment and credential recognition challenges, which can hinder their full economic participation. Africa, however, tells a more pressing story. The continent has become a major source of professional migration, often labelled as a "brain drain" due to the exodus of skilled labour in critical sectors like healthcare, education, and technology. Countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya are experiencing significant outflows of young professionals who seek greener pastures in the UK, Canada, and the United States, citing reasons such as poor governance, limited career prospects, and insecurity.[113] The effects are deeply felt, as the loss of talent undermines development goals, weakens public institutions, and exacerbates socioeconomic inequality. Yet, within this trend lies an underexplored potential: the role of local institutions, such as public libraries, in either mitigating or amplifying these migration patterns.

Intersectional Analysis of Migration across Europe, the Gulf Region, and West Africa. Master's thesis, Webster University, 2024.

[111] Freier, L. F., and Doña-Reveco, C. "Introduction: Latin American Political and Policy Responses to Venezuelan Displacement." International Migration 60, no. 1 (2022).

[112] Gonçalves, A. M. P., and Pinto, S. Harmonising Migration: An Analysis of Points-Based Systems Adapting the Best Practices from Canada, Australia, and the UK for a Unified European Union Immigration Framework. Doctoral dissertation, 2024.

[113] Adegoke, D. "'Japa': An Exploratory Study of the Roles of Social Media in an Out-Migration Trend in Nigeria." Social Media + Society 9, no. 4 (2023): 0563051231203691.

In the Nigerian context, the migration of young professionals has intensified in recent years due to deteriorating socio-economic conditions. [114] The phenomenon, popularly referred to as the "Japa" syndrome, reflects a mass exodus of skilled individuals seeking better opportunities abroad due to factors such as economic hardship, political instability, weak healthcare and education systems, and

insecurity.[115] This migration trend has reached alarming proportions, particularly among professionals in the health, legal, education, and engineering sectors, where the loss of talent significantly undermines national development. Despite this ongoing challenge, communitybased institutions like public libraries remain largely excluded from migration policy dialogues and national retention strategies. Yet, public libraries in Nigeria are among the most accessible educational institutions and have shown potential in bridging gaps in digital literacy, access to knowledge, and youth empowerment.[14] The value of public libraries in promoting inclusive learning, skill development, and community engagement. However, the existing literature falls short of connecting these services to youth migration outcomes or examining how libraries could be repositioned to offer sustainable alternatives to international migration. This underexplored intersection between public librarianship and youth migration presents a critical research gap. While there is growing scholarly interest in the socio-economic drivers of Nigerian brain drain, few empirical studies have assessed how local institutions such as libraries can function as mediating agents of change. Given the high rates of digital exclusion, job insecurity, and professional frustration reported among Nigerian youth, strategically rethinking the role of libraries could offer viable solutions for professional retention and national capacity building.

[114] Obani, Eberechukwu Faith, and Boris Happy Odalonu. 2023. "Impact of Rising Migration on Socio-Economic Development of Nigeria (2015-2022)". African Journal of Humanities and Contemporary Education Research 10 (1):39-56. https://publications.afropolitanjournals.com/index.php/ajhcer/article/view/354.

[115] Ok
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Communities through Digital Competencies and Advocacy. Library Trends, 72(4), 712-726. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2024.a949579

While migration among young professionals is a global phenomenon with varying regional dynamics, the role of community-based institutions in shaping these trends remains largely understudied. In the Nigerian context, public libraries are often overlooked in national development strategies, despite their potential to provide access to information, digital literacy, and career development resources. As a result of this gap, this study seeks to examine how public libraries function as mediating agents of change, either by equipping young professionals with the tools to thrive locally or by facilitating informed migration decisions. Therefore, understanding this role is crucial in addressing the systemic factors contributing to professional migration and in crafting sustainable solutions that will strengthen human capital retention in Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the study is to investigate the dynamics of migration patterns among young professionals in Nigeria and examine the role of public libraries as a mediating agent of change in addressing the challenges and opportunities associated with professional migration. While the specific objectives are to:

1. examine the key factors influencing the migration of young professionals from Nigeria to other countries.
2. analyse global migration patterns of young professionals across the globe, with a focus on comparative trends relevant to Nigeria.
3. assess the current roles and capacity of public libraries in Nigeria to support young professionals.
4. explore the potential of public libraries as strategic institutions for mitigating professional migration and promoting local opportunities for youth development.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted a descriptive survey design and employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach to investigate the migration intentions of young professionals in Nigeria and the potential mediating role of public libraries in addressing this phenomenon. The

methodological framework followed Creswell and Plano Clark's [116] recommendations for integrating quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis concurrently, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of both statistical trends and personal experiences. To reach the target population of young professionals across diverse sectors in Nigeria, the study employed a snowball sampling technique. Initial contact was made with individuals from

various professional bodies, including medical doctors, nurses, pharmacists, chartered accountants, lawyers, engineers, librarians, and journalists. These key contacts were asked to disseminate the survey link through their association's WhatsApp group platforms and encourage their colleagues to participate in the study. This method was instrumental in expanding the study's reach, particularly given the dispersed nature of the target population across professional and geographical boundaries. Data were collected over four months, from November 28, 2024, to March 28, 2025. A self-administered questionnaire was developed using Google Forms and included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The instrument was designed to capture both the measurable aspects of migration intentions (quantitative data) and rich, contextual insights into participants' motivations, perceptions, and lived experiences (qualitative data). Each survey link was accompanied by an introductory note outlining the purpose of the study and an informed consent form to ensure ethical compliance. Participation was voluntary, and participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. To enhance the reliability and validity of the research instrument, it was reviewed by two subject-matter experts in social sciences to evaluate the content clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. A pilot study involving 25 professionals was conducted to pretest the instrument. Feedback from the pilot informed revisions to improve question clarity and logical flow. The internal consistency of the Likert-scale items was measured using Cronbach's alpha, which indicated a high level of reliability. By the close of the data collection period, a total of 892 responses had been

[116] Creswell, J. W., and Plano Clark, V. L. Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2018.

received. These responses formed the basis of the final analysis. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations, to interpret patterns in demographic characteristics and migration-related variables. For the qualitative component, thematic analysis was employed to identify emerging themes from participants' open-ended responses, providing deeper insight into their experiences and perspectives. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the relevant gatekeepers of each professional group's communication platform before survey distribution. All data were stored securely and used solely for academic purposes, in compliance with ethical standards and data protection regulations.

While the study employed descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations to interpret trends in the quantitative data, no inferential statistical tests (such as crosstabulations, chi-square tests, correlations, or regressions) were conducted to examine the strength or direction of relationships between variables of interest, such as between public library usage and migration intention. As such, the findings provide a broad overview of participant perceptions and behaviours but do not allow for conclusions about statistical significance or causal associations. This limitation is acknowledged and suggests the need for further studies employing more robust inferential techniques to deepen understanding of these relationships and support evidence-based policy interventions.

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic Information (N = 892)

Category	Subcategory	Frequency (n=892)	Percentage (%)
Age	Under 25	223	25%
	25–34	356	40%
	35–44	178	20%
	45 and above	135	15%
Gender	Male	535	60%

	Female	339	38%
	Prefer not to say	18	2%
Professional Field	Medical Doctor	134	15%
	Nurse	89	10%
	Pharmacist	89	10%
	Chartered Accountant	71	8%
	Lawyer	107	12%
	Engineer	160	18%
	Librarian	116	13%
	Journalist	36	4%
	Other	89	10%
Years of Professional Experience	Less than 1 year	71	8%
	1–5 years	356	40%
	6–10 years	267	30%
	More than 10 years	198	22%
Geopolitical Zone	South-West	214	24%
	South-East	116	13%
	South-South	125	14%
	North-Central	143	16%
	North-East	107	12%
	North-West	187	21%

Source: Author's Work, 2024

As shown in Table 1, the demographic profile of the 892 respondents provides a clear understanding of the young professional population in Nigeria. Most participants (40%) were within the 25–34 age range, while those under 25 constituted 25%, indicating that approximately 65% of the sample were young adults. This age distribution aligns with the study's focus on early-career professionals and supports the relevance of examining migration patterns within this cohort. Older respondents were fewer, with 20% aged 35–44 and 15% aged 45 and

above, which may reflect lower migration intent among more established professionals. In terms of gender, 60% of participants identified as male and 38% as female, while 2% preferred not to disclose their gender. This male dominance may be attributed to the representation of professions like engineering and law, where gender disparities persist. Participants came from a broad spectrum of professional fields. Engineers represented the largest proportion (18%), followed by medical doctors (15%), librarians (13%), and lawyers (12%). Nurses and pharmacists each accounted for 10%, chartered accountants 8%, and journalists the smallest share at 4%. An additional 10% identified with other professional backgrounds. This wide disciplinary representation suggests that the sample captures perspectives from sectors most affected by professional migration, particularly in health, law, technology, and education. Regarding work experience, most participants (40%) reported between 1–5 years of professional experience, followed by 30% with 6–10 years, 22% with more than 10 years, and only 8% with less than one year. This distribution implies that most respondents are in the early to mid-stages of their careers - periods typically associated with heightened career mobility and decision-making regarding emigration. Consequently, this cohort provides a valuable lens for understanding the motivations and challenges related to international migration among Nigeria's skilled workforce.

Table 2: Factors of Migration (N = 892)

Question	Yes	No
Have you considered migrating abroad in the past 2 years?	667 (78%)	225 (25.2%)

Reason	Frequency (n-667)	Percentage (%)
Better job opportunities	543	81.4
Higher income	525	78.7
Insecurity and safety concerns	504	75.6
Poor healthcare and infrastructure	457	68.5

Access to quality education	421	63.2
Political instability	396	59.4
Family or social connections abroad	260	38.9
Other (poor governance, discrimination)	43	6.4

Source: Author's Work, 2024

As shown in Table 2, a substantial majority of participants (74.8%) reported that they had considered migrating abroad within the past two years, indicating a strong inclination toward international relocation among Nigerian young professionals. In contrast, only 25.2% stated that they had not contemplated migration during the same period. Among those expressing migration intentions, the leading motivating factors were the pursuit of better job opportunities (81.4%), the prospect of earning a higher income (78.7%), and concerns about insecurity and personal safety (75.6%). Other frequently cited drivers included dissatisfaction with the healthcare system and infrastructural deficiencies (68.5%), limited access to quality education (63.2%), and political instability (59.4%). Additionally, 38.9% of respondents indicated that social or familial ties abroad influenced their decision to consider emigration. These findings highlight the multifaceted nature of migration motivations, rooted primarily in economic and security concerns. The relative influence of each factor is further detailed through the mean scores and standard deviations presented in Table 3, which quantify the perceived impact of each variable on respondents' migration decisions.

Table 3: Extent to Which Selected Factors Influence Migration Decisions (N = 892)

Factor	M	SD
Job opportunities	4.53	0.71
Insecurity	4.38	0.84
Educational opportunities	4.12	0.93

Health system quality	4.08	0.97
Economic conditions	4.31	0.76
Political stability	4.00	1.02

Source: Author's Work, 2024

As shown in Table 3, job opportunities had the highest mean score (M = 4.53, SD = 0.71), indicating that it is the most influential factor driving migration intentions among respondents. This was followed by insecurity (M = 4.38, SD = 0.84) and overall economic conditions (M = 4.31, SD = 0.76), both of which also received high ratings. These results suggest that professional advancement, financial prospects, and concerns about personal safety are the primary considerations influencing the decision to migrate. Although political stability had the lowest mean score (M = 4.00, SD = 1.02), it was still rated above average on the 5-point scale, implying that it remains a significant factor in shaping migration decisions. The overall high mean values across all variables demonstrate that young professionals perceive multiple, interrelated systemic challenges as contributing to their desire to seek opportunities abroad.

Table 4: Awareness of Professional Migration and Destination Countries for Skilled Professionals (N = 892)

Category	Response Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Are you aware of young professionals migrating from other countries?	Yes	734	82.2%
	No	158	17.8%
Which countries do you think attract the most skilled professionals globally?	United States	742	83.2%

Canada	671	75.2%
United Kingdom	625	70.0%
Australia	512	57.4%
Germany	473	53.0%
United Arab Emirates	308	34.5%
Other	119	13.3%

Source: Author's Work, 2024

As presented in Table 4, 82.2% of respondents indicated awareness of young professionals migrating from other African countries, suggesting a high level of global migration awareness among Nigerian participants. This finding reflects an understanding that skilled migration is not a uniquely Nigerian issue, but part of a broader international phenomenon affecting many developing nations. In contrast, 17.8% of respondents reported no such awareness, which may reflect limited exposure to global discourse or a more localised perspective on migration. Participants were also asked to identify countries they believe attract the most skilled professionals worldwide. The United States was the most frequently mentioned (83.2%), likely due to its well-established reputation for high-paying employment, career advancement opportunities, and high living standards. Canada (75.2%) and the United Kingdom (70.0%) followed closely, both being known for stable political systems, robust healthcare and education sectors, and inclusive immigration policies. Other commonly cited destinations included Australia (57.4%) and Germany (53.0%), which are perceived to offer strong economies and high demand for skilled labour, particularly in technical and healthcare fields. The United Arab Emirates was selected by 34.5% of respondents, reflecting its emergence as a regional hub for skilled professionals, particularly in sectors such as construction, engineering, and finance. These responses collectively demonstrate participants' awareness of global labour markets and the varied factors that shape international migration trends among skilled professionals.

Table 5: Public Library Usage (N = 892)

Question	Yes	No

Have you used a public library in Nigeria in the past 12 months?	600 (67.2%)	292 (32.8%)

Source: Author's Work, 2024

How would you rate the capacity of public libraries in your area to support young professionals?

A significant proportion of participants (67.2%) indicated that they had utilised public libraries in the past 12 months, signaling that libraries remain important for young professionals despite facing challenges such as limited resources and underfunding. The primary reasons for using libraries were related to study and professional growth. Many participants visited libraries for research and study purposes, especially when preparing for exams or conducting jobrelated research. A medical doctor shared, "I often visit the library when I need to focus on studying for professional exams or conducting research for work-related projects". This emphasises the critical role that libraries play in fostering academic and professional development in a peaceful, resource-rich environment. In addition to study and research, career development was another significant reason for library visits. Many young professionals reported using libraries to engage in career-related activities such as accessing professional development resources and participating in workshops.

"I visit the library for career development seminars and networking events. It has helped me stay informed about trends in my field" (An Engineer). Libraries, therefore, serve as hubs for career growth, offering more than just books but also professional guidance and networking opportunities. Another notable finding was the high percentage of participants (over 60%) who used libraries to access free internet services. Given the often-unreliable internet access at home or in workplaces, public libraries provide an essential access point for young professionals seeking to conduct research, communicate, or engage with online learning platforms. "I rely on the library for internet access, especially since my home internet connection is unreliable" (A lawyer stated). This highlights the crucial role that libraries play in

bridging the digital divide, especially in a country where internet access remains a significant barrier for many.

Rating the Capacity of Public Libraries

When participants were asked to evaluate the capacity of public libraries in their area to support young professionals, mixed reviews were received. Many participants rated the availability of up-to-date resources, pointing to the outdated nature of materials in certain libraries. One participant, a lawyer, noted, "The resources in my local library are outdated, especially in my field of Law. It would help if there were more current legal materials". This feedback underscores a key challenge for libraries: the need to modernise and update their collections to match the evolving demands of the professional world. The perspective on the internet and ICT facilities was similarly divided. While some participants expressed satisfaction with the available internet access, others pointed to challenges with slow connections and occasional outages. "The internet facilities at the library are slow and sometimes unusable, which makes it hard to complete tasks efficiently" (Engineer). This suggests that while libraries are seen as important resources for digital engagement, there remains a need for significant investment in improving ICT infrastructure to ensure a smooth and efficient user experience. Career development programmes in public libraries also received mixed ratings. Many participants (about 40%) rated the availability of these programmes as "Fair," with some expressing a desire for more structured and specialised career development initiatives. This points to a significant gap in services that could be filled by public libraries, which are uniquely positioned to offer ongoing career development resources tailored to the needs of young professionals. In terms of training and entrepreneurial programmes, the responses echoed similar sentiments. While some participants recognised the importance of skill-building activities, many rated these programmes as only "Fair." This suggests that libraries could do more to cater to the specific skill development needs of young professionals, especially in areas like digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and soft skills. Lastly, participants also evaluated the youth engagement and empowerment initiatives offered by public libraries. Many participants rated these programmes as "Fair,"

acknowledging their existence but highlighting their limitations in terms of impact.

Table 6: Potentials of Libraries (N = 892)

Question	Yes	No
Do you believe public libraries can help reduce youth migration through skill-building and empowerment?	660 (74.0%)	232 (26.0%)

Source: Author's Work, 2024

Of the 892 respondents, a substantial majority (74%) indicated that they believe public libraries can play a role in mitigating youth migration. In contrast, (26%) did not share this view. These results highlight a strong perception among young professionals that public libraries possess the potential to serve as platforms for skill development and empowerment.

In what ways do you think public libraries can contribute to professional development and reduce the need to migrate abroad?

Participants widely expressed that public libraries hold untapped potential to serve as catalysts for professional development and local retention of young talent in Nigeria. A recurring theme in the responses was the idea that libraries could serve as access points for upskilling, especially for professionals in underserved regions. An engineer noted, *"If public libraries offered consistent ICT training and certification programmes, I wouldn't need to consider spending so much to access these services elsewhere or think about relocating abroad just to grow professionally."* Several participants emphasised the importance of career development programming. A medical doctor explained that *"public libraries could organise career talks, mentoring programmes, and CV writing workshops, which would help young professionals better navigate local job markets"*. In this view, libraries can act as bridges between academic qualifications and real-world employability,

something that is often cited as a reason for professional migration. The issue of digital access and resources was also central. Many respondents suggested that with upgraded internet infrastructure and online learning partnerships, public libraries could serve as "learning hubs for global certifications," such as Microsoft, Google, or Coursera-based programmes (stated by a pharmacist). This would reduce the need to migrate for such qualifications. Additionally, entrepreneurial support was mentioned frequently. Overall, the consensus among participants was that public libraries could significantly influence professional development and youth retention if strategically repositioned. Their role as inclusive, community-centred platforms was repeatedly highlighted as a powerful, yet underutilised, solution to Nigeria's ongoing migration challenges.

DISCUSSION

This study sought to investigate the dynamics of migration among young professionals in Nigeria and assess the role of public libraries as mediating institutions capable of reducing professional emigration through empowerment and skill-building. The findings corroborate existing literature on the migration trends and drivers among young professionals and highlight the latent potential of public libraries in offering localised solutions to this challenge. The study revealed that a significant proportion (74.8%) of young professionals in Nigeria have considered migrating abroad in the past two years. The leading factors influencing this decision included better job opportunities, higher income potential, and insecurity, each cited by over 75% of respondents. These findings are in line with previous studies, such as those by Liu[117] and Ojo et al.[118], which identified economic hardship, limited professional advancement, and safety concerns as dominant "push" factors prompting skilled migration from Nigeria. Oguejiofor

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[117] Liu, J. J. "Middle-Class Youth Fleeing Nigeria: Rethinking African Survival Migration through the Japa Phenomenon." Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 50, no. 16 (2024): 4021–4040.

[118] Ojo, T. O., Oladejo, B. P., Afolabi, B. K., Osungbade, A. D., Anyanwu, P. C., and Shaibu-Ekha, I. "Why Move Abroad? Factors Influencing Migration Intentions of Final Year Students of HealthRelated Disciplines in Nigeria." BMC Medical Education 23, no. 1 (2023): 742.

and Onwuasoigwe [119] further reinforce this narrative by identifying unemployment and political instability as major drivers behind the surge in youth migration under the "Japa" phenomenon. The global migration awareness among participants was also high, with over 82% acknowledging that similar trends exist in countries like India, Ghana, and the Philippines. Popular migration destinations identified by respondents, such as the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, correspond with global reports that emphasise the pull of these countries due to better work conditions, higher living standards, and political stability. This awareness situates Nigeria's experience within a broader global context of professional mobility driven by socio-economic inequalities between nations. The study revealed that a considerable number of respondents (67.2%) had used a public library in Nigeria within the past 12 months, primarily for research,

study, career development, and internet access. This reinforces literature from Adebayo[19] and Igwebuike et al.[120], which highlights the essential services public libraries provide, especially in underserved areas. Participants in this study viewed libraries not just as academic spaces but as critical access points for professional growth and digital empowerment. However, mixed assessments regarding the capacity of libraries were notable. While respondents recognised their value, many pointed out shortcomings in up-to-date resources, reliable ICT infrastructure, and structured programming. These findings echo those of Adeyemi et al. [121][122], who reported a lack of formalised CSR frameworks and inconsistency in library programming, despite the

[119] Oguejiofor, P. O., and Onwuasoigwe, C. "Hordes of Struggling African Youths Will Continue to Migrate en Masse to Developed Countries: The Political Economy of 'Japa' from Nigeria to the United Kingdom (2015–2023)." International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science 8, no. 4 (2024).

[120] Igwebuike, E. C., Udeh, S. N., and Okonkwo, O. M. "Effects of Financial Deepening on Economic Growth of Nigeria (1981–2016)." International Academy Journal of Business Administration Annals 7, no. 1 (2019): 54–67.

[121] Adeyemi, I. O., Abiona, B. F., Adebisi, A. I., Ishola, K. I., and Ogunlowo, H. D. "Assessment of Corporate Social Responsibility Practices in Selected Public Libraries in South-West and NorthCentral, Nigeria." International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility 9, no. 3 (2024). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40991-023-00086-4.

[122] Adeyemi, I. O., Abiona, B. F., Adebisi, A. I., Ishola, K. I., and Ogunlowo, H. D. "Assessment of Corporate Social Responsibility Practices in Selected Public Libraries in South-West and NorthCentral, Nigeria." International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility 9, no. 3 (2024). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40991-023-00086-4.

presence of some socio-economic initiatives. Eiriemiokhale and Sulyman[123] also acknowledged that despite strong leadership within the library sector, underfunding and weak policy support have hindered the full realisation of libraries' strategic roles. Participants proposed practical ways in which libraries could be repositioned to curb youth migration. These included offering certification-based ICT training, entrepreneurship development programmes, job readiness workshops, and acting as incubators for start-ups. As noted by a pharmacist, "Public libraries could become certification hubs for Google, Microsoft, and Coursera programmes this alone would attract many young people who are looking to upskill." This suggestion aligns with Bashorun[124], who emphasised the need for professional empowerment within Nigeria as a core strategy to slow emigration.

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[19] Adebayo, F. A. "University Education and Poverty Alleviation as Mechanisms for Enhancing Youth
      Development in Nigeria." International Journal of Psychology and Counseling 4, no. 1 (2012): 1–5.

Notably, 74% of respondents believed that public libraries could help reduce youth migration if equipped with relevant programmes. Respondents emphasised the need for libraries to provide tailored services for career growth, especially in areas like CV writing, mentorship, business funding information, and digital literacy training. These perspectives reflect the findings of Aregbesola et al. [125], who argue that libraries, as knowledge hubs, must transition into roles that promote sustainable development by directly addressing the economic and social gaps that compel migration. The study findings suggest that libraries are uniquely positioned to respond to Nigeria's brain drain crisis by facilitating local empowerment. However, to unlock this potential, systemic investment, strategic partnerships, and policy reforms are needed. Strengthening public libraries should not only be a

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[123] Eiriemiokhale, K. A., Sulyman, A. S., Oloruntola, M., Iskil, A. B., and Raji, M. F. "Roles of
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[124] Bashorun, B. Migration Trajectories: A Case Study of High-Skilled Youths in Nigeria. Bachelor's
      thesis, Malmö University, (2023).
      https://mau.divaportal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1795435.

[125] 25   Aregbesola, A., Owolabi, S. E., and Adebisi, T. "Going to the Cities: The Strategic Roles of
Public
      Libraries in Promoting Sustainable Development Goals." Public Library Quarterly 43, no. 3 (2024):
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cultural or educational agenda it should also be considered a migration intervention strategy aimed at making local environments more viable for skilled professionals.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study affirms that the migration of young professionals in Nigeria is driven by structural push factors like those seen in other developing countries. While the desire to migrate is strong, public libraries hold substantial promise as local institutions that can be repurposed to address professional disenfranchisement. Echoing the literature and the lived experiences of participants, the study emphasises the importance of revitalising public libraries as community-based platforms for skill-building, professional development, and youth empowerment. Therefore, libraries can become pivotal in reversing the tide of professional migration and fostering sustainable national development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the key findings of this study, several actionable recommendations were developed.

1.   The government and relevant stakeholders should address key challenges pushing young professionals to migrate, such as unemployment, insecurity, and poor working conditions. This can be achieved by creating more job opportunities, improving safety, and enhancing the working environment, especially in critical sectors like healthcare, law, and engineering.

2.   Nigeria should study and adopt strategies used by other developing countries like India and the Philippines. These include engaging skilled professionals in the diaspora, encouraging them to return or invest in local industries, and creating partnerships that promote skills transfer and professional reintegration.

3.   Public libraries should be modernised with current books,
     digital tools, reliable internet, and trained staff. They should
     offer services like digital literacy training, access to online
     courses, and professional development events to make them
     more relevant and useful to young professionals.
4.   Libraries should be part of national plans to reduce youth
     migration. They can host programmes like entrepreneurship
     training, job readiness workshops, and mentorship schemes.
     Providing access to global certifications through platforms like
     Coursera or Google can help young people gain valuable skills
     locally, reducing the desire to move abroad.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

I, Ailakhu, Ugonna Vivian, declare that there is no conflict of interest
in the study/paper titled The Mediating Role of Public Libraries in
Mitigating Young Professionals' Migration in Nigeria submitted to
IJMGS Journal.

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