

Climate-Induced Migration and Regional Governance in Africa: A Qualitative Study of Policy Response in West Africa

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Abstract: The study has considered the issue of climate induced migration within the context of the strength or weaknesses of its governance instruments within the West African sub-region. The fulcrum of the theoretical and qualitative evaluation is the extent to which current migration legislation and administrative protocols fit into modern definitions of climate driven migration as distinct from refugees and internally displaced persons, who acquired such status on the basis of violent conflicts and armed hostilities. The paper thus posits that migration being a strategy for populating a place should be treated with outmost care as everyone's progenitors migrated from somewhere and none were planted like a tree in a particular location. It was also found that migration serves as a means of knowledge, skill and technology transfer; thus, implying that some of the world's inventions came from migrants who applied their indigenous practices to better their lives and those of their hosts. Given the benefits, generality and sensitivity of this human geolocation phenomenon, the study found that it is incumbent on national governments of West African States to collaborate with the regional organizing body like ECOWAS to fashion out well detailed policy frameworks that protects and provide basic rights and privileges for persons defined as climate-induced migrants; while also providing punitive measures for institutions and person that would pursue discriminative agendas against migrants.

Key points: regional governance, climate-induced migration, complex interaction, vulnerability, adaptive capacity, policy instrument, climate-responsive governance, environmental triggers.

1.0 Background of the Study

The paper examined the contextual complexity of the inter-relationship between climate change, migration, quality of governance and its support administrative structures within the West African subregion. This area is noted for its low adaptability and high vulnerability to climate changes (Turco et al., 2015). As have been observed West Africa, been one of the most climate-vulnerable regions of the world, have witnessed several significant environmental transformations that have directly impacted on human existence and mobility. Field study for this paper indicate that Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) reported that in 2022 alone, approximately 71.1 million people lived as internally displaced persons; while in the year 2023, an approximate 60.9 million persons were internally displaced and 28.3 million of this population were displaced due to conflicts; and 32.6 million displacements were caused by disasters.

Further, in 2023, about 8,493,400 migrations were recorded within West African countries due to climate related disasters and conflicts. This number represent about 2% of the population of West African states which was placed at 446,044,000 based on United Nations 2023 Statistical Report. This staggering statistics is a clarion call for the urgent need for constant studies that can continuously shape policy direction and decisions (Osei-Amponsah et al., 2023). This phenomenon thus underscores the critical nexus between climate change and migration, therefore necessitating

the need for comprehensive policy frameworks to support vulnerable populations, since people are constantly displaced globally in relation to unplanned environmental disasters.

In view of the foregoing, it is safe to draw inference from field study for this paper and to posit that the drivers of climate-induced migration in West Africa are complicatedly multifaced, when viewed along a combination of factors. These comprises extreme weather conditions such as perennial floods and droughts, political conflicts and socio-economic instability, in addition to religious based skirmishes of various dimensions. In the forgoing regard, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has conducted its studies and documented rising temperatures and increased frequency of severe weather patterns in the West African region. The Report has indicated how this complicated situation has aggravated food insecurity and economic challenges for communities that are basically reliant on rainfed agriculture (Schürmann, 2022). The study observed that while migration is often seen from the viewpoint of being a coping mechanism or response to climate impacts, it also mirrors wider socio-economic circumstances, which requires the inculcation of effective policy responses with adequate capacity to address social, environmental and economic factors that enhance the resilience of the people (Huang, 2023; Lübken, 2019).

Given the forgoing challenge, regional governance mechanisms, such as the administrative instruments established by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), have aimed to enable the free movement of people as to support displaced populations, which studies have shown that for sub-Saharan region a migration by displacements have been on a steady rise from 3.7m people in 2013 to 7.4m in 2022; further, in 2023 this figure rose to about 8.5m (United Nations Statistical Report, 2023; IDMC, 2022).

In view of these daunting challenges, the implementation of these regional agreements and instruments has faced significant challenges due to financial constraints, lack of political will, national political resistance especially from opposition parties, and notable policy gaps in areas that are incidental to differences between national and regional policy directions. In the foregoing vein, a school of thoughts have maintained that current administrative framework has often ignored the complexities of climate-induced migration to the detriment of the wider populations that are in such difficulties. This has thus created an urgent need for comprehensive approaches that can prioritize the rights and socio-economic needs of migrating individuals who have been displaced on the basis of various natural or man-made disasters within the broader vagaries of climate adaptation strategies (Schürmann, 2025).

Consequent on the foregoing, climate-induced migration in West Africa can be said to be shaped by a complex interaction of environmental, economic, social, and political factors. On account of these factors, human and nomadic migration have characterized the West African region's pattern of existence for many years for which an estimated 7,551,660 immigrants have moved around the 16 countries of West Africa as of 2020 (Korte and Landmesser, 2025). Having looked at the global human displacement conditions, as detailed above, it is safe to reinforce further that migration is also driven by a multitude of natural and man-made challenges; which includes forced displacements due to agriculturally related conflicts, seasonal agricultural relocation, the search for better life or employment opportunities that are agriculture based, in addition to the adverse effects of climate change (Korte and Landmesser, 2025).

The current responses to climate-induced migration often include adopting some coping strategies, which may involve relocating to urban areas in search of alternative livelihoods (Osei-Amponsah, 2023). Thus, as different migration patterns evolve, understanding these dynamics is crucial for regional governance and policy-making that is clearly aimed at mitigating the impacts of climate change on susceptible populations in West Africa.

1.1 Research Gap in Literature

Further, the study employed qualitative analysis of literature as its evaluation methodology. This method allowed for the identification of research gap in knowledge. It was on the basis of this finding that the paper found that there is a dearth of policy instruments or supporting literatures in

respect of certain areas of migration complications such as the aspect of undocumented knowledge, skill and indigenous technology transfer that accompany migration or lack of policy framework or enforcements on discriminations against victims of climate induced migrations.

The study in response to these identified gaps applied ethnographical research and stakeholder field engagement to explore the subsisting experiences of individuals and communities and the ways they have been affected by climate changes and migration. Thus, by analyzing the means and basis of local adaptation and their strategies; and using same to assess the effectiveness of existing policies, this study aims to fill the gap by probing, informing and enhancing governance responses to climate-induced migration in West Africa, thus fostering resilience in the face of ongoing environmental challenges (Korte and Landmesser, 2025; Bendandi, 2020).

The foregoing implies that the vulnerability of West Africa to climate unpredictability is notable, and this is basically due to its low adaptive capacity and reduced opportunities in terms of alternative actions. Consequently, Korte and Landmesser (2025) in their work discussed a report published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The said IPCC Report hinted that the West African region is experiencing incremental rise in surface temperatures, increased frequency of extreme weather conditions, and significant sea level rise. The Report further affirmed that this sea level rise has particularly impacted on communities that are below sea level. In this vein, changing climate conditions directly threatens agrarian livelihoods, as over 80% of the population within this region relies on rainfed agriculture, hence making them predominantly susceptible to food insecurity and economic instability (Osei-Amponsah, 2023; Korte and Landmesser (2025).

It should be noted that migration patterns in the West African region are sensitive to changing natural or man-made conditions, thus causing human relocation from the arid north to the more humid south (Schürmann, 2022). As could be seen, factors influencing migration decisions are multipronged. Thus, while environmental factors are notably significant, social and economic drivers, such as job availability and access to land also play a crucial role.

Further, another factor is political instability, which have been known to be driven by conflicts in countries like Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria. This situation has been known to further complicates the migration dynamics (Schürmann, 2022; Korte and Landmesser, 2025). In the over all, field study for this interrogation provided the viewpoint that these interconnected socio-economic drivers engender the need for comprehensive policy frameworks that can address both climate change and incidental migration tendencies in an all-inclusive manner. The study found that such policy instruments are currently unavailable.

1.2 Problem Statement

The primary drivers of climate-induced migration in West Africa include extreme weather conditions such as floods and droughts, rising temperature, which are compounded by incremental environmental changes like desertification and rise in sea-level due to ozone layer depletion. Thus, issues like rainfall variability have been known to severely impact on agricultural productivity in the region. This does result food insecurity and thus invoke some levels of people migration in search of better living conditions (Huang, 2023). Consequently, field studies have shown that heavy rainfall conditions, have resulted significant flooding which has produced displacement of substantial populations of the community; therefore, indicating the direct relationship between natural climatic condition, huma-driven environmental devastation and migration decisions (Summer, 2025). In Nigeria for instance poor planning and lack of political will have been a challenge in tackling the perennial flooding from dams. This man-made problem results the displacement of hundreds of communities annually without a hope of permanent solution.

As a problem case for this research, field study also indicated that environmental factors and socio-economic conditions also play a significant role, what researching. Many members of affected communities who face adverse effects of climate change may not have the resources to adapt to the change brought by climate variability. This situation in turn facilitate migration as a sustainable

strategy to diversify and mitigate risks, and also seek better opportunities elsewhere (Korte and Landmesser, 2025; Lübken, 2019). Further, the concept of social transformation through adversity serves as the basis for examining the problems incidental to these dynamics, which includes, demographic changes, agrarian practices, and economic conditions that influence migration decisions (Korte and Landmesser, 2025; Blocher et al, (2015).

On the other hand, there is growing evidence that drought-induced out-migration from regions within Sahelian fringes of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso has significantly increased since 2000 (Borderon et al., 2019). As a significant concern, regional policy instruments have continuously treated environmental migration as an ad-hoc or sideline humanitarian problem rather than a structural governance challenge within the region.

Conversely, nomadic migration which was once a regulated socio-ecological adaptation has transformed into a security threat issue as demonstrated by the 2022 Sokoto-Maradi corridor conflicts arising from well coordinated attacks in addition to the 2023 Wassa-Akropong clashes in Ghana (Olaniyan & Okeke-Uzodike, 2015). Thus, as a problem, the absence of historically knowledgeable and climate-responsive governance within the West African region has become a breeding ground for recurring hazards including, farmer-herder violence, urban slum expansion syndrome, and recruitment of displaced persons into terrorists' networks, which are presented as alternative survival strategies. These are all problems worth scientific evaluation and proffering of solution.

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives

The study found that several theories have been used in attempts at explaining the complexities incidental to climate-induced migration which also include agrarian based nomadic migration. For instance, *migration system theory* holds the suggestion that changes in one part of a closed system does affect the entire migratory flow. This theory reinforces the interconnectedness of migrant sending and migrant receiving locations (Korte and Landmesser, 2025).

Additionally, it should further be noted that another school of thought have propounded the *survivalist theory* that opines that at certain point, some families may send some members to less affected regions as a preservation and coping strategy (Blocher et al., 2015). The study also considered the *theory of climatic migration* which points that environmental degradation being a major driver of climate migration is contemplative of governance and policy weaknesses (Myers & Kent, 1995). These perspectives imply that climate-induced migration is not merely a response to environmental stressors but is closely connected to household decision-making processes that are influenced by broader political and socio-economic contexts (Korte and Landmesser, 2025). This study is based on a combination of both frameworks.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are based on relevant issues and resulting questions that seeks to unravel the effectiveness or weaknesses of migration management including its governance

instruments and structures; these are summarized as follows:

1. Analyze how ECOWAS and national governments frameworks have been designed to respond to climate-induced migrations while investigating the historical evolution of nomadic migration systems and their contemporary threat profile to the region.
2. Propose and recommend regionally coordinated measures that has the capacity to mitigate the negative impacts of both climate and nomadic migration in the West African region.
3. Assess the socio-political consequences of human mobility in the West African region and propose governance strategies that can mitigate the negative impacts of climate and nomadic migration.
4. Examine the effects and consequences of human and nomadic migration to regional peace, security, and socio-economic conditions with a focus on herdsmen pastoralists.

1.5 Outline of the Study

The study commenced with a background which dealt with the contextual complexity of the range of relationships between climate change, forced migration, quality of governance policies and administrative support structures for response within the West African subregion. The background of the study also drew attention to the need for continuous study that can be used to continuously shape policy decisions that support vulnerable populations.

The background of the study further identified key drivers of human and forced migration to range from extreme weather conditions such as perennial floods and droughts, politically motivated conflicts and socio-economic instability incidental land ownership tussles, religious skirmishes, greenhouse warming, rising temperatures and increased frequency of severe weather patterns, etc. the study also has a research gap in literature that unraveled the key premises of its interrogation and then delved into its problem statement and theoretical perspectives.

The study for identified four objectives which are the fulcrum on which the research revolves. The objectives include understanding of the governance framework that has been initiated by ECOWAS to aid its response to climate-induced migration, and how nomadic migration is a consequential fall out; it also deals what the regionally coordinated measures that has the capacity to mitigate climate driven nomadic migration. The objectives of the study also dealt with socio-political consequences and policy mitigating measures; in addition to examining the effects and consequences in respect of regional peace, security, and socio-economic conditions.

2.0 Literature Review

The study notes that climate-induced migration has been recognized as a significant climate adaptation strategy to mostly unforeseen environmental and socio-economic stressors (Rigaud et al., 2021). In this vein, various theories have been used to explain the basis and relative implications; one of such is the *theory of climatic migration* which explains how environmental degradation should be treated as a major driver of climate migration and aggravated by governance and policy weaknesses (Myers & Kent, 1995; Croi, 2024; Kälin & Schrepfer, 2012).

In view of the foregoing, regional governance bodies like ECOWAS have been noted to play a crucial role in enabling free movement and cross-border cooperation. However, this responsibility has also come with challenges in managing issues that are related to resources and incidental conflicts arising from natural resource management and rapid urbanization (Osei-Amponsah et al., 2023). Thus, in Nigeria for instance too many conflicts have been reported from foreign invading herders who contend with indigenous people over cattle grazing lands or access to drinking water (Taiwo, 2022). In view of this situation, the study opines that nomadic migrations have historic origins that are tied to pastoral ways of life in the Sahel region. These nomadic migrants in some West African countries like Nigeria and Ghana have significantly contributed to recurrent conflicts over land and water resources; thus, threatening regional peace and stability (Tonah, 2006).

Consequent on this development, existing literature has maintained a concerted encouragement for integrated, gender-sensitive frameworks that can combine climate conditions, incidental migration, and governance response by way of holistic policy interventions (Setrana & Kyei, 2021). Further, it is important to note that migration in West Africa has been shaped by a complex interaction of environmental, economic, and socio-political factors (Adepoju, 2005). In this regard, climate-induced migration has been increasingly recognized as a subtle form of forced displacement; however, it lacks formal legal recognition (Rigaud et al., 2021).

This understanding is crucial to any governance structure that could be designed to meet such expectations. This account for the reason why ECOWAS protocols on free movement provides a framework for mobility, but however do not clearly address climate migrants' issues (ECOWAS, 2022). As pointed earlier, nomadic migration has a historical link to pastoralism and trade, and as such has grown into a source of tension due to the scarcity of land and resource competition (Teye, 2022). Based on this, the study thus aligns with the need for integrated governance structure that consider both climate and human oriented mobility (Amadi & Vundamina, 2023). In view of the

relevance of the issues that are directly impacting on the identified objectives of the study, this paper shall review related literatures in the following areas of significance:

2.1 Climate-Induced Migration – the Conceptual Debates at the Center

Climate-induced migration in Africa, and especially in West Africa, has become a critical issue that has been influenced by a variety of factors, including political (in respect of lack of political will), environmental, social, and economic factors. The West African region has experienced significant impacts from climate change and its consequences. This has affected human mobility in very complex dimensions. Reports published by Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) indicate that in 2023 alone that 26.4 million people were displaced all over the world by environmental disasters, thus demonstrating the urgent need to understand this phenomenon in specific regional contexts (Osei-Amponsah et al, 2023). This has raised a lot of concern for which Black et al. (2011), cautioned against the “climate refugee” narratives insisting that climate-induced migration is a multicausality phenomenon. For instance, in West Africa, irregularities in rainfall portend a relative influence on “land tenure insecurity, labour market shocks and conflict to produce step-wise migration” (Rademacher-Schulz et al., 2014).

A more practical approach to the understanding of this multicausality phenomenon is found in the work of de Longueville et al. (2020) who demonstrated that the perceptions of climate change maintained by rural community dwellers in Burkina Faso was not always in consonance with observed meteorological data, meanwhile this culturally based interpretation form the basis of their migration decisions, de Longueville et al. (2020) further argued that in examining the environment-migration nexus, perception data as in cultural interpretation should not be used to replace climate based data, and vice versa. This imply that both sets of data should be considered separately in order not to exhaust possibilities of solutions by considering other alternatives before climate eventualities take the stage. Consequently, de Longueville et al. (2020) identified other crucial factors that are beyond climate change, these includes; poor socio-economic conditions and population pressure, which they pointed also influence household or community decisions to migrate.

2.2 Nomadic Migration- its Origin, Dynamics and Influence

It is imperative to understand that nomadic migration is as old as man’s existence on earth. In this regard, archaeological and oral-historical narratives have shown evidence of trans-Saharan pastoralism which was connected to prehistoric trading activities where camels were the principal means of mobility and carriage of goods. This continued up to the 3rd century and proceeded to the emergence of the Almoravid movement in the 11th century (Bassett & Turner, 2007). As applicable, the *dar* system (communal grazing reserves) was operated on the basis of reciprocity treaties (*sana* agreements) between Berber, Fulbe (Fulani) and Hausa tribesmen.

By institutionalizing their commitments through ancient political arrangements, seasonal movement corridors and routes were established to avoided tensions and ecological over-exploitation (Dreier & Sow, 2015). However, during the annexation of Africa through colonial conquests (1890–1960), these migration routes or corridors became frozen and converted into fixed international borders. The colonial overlords also criminalized cross-border cattle grazing, and transformed pre-historical pastoral mobility into a security concern, since it affected their exploitation of Africa.

In view of the theoretical perspective of this study, the current context under which climate change is been discussed, indicate how it has exacerbated the known historical trends; as increasing frequency and intensity of climate-related situations and events such as hurricanes, droughts, and how wildfires drive millions globally from their homes. As field study and international migration statistics indicate, by the end of 2023, the number of people who have been displaced by disasters reached a record high, with climate-related factors playing a pivotal role (Mixed Migration Center, 2023). As should be expected studies have shown that such migrations are of significant concerns in respect of its impacts on the receiving communities. Consequent on this, migration incidences have

been viewed as a significant strain on resources and infrastructure of migrant receiving communities, thus resulting social tensions and economic disparities (Prange, 2022).

Further, the historical origin of nomadic migration has been found to be a multifaceted phenomenon that has been warranted by environmental changes, resource scarcity or unavailability and socio-political dynamics. Studies show that throughout history, human populations at different times have been compelled to migrate as a valid response to environmental stressors, which includes natural disasters, climate shifts, and natural resource depletion (Yayaz and Mastali, 2025).

Consequently, these nomadic styled migrations have not only redefined some natural settlement patterns but have also significantly influenced or impacted on the development of human civilizations and cultural exchange among persons of different ethnic origins. Globally, environmental disasters and crisis triggered large scale migrations along established human, economic and social networks, thus bringing to the forefront, the long-standing inter-relationship between natural ecological conditions and human mobility (Torres and Casey, 2017; Lübken, 2019).

2.3 ECOWAS and Regional Governance Response to Migration

The West African regional governance instrument referred to as ECOWAS 1979 Protocol guaranteed three freedoms, namely, entry, residence and establishment. However, its implementation has been known to be asymmetrical. For instance, while Ghana and Senegal have effectively domesticated the protocol, Niger and Nigeria have retained ad-hoc border closures policy during livestock disease outbreaks (Dick & Schraven, 2021). In order to sustain the argument of the weakness of migration centered institutions, it is important to state that the 2021 ECOWAS Disaster Risk Reduction Policy only cursorily mentioned climate displacement and assigned its coordination to an understaffed National Emergency Management Agencies. This is not adequate considering the daunting and mountain challenges of modern times migration.

The study note that the implications of climate-induced migration are deep, particularly in the areas of governance and policy responses as observable in fragile states within the ECOWAS framework. As climate change aggravates existing vulnerabilities, migration does result increased pressure on urban areas, drain public resources and contribute to social tensions (Immigration Policy Lab, 2023). In view of this, an understanding of the motivations behind the various forms of migration would enhance the development of appropriate frameworks for safe and regular migration pathways that are essential for mitigating vulnerabilities in the face of climate change (Lübken, 2019; Osei-Amponsah, 2025).

Additionally, the existing framework of international refugee law has been known to presents significant barriers for individuals who have been displaced by various climate dynamics. Unlike conventional or traditional refugees, climate-driven migrants do not appear to fit into the definitions contained in current legal instruments of the West African sub-region. This lacuna therefore prevents them from receiving the protection and assistance they need under the law (Omolere, 2025). Thus, by the definition of Article 1 of the 1951 Refugee Convention, a refugee could be defined as someone who “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of [their] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail [themselves] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of [their] former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”

As could be ascertained from Article 1 of the 1951 Refugee Convention, this definition of refugee does not comprise of those that have been displaced by natural or environmental factors. As a result of this limitation in the statute, many individuals whom have been displaced by climate change lack formal legal status or required protections under the law since they do not fit into the refugee mold. This legal lacuna leaves millions of migrants vulnerable and insecure in the face of rising global human displacements.

Accordingly, it has been observed that this lack of recognition does aggravate various other forms of vulnerabilities for the migrants, hence leaving many persons without legal recourse or support

(Jordan, 2021). Further, the political discourse surrounding migration dynamics has become increasingly diverged, hence portraying migrants in a negative light and framing their arrival as unwarranted crisis. Over the decades, this narrative has diverted attention of policy makers from the major causes of human and forced migration, thereby hindering effective policy responses that are specifically aimed at supporting displaced individuals and addressing remote and general impacts of climate change (Jordan, 2021; UNESCO, 2025).

It is important to draw a definitive line of difference between climate migrants and refugees. Under the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, refugees are defined as individual persons “fleeing persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion” (Omolere, 2025). Accordingly, Omolere opined that “this definition does not include those displaced by environmental factors. As a result, many individuals displaced by climate change lack formal legal status or protections to press for any rights. This legal gap leaves millions of people vulnerable and unprotected in the face of increasing climate-related displacement.” Omolere’s views are apt and succinct in the regard.

3.0 Methodology

The methodology adopted for the interrogation of this discourse is *qualitative analysis* which would consider the views of subject matter experts, including contributions and position papers of international and regional agencies, research institutions reports and data. This collection of information would be discussed alongside field investigation reports as follows:

3.1 Qualitative Analysis of the Causes of Climate-Induced and Nomadic Migration

In view of the foregoing, this study observed that certain factors are responsible for climate-induced and nomadic migration which are significantly founded on the historical conditions and perspectives incidental to the study. In this regard, the study shall briefly discuss those factors and their dynamics and how they have shaped or influenced West African regional policies on persons displaced by climate-induced migration and those that have been affected by traditional nomadic migration. This second type of migration have been known to redirect the efforts of constituted authorities to policy areas that in some cases have aggravated the situation. In all, the paper shall discuss these forms of human migration that have been found to constitute a combination of environmental, economic, and social factors that compel individuals and communities to relocate from their homes, sometimes without the intension of returning.

3.1.1 Environmental Factors

The study found that extreme environmental conditions play a critical role in influencing migration patterns in the West African region. These extreme conditions were noticed to occur in forms of sudden-onset of natural disasters such as hurricanes, desertification, floods, and wildfires (during dry seasons); and have forced communities to evacuate to safer regions even if it means residing outside their home countries. Field study and available literature also found that on the converse, slow-onset of environmental changes like rising sea levels, protracted droughts, and unusual desertification create unsustainable living conditions, that prompts individuals, families and community-large migration as a coping or survival strategy (Blakemore, 2019; Sussman, 2023).

3.1.2 Scarcity of Natural Resource

Migration records indicate that climate changes aggravate or exacerbates natural resource scarcity, especially in water prone and arable land areas of the region, thus leading to increased competition for natural resources between the indigenous people and the migrants. Investigation leading to this report indicate that after some years of such competition for the scarce resources, conflicts will ensue, and this would further drive migration (Blakemore, 2019).

3.1.3 War, Enslavement, Insurgencies and Violent Conflicts

The study found that greater aspects of migration have for ages been attributed to complications arising from war, insurgencies, enslavement, and persecution. The Jews for instance fled their

ancestral lands and were exiled following the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (Blakemore, 2019); thus, creating a widespread cache of diaspora of Jews some of whom may never return to Isreal.

Further, Gates (ND) in a report on modern migration pointed that at least 12 million Africans were enslaved, tortured and forced to relocate to the Americas during the era of the transatlantic slave trade dating between 1500 and the 1860s. in the Report, Gates pointed as follows:

“The journey between Africa and the Americas, "The Middle Passage," could take four to six weeks, but the average lasted between two and three months. Chained and crowded with no room to move, Africans were forced to make the journey under terrible conditions, naked and lying in filth.”

The foregoing is the mode of mass migration by enslavement. This commercial practice as it was back then, has currently reshaped the demographics of the Western world in terms of commerce, social conditions, technology, etc. incidentally, Gates further reported at the close of the report that:

“A significant new migration movement is that of immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean. Between 2000 and 2010, black Africans represented the fastest-growing segment of the country's foreign-born population. In 2011, 1.7 million immigrants from the Caribbean and about 1.1 million from Africa were living in the country.

Less than 10% of Caribbean blacks live outside the Northeast and Florida. African immigrants are more widely settled. They are mostly concentrated in New York, Texas, California, Florida, and Illinois, with 21% living in Midwestern states, and 15% in Western states.

The African-American journey begins again.”

Although the study is focused on West Africa migration conditions, mention shall be made of the impact of war and violent conflicts that has resulted globally forced migration events. These have also affected the African continent. A case in point is World War II in 1945, where Holocaust survivors and millions of civilians were displaced across the world and many emigrated to Western Europe; another case is that of the end of the Vietnam war, which resulted the migration of over 125,000 people to the United States alone. This migration was a strategy adopted in response to acute humanitarian crisis (Gates, ND).

3.1.4 Economic Factors

Economic motivations have been found to influence or intertwine with environmental issues, thus pushing people to migrate in the search of better opportunities and better living standards. In this vein, climate change impact resulting reductions in land productivity and habitability has been known to directly impact on economic productivity and viability. This has affected food and water security, thus compelling individuals and communities to relocate to areas that can provide them with better livelihoods and hence achieve economic sustainability (Cascio, 2025; Striking Women (ND).

Further, in modern times, environmental degradation resulting from industrial activities such as crude oil exploration and extraction has also forced individuals who are dependent on fishing and subsistence farming to seek livelihoods in urban areas that are not affected by such devastation. It is important to note that such industrial scale degradation of the environment sometimes portend higher emissions, which contributes to the greenhouse effect thus resulting a cycle of climate change dynamics and migration of human persons (Jordan, 2021).

3.1.5 Socio-Political Factors

The study found that migration is also influenced by a range of socio-political dynamics which has significant impact on human habitable environments thus resulting monumental changes that often aggravates existing inequalities. These identified inequalities disproportionately affect vulnerable groups in the society, including indigenous populations and low-income dwellers and aggregated communities. The marginalization arising from this situation can result political instability and conflict, which are known drivers of migration (Torres and Casey, 2017). Consequently, the

relationship between environmental, economic, natural resource, and political factors complicates the migration process, thus making it difficult to identify a single cause for any range of movement. In all, it can be opined that environmental triggers are closely connected to socioeconomic, cultural, and personal factors (Sussman, 2023; Schewe, 2025).

3.2 Consequences and Impacts of Climate Change

Having considered the major drivers or factors resulting voluntary or forced migration, we shall also look into the social and global consequences of migration; and the relative impacts of these changes as they appeal to human lives. In this regard, the mounting frequency and relative intensity of climate-prone events, such as earthquakes resulting from industrial activities, floods, heat-waves, and extreme weather conditions directly influence migration decisions and possible patterns.

Studies point that as these events increases in frequency of occurrence; and they do not only displace human populations temporarily but also change the long-term structural and demographic dynamics of where and how people live (Xie and Chen 2024; UN Statistical Report (2023)). Thus, the interconnected nature of these challenges does require a comprehensive approach in addressing them, while understanding the remote and root causes of climate-induced migration through focusing on issues of sustainability, equity, and global cooperation (Jordan, 2021; UN Statistical Report (2023)).

3.2.1 Impact of Migration on Civilizations

As should be understood, migration has historically played a significant role in designing and shaping human civilizations; which has been orchestrated by a numerous factor including economic disparities, socio-political instabilities, and forced environmental changes (IOM Migration, 2025; Gagnon and Lagacé-Roy, 2024). This finding thus affirms that the movement of populations as migrants can lead to both positive and negative consequences for the moving and receiving societies, and this can be achieved by influencing existing social structures, cultural dynamics, demographic balance and economic conditions.

3.2.2 Economic and Social Consequences

The study has affirmed that environmental degradation, scarcity of natural resources and the quest for better livelihood have resulted the influx of migrants into urban areas. This phenomenon has thus escalated the existing socio-demographic and structural challenges such as overcrowding, strain on infrastructural resources and public utility services, thus increasing the demand for services (Institute for the Study of International Migration, 2025). This situation is prevalent in cities that are experiencing rapid population growth arising from surge in migration.

A major consequence of this surge is that it over stretches public utilities and inadequate social infrastructure can result the proliferation of slums and crimes. As an additional consequence, such environments are known for diminished access to essential services for residents, thus perpetuating cycles of crime, violence, poverty and social unrest. This imply that migrants in such vicinities may experience some forms of societal stigma and resource marginalization, which negatively impacts on their integration into destination communities. This hinders their seeming abilities to establish new and effective social ties and the assimilation required to become productive (Torres and Casey, 2017).

3.2.3 Mental Health Implications

As field study and consulted literatures affirm in this study, the mental health of migrants was found not to be of an important concern to policy makers, and as such receives little or no attention. In this regard, studies have further shown that there are higher levels of depression among certain migrant populations compared to their counterparts who remained in their countries of origin irrespective of the daunting challenges (Torres and Casey, 2017). Thus, factors such as exposure to trauma arising from migration, various dimensions of discrimination in host societies, and loss of familiar environments contribute to this adverse mental health challenge.

The situation has a direct connection with the Glenn Albrecht's innovative concept of "solastalgia" which is a reflection of the distressed mind condition resulting from environmental degradation of one's home, which has produced psychological complications of near hopelessness perceived in displaced individuals (Lübken, 2019).

3.2.4 Cultural Transformations

It is common knowledge among social scientists and public policy makers that migration, whether voluntary or forced, serves as a catalyst for cultural exchange of indigenous identities and various levels of human transformations. This means that as people move about, they bring and inculcate either directly or indirectly their cultural practices, beliefs, and traditions, which does enrich the social fabrics of the destination communities: for instance, Jumbo et al. (2018) demonstrated how African migrants exported African indigenous technological practices to Western countries where they were enslaved.

These practices became known as slave inventions, for which their slave masters took credit and processed patents in their own names. A clear case of this cultural transformation as reported in Jumbo, et al. is that of Thomas Jennings, an African slave whose invention was rooted in African indigenous technology and has now become known as fabrics washing machine. He stood his ground and got the design patented in his name. The authors further averred as follows:

"Secondly, many of these African exported inventions were not patented to the slaves and were forcefully taken and patented to their masters since for a long period of time the slaves were not considered to be humans and when the West changed that orientation, they said the slaves were not citizens of the United States as to be patented."

Further, studies have shown that this process can also lead to cultural tensions and the erosion of cherished traditional identities, especially when the host societies have been known to struggle to accommodate new populations. Consequent on the clear findings of this study and especially the discovery that migrants' communities can leave a lasting cultural mark on their new environments, contributing to social advancement and stability through engagements such music and other forms of art (Lübken, 2019).

4.0 Discussion of Research Findings

The study was predicated on qualitative evaluation of existing literature in addition to well structured field study. In its observation, the study found that migration whether voluntary or forced has established relationship with climate change, thus becoming increasingly prominent in discussions that border on the future of global human demographics and civilizations. As have been discussed in this study, environmental changes, such as extreme weather conditions and degradation of natural resources, has been a major driver that has compelled human populations to relocate to other areas in search of better living standards, thereby influencing the nature of migration patterns and their incidental demographic shifts (Institute for the Study of International Migration, 2025).

As has been noted in this study, the present and extended effects of these migration movements whether within West Africa or elsewhere cannot be said to be all together negative or in bad light as some migration activities has led to improved livelihoods and social conditions for both sides of the divide. However, the study finds that the interplay between the identified environmental challenges that results human mobility has generated torrents of concern that has provided the need for comprehensive strategies that support both migrants and host communities in the mitigation of potential conflicts and by extension foster social cohesion (IOM Migration, 2025).

Understandably, the study also found that there are recurring threats against migration, examples are the monthly reports of deaths of Africans in their attempts to cross the sea from Northern Africa to Europe. This life threatening risks arising from the quest for better economic opportunities has remained a recurring downside of the migration phenomenon for some Africans who prefer to use the dangerous route to Europe. On the other hand, within the context of climate change and environmental disasters, migration also poses significant threats to individuals, families,

communities, and broader societal structures. A case in point as the study has dealt with is the Fulani nomadic or pastoral migration down south.

The search for green vegetation and water for their cattle has resulted various conflicts in Nigeria and Ghana and other parts of West Africa. In Nigeria for instance, a group of cattle rustlers have utilized this migration opportunities to cause devastating harms to genuine herders. In the same guise, land grabbing activities have been noticed within the middle belt region of Nigeria where there are multiple evidence that the herdsmen have caused lots of mayhem, criminally vandalize, dehumanize and kill their hosts just to take over their lands. As the study has noted, these threats have manifested in various forms, hence affecting both the migrants themselves and the regions or communities that receive them.

The study has also considered the issues of environmental impact on the health conditions of the migrants. It should be further noted that the phenomenon of climate-induced migration is directly connected or linked to the degradation of natural environments. The impact to human health of this degradation has led to significant health crises among affected populations. Thus, migrants are daily confronted with higher health risks, which are aggravated by inadequate public health infrastructure in their host communities, particularly in rural areas (Hoffmann et al., 2020). Conclusively, Hoffmann et al. found that evidence exists that the environmental factors identified in this study can be used to explain migration patterns and outcomes.

Having established the foregoing, suffice to say that the influx of displaced individuals, families and whole communities into urban centers due to the stated reasons in this study can stretch and strain existing healthcare systems, thus creating significant health complications with security implications for both migrants and local residents (Blakemore, 2019). The study also found that mental health issues arising from the trauma of geographical displacement, particularly for vulnerable persons or populations such as refugees are enormous as there is evidence that they struggle with integration into the new society majorly due to cultural and language barriers (Hoffmann et al., 2020; Schewe, 2025). Further, the loss of cultural and ancestral heritage in addition to connection to ancestral lands can lead to longtime impacts or psychological effects of traumatic dimensions, particularly among indigenous communities (Jordan, 2021).

In terms of socio-economic strain and incidental urban challenges, the study found that climate-induced migration has in several cases resulted overcrowding in urban areas, hence leading to inadequate housing and over stretched public infrastructure and utility systems. Further, as populations grow, essential services such as education and healthcare become insufficient to meet the needs or requirements of both migrants and local citizens (Blakemore, 2019). In this regard, this overcrowding can generate all sorts of social friction and conflict, especially when resources become scarce, hence resulting significant tension between migrants and host communities.

Finally, the study found that economic disparities between the migrants and their receiving population also play a significant role. It was found that many migrants do arrive their destinations with limited financial resources, thus forcing them to adopt precarious and pitiable living conditions. Having stated the obvious it is implicit to posit therefore that the identified socioeconomic strains can lead to discrimination against migrants by their hosts, further isolating the migrants from their host communities and limiting their access to vital services (Prange, 2022).

In its observation, the study found that migration whether voluntary or forced has established a relationship with climate change, thus becoming increasingly prominent in discussions that border on the future of global human demographics and civilizations.

5.0 Conclusion of the Study

Migration has been viewed as a means of changing a person's location to a better place that satisfy his or her immediate aspiration. This movement is not without attendant challenges as it produces consequences that are sometimes unimaginable. This view is strengthened by the recorded instance of the negative impacts of the Fulani nomadic culture that has kept some of them in perpetual motion as herdsmen or traders. Their involvement in some communities in Nigeria's middle belt

area has become source of sorrow and national outcries. On the other hand, migration either voluntary or forced has also produced positive impacts as it has been a means of transfer of indigenous knowledge, skill and expertise to new locations where same have been reinvented to suit more purposes.

Having seen both sides of the issues, it is important to note that while there are governance instruments that are designed to control the flow of persons from one region or country to other, such instruments must take many factors into cognition. These factor as the study has pointed includes health condition of the migrants, educational needs, cultural adaptation, knowledge or skills transfer, language barriers, etc. these instruments should also recognize the roles of migrants in the building and development of society. This view is amply supported by the fact that countless thousands of Africans risks their lives by crossing through the Mediterranean Sea to Europe just to provide cheap labour to power their productive sector and remain competitive in the global economy.

Further, regional governance instruments for migration such as ECOWAS protocols on internal and external migration can only be effective if it considers the socio-cultural differences of members states and their populations. Secondly the study posited that governance instruments must make economic and social provisions for safe landing especially for migrants that fits the definition of refugees' status under international law. This imply that wholistic national legislations among member nations of regional institutions such as ECOWAS should re-enact or review their immigration laws to accommodate the various range of displaced persons discussed in this paper.

Further, governance instruments having been seen to be inadequate to cater to the myriads of needs of migrants. This means that regional institutions like ECOWAS must maintain a comprehensive data base of in-country and out-country migration for member states. This database would be necessary for future planning and expansion of scope of migration issues.

6.0 Recommendations

The study recommends as follows:

1. West African regional parliaments should as a matter of urgency review their migration laws to make provisions for other forms of migration outside those that satisfy the definition of refugee.
2. National governments in West Africa should in the interest of their citizens make appropriate budgetary provisions for migrants since the study have shown that migration also come with development benefits to the host countries.
3. Regional institutions like ECOWAS should intensify engagements with governments of member nations to enact legislations that criminalizes any attempts of citizens aimed at discrimination against migrants.
4. Constant study of the dynamics of migration should be embarked on by regional governments to continuously ascertain acceptable conducts, processes and procedures that are in compliance with international best practice.
5. The health, wellbeing, education, social integration and dignity of human person, etc. must be the guiding principle and foundation of all instruments of governance in respect of migration policy of ECOWAS member States.

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