



**‘JAPA SYNDROME’: DYSFUNCTION TO SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN
NIGERIA**

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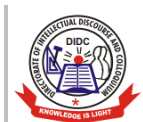
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Abstract

‘JAPA’ syndrome is no longer a fable but a national challenge that may paralyze virtually all sectors of the economy, especially in the field of science and technology, if not adequately addressed. The study assessed “Japa” syndrome dysfunction, consequences, and solutions to catalyze science and technology in Nigeria. ‘Japa’, a Yoruba locution (Nigeria tribe), means the massive exit of Nigerian youths, a colloquial term that describes ‘fugitive’ or ‘absconding’. politics, loss of potentials, infrastructural decay, weakened educational system, loopholes in the, medical system, hunger and starvation are factors that have instigated, the, ‘Japa Syndrome’. It was recommended amidst others, that government should brace up in activities that will enhance science and technology through sensitization programs and campaigns, giving out soft loans to intending entrepreneurs and government beefing up security in the nation to encourage prospective foreigners coming in to train Nigerians in science and technology.

Keywords: *Japa Syndrome, Dysfunction, Science, Technology, Nigeria*



Introduction

Science and technology are the bedrock of any society; their impact enables the progress of any nation since they are the roots of economic development, productivity, and advancement. (Daniel, 2024) mentioned that a onetime minister of education, Mr. Nnaji, affirmed that the crucial role of science and technology in fostering sustainable development and global well-being cannot be underestimated, yet the system in Nigeria appears stagnant due to little or no concentration in research and economic advancement, while this lacuna has made Nigerian youths take dangerous steps, especially with the current ‘Japa syndrome,’ a Yoruba locution (Nigeria tribe), meaning to leave for ‘Emerald meadowlands.’ Japa’ Syndrome, the massive exit of Nigerian youths, a colloquial term that describes ‘fugitive’ or ‘absconding,’ comprising strategies employed by Nigerians, especially younger ones in their homeland, stepping out in mass in search of greener pastures abroad (Nduka & Andrew, 2023)

Japa syndrome is an unusual term, used by most Nigerians to describe the outmigration trend of Nigerians into Europe and other parts of the world. (Aliyu, 2023 in Nduka & Andrew, 2024). ‘Japa syndrome’ has led to several death cases based on illegal migrants taking dangerous patterns in and out of Nigeria, some fleeing through the Sahara Desert, Maghreb region, and Mediterranean Sea in search of a better source of livelihood (Okunade & Awosusi, 2023). In Nigeria, 'Japa Syndrome' plays a crucial role, as migration has created a void among young Nigerian professionals who continue to leave the country in search of better opportunities.

Japa Syndrome has set the pace for notable leaders lauding different views on eloping to the western world. Babatunde Fashola, a one-time minister of works in Nigeria, admonished Nigerian youths to resist the temptation of abandoning the country for greener pastures, while Nafisat (2024) mentioned that a former senator in Nigeria, Shehu Sani in Kaduna state central, affirmed the importance of nation-building, calling on Nigerians to focus on improving their own country rather than seeking opportunities abroad. In his quote, he mentioned that “everyone should make it better or continue to face systemic rejection and advised Nigerians to stop contemplating relocation abroad; rather, they should remain in the country and contribute to its development. Though Peter Obi (2023) contradicted previous discussion and mentioned that the international expatriation of our youth is good and admonished that the ‘Brain Drain of Today’ is the ‘Brain Gain of Tomorrow’. Students are encouraged to consider

studying abroad, believing that a brighter future awaits them *to build a greater Nigeria*. Busari (2023) encouraged Nigerian youths, not to be restrained by the government but ensure that, diverse institutions come together to multiply effectiveness in the field of science and technology to uphold patriotism as a key activator in progressing the nation of tomorrow. Frederick (2023) affirmed that a mass of Nigerians (doctors, tech experts, academics, and students) are leaving the country, creating a significant drain on the national talent show room in the diaspora due to failure to return to their fatherland as promised. In spite of these warning, more Nigerians are leaving the country, a loss today based on the fact that Nigerian immigrants are offered mouthwatering packages, since they soon forget about their national as they shun coming back sooner than expected.

Worrisomely, the rising increase of Nigerian immigrants has progressed over the years; the itch towards migrating towards Europe, US, and UK is on the increase, while citizens are adamant, in spite of warnings by the Nigerian authorities, because they continue to advance in desperate actions to ensure they flee the nation. This trend of dispersal, irrespective of new-fangled migration rules announced during election campaigns, has been indifferent. The worst of it all is its effect on science and technology, the epitome of economic development in any nation. The Nigerian Tribune, Thursday, 22nd June, 2023, reported that a Tunisian fisherman, Osama Al-Dabibi, mentioned to the BBC (British Broadcasting Co-operation) that he was hoping for a big catch as he cast his net in the waters of the Mediterranean, only to find 15 dead bodies of sunk immigrants. Why should nervousness in Japan decline to such a huge humanitarian catastrophe? This is unbelievable for a good-looking world that has not adjusted to the trend in science and technology.

Dysfunctions in Science and Technology due to Japa Syndrome in Nigeria

Nigeria, a country in West Africa, stands out as the most influential economy with a GDP estimated at \$477 billion in 2022, while the real GDP growth plunged to 3.6% from 2022, precipitated mainly by a decline in oil production (ADG, 2022). She also tops the ranking of the flushest African countries ahead of Egypt and South Africa (Nduka, 2023; Chinedu, 2023). Nigeria consistently ranks among the top recipients of transmissions in Africa with billions of dollars. Though dysfunction stops the inflow of science and technology in Nigeria, due to the slogan of the 'Japa Syndrome'. These factors are:

(a) Politics

The political terrain in Nigeria stands out among reprehensive countries in Africa with leaders that are faced with empty promises. The youths are engaged to rig elections and disappear with ballots. boxes, with vain promises of assistance after they must win, but they dump them as soon as they are declared winners. Nigeria, a figurehead country in the world, has not depicted its power, especially in harnessing the field of science and technology by ensuring that the safety of the youth remains a priority. Science and technology are protective means to ensure that political alignments are protected with research and development to preserve genetically accomplished promises through politicized deals in the country. Politics in Nigeria has also been an issue, confronted with instability through frequent unrest that has degenerated corruption, insecurity, kidnapping, treachery, nepotism, and instability.

(b) Poor leadership style

Poor leadership pattern in Nigeria has eroded the thriving of technology, accepted in a maxim that one can only give what he has. This nonchalance of politicians has persistently birthed hardship in high unemployment rates, inflation, and equivocally limited access to quality education and health care systems. It has also pushed many Nigerians to seek opportunities elsewhere (Aliyu, 2023). Gerald and Baldwin (2023) mentioned that the economy's real national income ought to intensify over a long period of time through programs, policies, or activities that seek ways to improve the economic well-being and quality of its citizenry. The leadership style is pigeonholed by poor infrastructure as a result of long years of dilapidated infrastructure, an unwarranted economy, a substandard growth rate, and failure to catalyze personal income towards effectiveness in the field of sciences. It is embarrassing that the government voted in by citizens has failed on good governance, sustainability, and development—key modes to sustenance in a progressive Nigeria. These failures, irregularities, and non-adherence to the plight of citizens have spurred the 'Japa Syndrome'. Sadly, they leave because they can no longer bear the distressing issues of what the government had earlier promised, while issues of neglect and oppressive government are the order of the day, bluffing weak citizens and treating them with disdain.

(c) Poor Implementation

Stylistically, the economic growth of Nigeria has been faced with decades of political instability due to lack of implementation, degenerating corruption, mismanagement of resources, and lack of sustainable development. This factor has contributed to the disillusionment among Nigerian youth, thronging towards 'Japa Syndrome.' These individuals, particularly young Nigerians, chose to migrate abroad in search of better opportunities with little or no intention of returning to their homeland, running errands in a land with high expectations. The Nigerian youths, having exasperated minds of moving away from their homeland, foiling internal development and inhibiting economic growth in the nation, bottleneck science and technology in the most populous country in Africa.

United Nations World Population reports in Otelemate (2024) mentioned that Nigeria's net migration rate in 2024 was forecasted to be -0.267 per 1000 population (a 2.2% decline from 2023, when it stood at -0.273 per 1,000 population). These mentions on the impact of science and technology development are an impediment to economic development since implementation is far from the truth and steps needed to facilitate science and technology. Outrageously, this prognostication yearns for concern, based on frustration written on the faces of Nigerians and the fact that no nation can strive without sustainable development in the field of science and technology.

(d) Insurgency

Insurgency is a mention of battles between state and non-state personalities, a bid to weaken authorities due to a series of subversive attacks. (Bello, 2013; Mukhtar, 2017). Insurgency is a symptom of poverty and political alienation, where people agitate or try to fight others over what they feel to be right in a social, political, or historical setting. Insurgencies are stirred by political injustice due to the growing numbers of insurgent factions that keep rising. These distractions have not created adequate forums for science and technology to play their role in the economy of the country. Fulani herdsmen, Boko Haram, Niger Delta militants, and IPOB have continued to attract attention, while the consequences have led to the loss of many lives and properties (Mukhtar, 2017), which in turn has affected science and technology.

(e) Corruption

A transparent system supports human capital and collective well-being of citizens, while a lopsided government is a reversal. Oyadonghan & Ibanichukwa (2014) in Ntaka (2023) mentioned that the transparent international perception index in 2015 ranked Nigeria, 136 out of 168 countries, on the prevalence of corrupt practices. Corruption is the monster that has suppressed science and technology, while incapability in dealing with this monster has raised detrition in the field of science, eroding the nation's capital and resources through decaying trust in governmental practices. Multilateral policies are a climax to solving the Japa syndrome, as educational programs could enlighten the populace on the risk involved, advancing through enticing benefits from the government to promote science and technology in Nigeria. The ripple effect in physics is an addition to the fact that if more channels are created in the field of science and technology to curb the Japa syndrome, corruption will not be necessary.

Consequences of 'Japa Syndrome' to Science and Technology

Nigerians are fixed up in the 'japa' syndrome; many say they have lost hope in Nigeria while trust for the country is not enterprising enough due to false hope and promises in governance; many have also chosen the education and employment route to 'japa,' while others cherry-pick more exceptional dangerous trips, either crossing the Mediterranean Sea or the Sahara desert, with the belief that immigrating to other parts of the world would afford them better education, better career opportunities, better-paying jobs, and, of course, a safer and more secure future for their children. These benefits they believe are vague in Nigeria at the moment while the emigration of qualified professionals has a far more damaging impact on science and technology in Nigeria in the following sub-headings:

(1) Loss of Potentials

Connoisseurs leave the shores of the country for greener pastures abroad, to countries like the United Kingdom. Reports by the government revealed that publicized approval by Nigerian nationals for its worker visas increased by 11,854 between December 2019 and June 2022. According to the report, this is a 303% level change from 3918 in December 2019 to 15,722 in June, making Nigerians the second-highest recipients. Events of this nature have made Nigeria

lose a lot of capabilities to the labor markets to Canada, Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States, and Australia. Experts are also lost in the medical field, academics, science and technology. The researchers are worried that these experts are meant to add value to the field of science and technology but their disappearance have created a vacuum in the advancement of technology while Nigerians in the diaspora are urged to return home with global training, skills, and resources acquired to make the nation a better place.

(2) Huge vacuum in institutions

The nation is dwindling in science and technology while other nations are taking advantage of this development, despite the fact that huge riches in the nations are diverted for selfish reasons. Human resources are diverted to other western countries, who openheartedly welcome large numbers of Nigerians as skilled workers, while the current 'japa' trend is no exception to this development; in that, these great talents keep moving from other countries as well. Large firms are losing a lot of their best hands who take with them years of training and skills to other foreign nations, leaving a hole in many institutions, which subsequently has to be filled by newer potentials that may not be as experienced as those who have left these organizations. Suffice it to say that establishments have to repeatedly invest in the retraining of staff.

(3) Crippled Industrial Growth

'Japa Syndrome' has stunted the growth of some key industries in Nigeria; the health sector had the best doctors, but most of them have been engrossed by the syndrome. The science and technology sector had one of the best technicians, displaying their talents in Europe and America. Then imagine this scenario for every other sector of the economy. Afunugo (2021) mentioned that the, 'Japa syndrome' is climaxing to a high rate of emigration of Nigerian citizens into foreign countries, repressing economic development due to the exodus of citizens leaving the nation to explore other parts of the world, particularly Europe, without considering uncertainties in failure, extinction of good hands, dearth, and irregularities. (Ntaka, 2021). This move would have been perverted, but for poor understanding among citizens and the negligence of the government—as every country has gone through an adverse period while awareness is key in this socket—to help rebuild the broken walls of the nation.

(4) Infrastructural decay

Infrastructural facilities are dividends of democracy, but educational instability amidst other decadence in other institutions in Nigeria and across the globe has affected economic development as citizens live as prisoners in their homeland. Infrastructures are oftentimes abandoned due to the emergence of new governments and power changes that may not want to take over projects of past governments since they feel the only option is to resolve problems through the 'Japa syndrome'. Youths meant to spur development are caught up in the web as they are restricted through politicized jobs (Nduka, 2023) while career growth is marginalized. These lapses of the government towards jobs given to foreign companies while indigenous ones are often downsized are a challenge, as reasons for the sabotage are ingenuity, inconsistency, inexperience, and marginalization. The nation has also failed to detect measures to address lapses in lifting embargoes among indigenous companies with stiffer measures against defaulters and criminalities, regular checks, routine calls, supervision, training, and retraining of youths.

(5) Deflated Educational System

The educational system is in one of the most deplorable status quos in the Nigerian system, as its effect in science and technology has deflated the fulcrum and inefficiency of the government. It is rather frightening that more Nigerians are still eloping to European countries with the intention of by courting hardship, in spite of measures set by the western world to stagnate dreams of developing countries by encouraging immigrants to accept scholarships at an outrageous cost, study, and after graduation remain there to serve these developed nations—modern-day slavery. In July 2022, the Association of Nigerian Students in Europe revealed that Europe alone has more than three million Nigerians enrolled in different higher institutions of learning. (Friday, 2022). A survey also indicates that 89.87 percent of Nigerian youths prefer to study at a university outside the country. Seventy-three percent of Nigerians, 60 percent of doctors, and 89.87 percent of students still want to leave the country. (Ogungbile, 2023) They want to flee the country. Tell me? Is the government not seeing the venom in the mouths of the youths, waiting to be unleashed? What about an academic system where the best academics have taken their knowledge abroad? This is food for thought that should be channeled to the Federal Government.

The anguish on the current state of schools in Nigeria, with limited access to curriculum development in spite of discipline, a lacuna that has left the conscience of politicians ‘dead’ in leader, youth, and children (Ntaka, 2021). The Nigerian youths and their devotion to others are appalling, with unidirectional interest in money, compromising their integrity in diverse directions through unpatriotic activities that think nothing for the country but themselves, while development is hardly seen in a nation that should have the interest of their citizens at heart, either through philanthropism or obligation from the government. Sadly, brain drain is the hegira of this tan tumult, as human capital continues to leave a big vacuum in developing nations that hardly fill the space based on long-yearning challenges. (Nduka, 2023) upswing in legal and illegal channels located by fraudulent Nigerians, producing adverse effects, especially in depleting the reputation of Nigerian citizens and the shortage of human resources in the educational system. anguish on the current state of schools in Nigeria, with limited access to curriculum development in spite of discipline, a lacuna that has left the conscience of politicians ‘dead’ in leader, youth, and children (Ntaka, 2021). The Nigerian youths and their devotion to others are appalling, with unidirectional interest in money, compromising their integrity in diverse directions through unpatriotic activities that think nothing for the country but themselves, while development is hardly seen in a nation that should have the interest of their citizens at heart, either through philanthropism or obligation from the government. Sadly, brain drain is the hegira of this tan tumult, as human capital continues to leave a big vacuum in developing nations that hardly fill the space based on long-yearning challenges. (Nduka, 2023) upswing in legal and illegal channels located by fraudulent Nigerians, producing adverse effects, especially in depleting the reputation of Nigerian citizens and the shortage of human resources in the educational system.

Stakeholders have persistently expressed concern over the decline in the number of lecturers’ in the nation’s universities. Whistler (2023) mentioned that this unwholesome journey has stagnated the oxidation of the curriculum towards patriotism and placed frugality in high jump due to regular application of obsolete practices, monopolized job opportunities, and a dearth of welfare of staff (Nduka, 2023). Other aftereffects are unproductivity, loss of tax revenue, insecurity, and vagueness while leaving the system to deal with higher taxation to frame up the shortfall, incessant strike actions, and compelling lecturers and teachers to join the ‘japa leagues’ and enroot European countries in mass numbers. Astonishingly, good hands are migrating to other countries', thereby creating an artificial scarcity of employable hands in the

nation. (Okah, 2022), while the system is left with uncreative graduates that are brought into the academic system with little or nothing to offer (Ntaka, 2023), on the lifeline of students' academic or moral growth. Education is a precious asset that, if properly connected, will repair the economy, expunge corrupt practices, and uphold potential in our younger generation.

(6) Ailing Medical System

The Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors, sometime last year, revealed that about 50 percent of Nigerian doctors had already found their way out of the country. (Ogungbile, 2023). The University College Hospital, Ibadan, Oyo State, also noted that more than 600 of its clinical workers have resigned their appointments, while the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital

disclosed that more than 150 nurses resigned their appointments with the tertiary hospital. The medical personnel are not left out, as Otelemate (2024) reported that the Nigerian Medical Association mentioned that no fewer than 10,296 doctors proficient in skills in Nigeria are currently practicing in the United Kingdom as skilled professionals as of December 2023.

The medical system has also been visited with scarcity of naira, inflation, fuel subsidy removal, and the departure of key pharmaceutical companies like GSK and Sanofi-Aventis that have left the country in a confused state. Moreover, the soaring price of medicine, inadequate subsidy, and migration of health workers and other highly skilled medical professionals have been affected, but Dare (2024) contradicted this move, saying that Governor Uzodinma countered the circulating news and levied it on government sabotage. He mentioned that cabals were responsible for the relocation of investors from Nigeria since they applied double standards towards their deals with other countries while they degraded Nigeria. This, he mentioned, facilitated the exit of multinational companies in Nigeria and stated that it had no connection with the state of the economy in the nation since they were not genuine investors. In whatever way, probes on the departure of previous companies in Nigeria and their sudden exit must be scrutinized against reoccurrences as they are endemic to economic growth. The government must play their parts adequately to foil the ingenuity of duplicate occurrences in oil and pharmaceutical companies currently moving away.

(7) Brain Drain

This involves the transfer of technology, innovation, and capital back to Nigeria through progressives and jingoistic citizens interested in stagnating science and technology through migratory activities. Ogungbile (2023) mentioned that today there is an increasing rate of an emerging urge to leave Nigeria by the old and the young, and the current net Nigerian migration rate is -0.273 per 1000 population, indicating that more people are emigrating from the country. It's depressing that Nigeria is currently sinking deep in brain drain, and it probably needs a call for emergency. It is expedient that the government should provide a conducive environment to resuscitate absorbing first-class graduates as lecturers and expand existing universities instead of establishing new ones. In education, the need to diverge further crises in the Nigerian system is necessary, as brain drain is another dimension where lecturers and teachers are gradually moving away. The system is depopulated, and there is a complete loss of skilled workers. There should be enough sensitization if they must leave, as brain gain ensures that after professionalism is achieved in diverse fields through expertise, skills, knowledge, resources, etc. They train others on their return home after acquisition to invest in their nation.

(8) Hunger and Starvation

A hungry man is an angry man, but education through mechanized means is a gate pass to economic liberation, as nearly two-thirds of Nigerians—two million people—now live on less than \$2, according to new data from the National Bureau of Statistics while almost 133 million Nigerians, or 63% of the population, are multi-dimensionally poor, lacking access to clean water, health care, energy, and sanitation (Ruth, 2022) While this is true, the state of the economy is currently devastating, and recent developments in the exchange rate show that the number of people in poverty will dramatically increase based on the increasing rate of poverty, being the resultant effect of the 'Japa syndrome', thriving and enriching the pockets of the western world while developing nations are sunk in poverty.

Companies in the nation have also taken advantage of the situation, and this has stagnated the economy through an increase in goods and services, leaving citizens to scamper for a better standard of living. Nigerian youths must take advantage of absorbing this difficulty through the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills, especially in the field of agriculture, to send positive development across the nation, a keynote against migrating to Europe. They must seek out

better ways to add value to the economy of the nation by grabbing skilled and unskilled jobs and acting wisely.

Conclusion

Nigerians appear to be obsessed by the 'Japa syndrome, but if adequate measures are taken in the field of science and technology to put things in place as envisioned, there will be good tidings for all Nigerians by ensuring that all strategies are put in place in an enabling field of science and technology.

Recommendations to 'Japa Syndrome in Prompting Science and Technology

1. The government must endeavor to train and retrain youths in the line of science and technology to ensure a better plan that could be applied to their careers, ready for a brighter tomorrow.
2. Good welfare packages are padlocks that should be unlocked to ensure that practical knowledge is applied experimentally that will impart hands-on skills to students in reformation programs.
3. A robust and practical educational system must be upheld to address the right norms and perceptions about sciences.
4. Good governance is a key to national productivity, thus necessary by affirming that government promises are kept in transparency, accountability, and tranquility to facilitate infrastructural development and promote educational growth by fixing up the public health system that will secure more jobs for the youth.
5. Entrepreneurship courses in the university must be adequately created to lift success and break the surge in business, health, education, agriculture, and other areas to upturn the success of Nigeria in the field of science and technology.
6. The populace should be enlightened more on the Japa syndrome through campaigns, conventions, seminars, and sensitization programs to disabuse the minds of youths towards illegitimate migration, as mentioned in Ochogwu (2024), who advised that the narratives must be changed to regain the nation's heritage

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