

How Perception Plays Out Between Migrants and Their Host. The Case of the Beninoise in Southwest, Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper gathered information on perception, the extent of integration, and challenges of the Beninoise migrants in their host community in Nigeria, to ascertain if the perceptions can be regarded as having positive impact, negative, or both. 10 in-depth interviews and 384 household surveys were undertaken in August 2017 to generate data for the study. The findings show that host communities contend that migrants influence social vices and increase the burden on public facilities in the community. While migrants are perceived to negatively affect chances of job opportunities for members of the host, they are also providers of cheap labour. Thus perception in this study is both positive and negative. The migrants have been partly integrated through their involvement in some community activities while increasing incidences of floods are perceived as the most challenging for migrants in the host community.

Keyword: Beninoise; migrants; perception; Lekki; Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Migration within Sub-Sahara Africa remains is a continuous and unending process. This process has had reinforcing impacts on both home and receiving countries, host communities and the immigrants as well as neighbouring communities in receiving countries [13, 66, 7, and 56]. In West Africa, there is a reciprocal flow of migrants between countries in the region which is geared by regional policies, created with the intention to facilitate movements of persons and goods within the region [26, 25, 29]. Out of a number of diverse cases, this study solely examined the migrants from the Republic of Benin to Nigeria.

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In 2011 alone, over 4 million Beninese have migrated out of their country of origin [30-32]. The Republic of Benin is one of the francophone countries that is linked to Nigeria from the country of Togo. While anecdotal evidence show that there are Beninese in neighbouring Togo, it is evident that there many more whom have migrated into Nigeria [65]. Within the Nigerian space, the migrant's presence has likely impacted socioeconomically and environmentally on the bordering communities. To investigate these concerns, data from 10 in-depth interviews, and a total of 384 household surveys were collated from both host community and the migrants. The aim of this research was to examine perceptions of the host communities and the Beninese migrants, their extent of integration in the host community and also on the impact with regards to cost of living; pressure on available resources and burden on infrastructures. The combination of survey responses and in-depth interviews provides an enriching dataset in which the survey findings gathered can be complemented with outcomes from the in-depth interview. This paper begins with an appraisal of the topic from previous literatures, followed by a contextual background of the study area (Lekki Southwest, Nigeria). A comparison of the migrant's and host community household profile, perception on the impact of the migrants in host community, to establish whether migrants are of negative/positive impact with regards to business activities, pressure on resources and the environment. After which a look into the extent of integration and challenges faced by the migrants in the host community as perceived by both parties.

1.1 Previous Research

As migrants change location, impacts are made as well as felt. A number of researches on the impact of migrants on host communities have been documented. The situation is dicey in that some portray negative while others have positive reports, and in different situation there is a mix of both. It has also been noted that some factors mediate the way migrants are being perceived. As influencing perception, studies have shown that the status attained by migrants after arrival to a community influence the way host communities perceive migrants and this is largely based on information about the migrants origin dispersed by the media channels which could be negative or positive [1, 40, 17, 20, 43]. What is being known of the migrating group in the public space can create a soft-landing for them at their place of destination. Probably based on the undue situation that is believed to have faced the migrants at their place of origin. On this premise many have been given asylum or refugee status at countries of destination. While this is positive, a reverse information being circulated of the migrants can as well spell doom and possible rejection at their places of destination. There are positive accounts which suggests that migrants (forced or displaced) or in whatever from contributes to the economic fabrics of the host community, to the links of assessable and cheap labour provision to the community [10, 18, 22]. There are also notable evidences of migrants providing new market systems and engaging trades by patronizing the bigger sellers from the host community whilst they sell cheaply below market prices [11, 42, 62, 16, and 24]. More often than not, there have being some pessimistic submission of migrants in host community suggesting that their impacts are directly negative. Some studies are of the opinion that migrants are welfare scoundrels do not contribute any meaningful development to the community whilst changing the prospect and future for members of the host community [64, 63, 48, 37, 19] fuels the level of crimes committed in host communities [64, 40], hijacking jobs meant for the lower class groups in the host community [48, 51]. They have also been perceived to contribute to housing problems [48, 54] and poses a threat to cultural and socioenvironmental resources and increases anxieties and tensions between groups in host communities [46, 37, 53, 45, 57 and 60]. While there are

studies that have also revealed that perception of host communities on migrants is rather a combination of positive and negative outcomes [40, 14, 35, 38 and 39], however, scarcely reported are the processes of migrant's integration in host community. Rather than a variants of perceptions, integration brings to play the equal role of migrants and their host communities, but more impactful are variabilities in the attitudes of host communities which is believed to influence migrants' adjustments to lifestyle in host communities [58, 61]. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, the exploration of migrants' integration is quite new and majorly focused on high-income countries [52]. On the other hand, one relevant use, points that migration policies reflects process paths to integrating migrants in society, however, not much has been done to explore the integration of migrants in host communities especially where there are no guiding migration policy to consult such as the case of Nigeria. Specifically, none of the previously mentioned studies have investigated the case of the Beninese and their hosts in Nigeria. This study was undertaken to examine the perceived impacts (either positive, negative or a blend of both) of the presence of Beninoise migrants on their Nigerian host and to examine the extent of migrant's integration into the socioeconomic fabrics of the host community while without losing track of the challenges faced by the migrants in the host community.

1.2 Theoretical Explanation

The tenets of the Acculturation theory was also explored within the scope of this study. Acculturation theory explains the intercultural relationships and plural societies. Migration leads to a wider interaction of people and culture from different background [9, 58]. "Acculturation covers all the changes that arise from the contact between individuals and groups of different cultural backgrounds" [9]. The concept extends to also mean how immigrants reclaim significant aspect of their culture, the social structures and institutions, without entirely abandoning their initial cultural identity. Berry identifies four possible acculturation expectations:

- When integration is defined as where the dominant society (host community) accepts the will of the immigrants to sustain their cultural identity whilst being embraced by the host.
- When the dominant groups (host community) do not accept the maintenance of the cultural transfer and practice of the immigrants although there are traces of support for social contact.
- In this case, the dominant group do cut all ties with members of the other groups. A clear case of segregation takes place.
- When marginalization is imposed by the dominant group as a form of exclusion.

In all situation, the lesser group such as the case of migrants in the host community, seek to integrate themselves by all possible means. Integration is one important strategy employed by migrants to acculturate themselves into the host community. However, where this is not done properly cultural isolation or confusion may set in for migrants [55]. In the light of this, the Beninoise migrants is regarded as the lesser group while the dominant group being members from the host community in Nigeria. Most societies within Nigeria are a mix of varying culture, such as the case of Lagos and Lekki being a heterogenic and pluralistic society. A plural society is one with the co-existence of various ethno-cultural diversities under same structure. In the case of migrants and host, integrating or accepting the migrants as significant persons in host community largely surrounds the perception of the host community on the impact the migrants' presence has or would likely have on the community in the

present and in future. Integration brings assimilation and closer relationship by means of considering the responsibilities and rights of both parties, their access to various services and of identification and respect for the principles that keeps the members of host and the migrants towards a unified goal [31].

1.3 Geographical and Socioeconomic Background of the Lekki, Southwest Nigeria

Lekki is natural peninsula located in Southwest; with Victoria Island to its west, Ikoyi to the South Atlantic Ocean, to the north is the Lagos lagoon and Lekki lagoon to the east. Lekki houses several residential estates gated residential development, agricultural farmland, and its proximity to the Seme border coupled with the free movement policy of ECOWAS has encouraged the influx of Beninese migrants which has created diverse cultural influences. In present day Lagos, the area is surrounded by other local government areas such Epe and Eti-Osa as shown in Figure 1. Prior to the relocation of the Nigerian capital to Abuja, Lagos Island and the Eti-Osa Local Government Area (LGA) served as the seat of the Nations' Capital in Lagos [50]. The eastern part of Ibeju-Lekki LGA is adjoined at the ends of edge of the Refuge Island with a housing population estimated 401,272 [41]. As shown in Figure 1, the peninsula is about 10km wide and averagely 70 to 80 km long, it lies between a latitude of 6°27' and 6°27' 30" N and a longitude of 3°27' and 3°30' E. Lekki currently a home for several estates, restricted residential areas, arable lands, areas allocated for a Free Trade Zone, which is under construction [5-6].

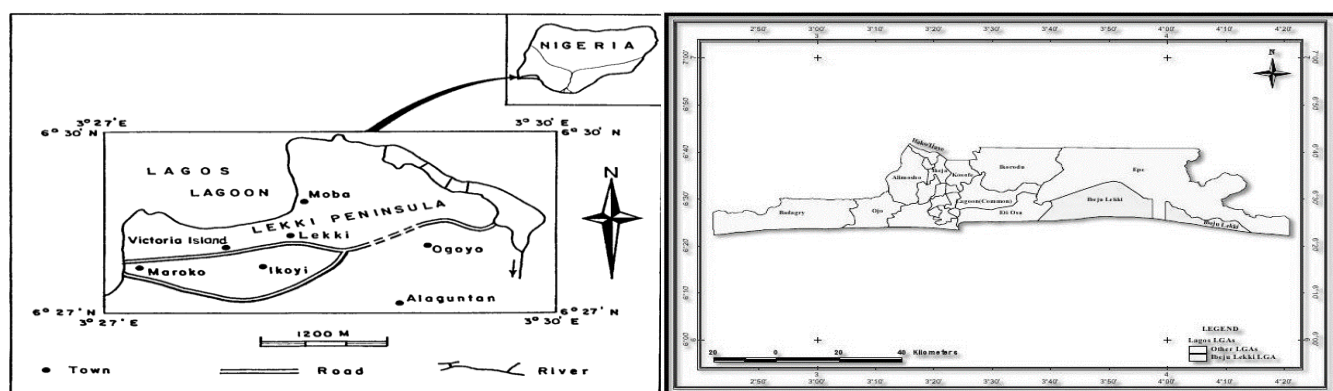


Figure 1: Map showing the Lekki Peninsula and environs in Lagos.

Lekki is a heterogamous classed society, peripherally an area for the urban rich. Majority are civil servants such as administrators, health workers, accounting officers, teachers among others; on the other hand there are artisans which include tailors, house-keepers, carpenters, electricians, traders and contractors those of whom are predominantly immigrant into the area with the aim of providing needed services to the urban rich in the area. The Agro-economic side of Lekki makes the business of agriculture attractive to residents and immigrants to the area. These features of Lekki overtime has being the source of income and livelihood to people from far and near like the Ijaws of Bayelsa and Rivers State in Nigeria, the Beninese of Benin, and many others that often venture into horticulture, farming, fishing and other jobs like the home services. The area also has a composition of people with different religious affiliations.

2. Materials and Method

Data collected in August 2017 from both in-depth interviews (IDI) and household questionnaires administered to migrants and host community member was used in this study. Using a 95% confidence interval and 5% margin of error a total of 384 households (100 vs 284) were randomly selected from migrants and host communities respectively. Ten (five each) in-depth interviews were held for migrants and members of host and the perceptions of both were analysed. The survey questionnaires had questions on household features for the migrants' respondents and their host. Other sections of questions cover the perception of both category of respondents with regards to the migrants impact on social vices, business activities and living condition in the host community. Followed by questions to elicit a general view of challenges faced by the migrants in the community. The in-depth interview responses gathered strengthened the findings from the survey and furthermore we used in collated varying responses with regards to integration and challenges of the migrants in host community. The SPSS was engaged for quantitative data entry and analysis was done while qualitative responses were recorded and content analysed. Due to time constraint in only the in-depth interview method was adopted for collecting the qualitative data.

3. Results

3.1 Household Characteristics

Although not living better than the host as posited in a different study [1] the Beninose migrants had some advantages as well. As presented in Table 1, there is a higher proportion of household head with formal education (76.9%) from the host community than the migrants (59.6%). More than half (38.5% VS 12%) of the proportion of household of host communities are headed by females than migrants, households. However, 54% of migrants' household heads earn below the minim wage of the host country. From all respondent participants in this study, 46% of the host and 32% of the migrants are married. While more than two-third (32%) of migrants' household heads are into farming. Generally, it is a fair living condition for the migrants which contradicts findings from migrants study by Porter and his colleagues 2008. Also, the table shows that only 14.9% of household heads of the host are of the ageing population while there is a higher proportion (23%) among the migrants' household head.

Table 1: Household characteristics of Beninose migrants and host community.

Characteristics	Host	Migrants
Household headed by females (%)	38.5	12
Household heads above 60 years	14.9	23
Household heads with formal education (%)	76.6	59.6
Household heads who are married (%)	46.9	32.0
Household heads engaged in trading/artisan (%)	22.5	44.2
Household heads engaged in farming (%).	2.2	32.1
Household head who earn below N30, 000 (\$79) (%).	2.1	54.3

Source: Field Survey, 2017

3.2 Perception on Beninoise Migrants

The study revealed a self-assessment on the negative impact of the migrants on the host community. Table 2 show that 19.5% of the migrants perceive that they have negatively affected the available jobs in the host community however, a higher proportion (60.4%) of the host believe the migrants have taken most of the available jobs in the host community making it difficult for members of host. More than half (67%) of the members of host community opine that the migrants' presence constitutes some vices in the community which gives the media a wrong description of the community. This is also in consistent with findings from migrant studies [46, 1]. The study also show that only a few members (11%) of the host community perceive that the increase in the cost of accommodation is due to the presence of the migrants, this is one perception the migrants have zero opinion for. Almost similar proportion was observed in the case of migrants influencing the cost of labour works done in the community. However, there are varying opinion in this regards.

Table 2: Proportion of the Beninoise migrants and members of host community who had negative perception on the presence of Beninoise migrants on the community life.

Household characteristics	Host	Migrants
Cost of education (%)	10.5	12.1
Cost of food (%)	12.0	11.3
Cost of accommodation (%)	11.0	-
Jobs available (%)	60.4	19.5
Cost of labour (%)	12.2	9.1
Media effect of the community (%).	67.2	9.4

Source: Field Survey, 2017

To buttress the perceptions tailored to the fact that the migrants are taking up jobs meant for host members. A respondent interviewed at expressed that;

Beninoise migrants make everything hard for the Nigerians due to the labour market, in terms of construction, road and building construction. They accept jobs below the price of the Nigerians. They are willing to do any job for a meager amount because they are eager to make the money to go back to their country. The quality of their job, however, cannot be compared to that of Nigerians. Nevertheless, Nigerian employers are greedy and are ready to give out the work to Beninoise migrants to make things their financial burden easier (IDI/28years/Male Artisan). On a contrary, some of the host community members hold a different perception in this regard. A view by a 30 year old business man in an in-depth interview noted that; They come in to assist in some labour work, POP work and other construction work. They work as labourers and they charge less, at the same time they do the work with zeal. Unlike Nigerians who carry out jobs without zeal

(IDI//30years/Business Man). Another respondent was also of a positive perception; We Beninese are doing well because we go extra mile to ensure we meet up with our target, we work within the specific time frame but the Nigerians do not, they give excuses (IDI//30years/Business Man). As captured in other studies [28, 49, 1], Table 3, show a higher proportion of host community members who perceive the migrants as constituting security threat and influencers of crimes in the community while the migrant respondents were 32% assertive to this plight. 77% of the host community respondents perceive migrants to influencing security threats and crime rate, 67% perceive same to prostitution and hooliganism, 79% felt the presence of the migrants a burden to public provisions (water and school). Although other study [39] debunks these findings. Members of the host community hold similar views in high proportion above average on the prevalence of prostitution and hoodlums as well as burden placed on the use of available public water and school in the community. In all of these, the migrants are of a contrary view, only a few are of same perspective.

Table 3: The proportion of host community members and Beninoise migrants, who perceive the presence of Beninoise migrants as a burden and pressure on activities in host community.

Other Aspects	Host (%)	Migrants (%)
Security/Crime rate	77.2	32.1
Prostitution/Hooliganism	67.4	22.2
Burden to Public water	79.2	22.1
Burden on Public school.	67.1	28.7
Development of the area.	76.0	3.4

An outcome from the interview show that some members of host community yet perceive the migrants as a burden. One of the respondent said;

Nigerians are not happy with them due to the way they behave, we try to treat them well but they are heartless. They commit crime and because they have no traceable address and there is no detail about them. They believe they can easily run to the country and come back anytime for their money. They do not add value to our country (IDI//28years/Male Artisan).

3.3 Extent of Integration of Beninoise Migrants in Host Community

As part of the objective of the study, the extent of migrant's integration was examine. Interview responses held we recoded into three aspect of integration. Table 4 show that 79.2% of the host members perceive the migrants' integration by ways of understanding the language spoken by the host. Almost similar proportion (76%) opine that migrants hold significant position in the host community. It is believed that some level of social acceptance must have been achieved to the extent that responsibilities can be saddled on the migrants in the host community. What is critical is that integration of migrants into the community is not a formal process or through

any form of policy implementation such as the case in most communities in developed countries [36].

Table 4: Proportion of perceived extent of integration of Beninoise migrants in host community.

	Host (%)	Migrants (%)
Understand the language	79.2	22.1
Participate in community meeting	67.1	28.7
Hold positions in community	76.0	3.4

Source: Field Survey, 2017

3.4 Challenges faced by the Migrants in Host Community

In examining the challenges faced by the Beninoise settlers in the host community from their self-perception and that of their host, Table 5 show that of all challenges, 76% and 69% of respondents (migrants VS host) perceive flooding to be a major problem faced by the migrants. More than half (53%) of the migrants respondents perceive that they were some areas in the community that are restricted to only members of host. Flood incidence is a general challenge faced by housing units in Lekki as revealed by Ajibola, Izunwanne and Ogungbemi [8]. A higher proportion (67.9%) perceive accommodation challenge as another major problem faced by the migrants.

Table 8: Challenges faced by Beninoise migrants in host community perceived by members of host community and the migrants

Variable	Host (%)	Migrant (%)
Flood	69.3	76.4
Restriction on their movement	12	53.4
Accommodation problem	45.2	67.9
Discrimination	10.1	18.2
Communication challenge	45	12.2

Source: Field Survey, 2017

The interview findings also revealed that this as a major factor. A respondent explained that;

Accommodation is a major concern for Beninoise migrants, most of them are young and they come here without proper arrangement, some of them stay on the site where they work, in constructing building once the first decking is completed they live there until the building is completed then they move to their next job site to live, that is how they live in circles. They live in uncompleted buildings until the project is completed. Secondly, they find it difficult to communicate in English language unless they have stayed for a long period of years (IDI//30years/Business Man) We have serious housing problem, good houses are very expensive, and so we manage whatever we can afford. (IDI//39years/Business Woman). As you can see our houses are not

comfortable but that is what we can afford, we do not have the money to get a good accommodation. This is where we have been living for many years now (IDI//46years/Business Man) In most communities around coastal areas in Lagos, Nigeria face similar accommodation challenge. The available housing units are rather very expensive while the supposed available ones are either not accommodating enough or not conducive for living. Generally, housing challenges are very critical for migrants [54]. While buttressing the restriction on movement for migrants, a respondents claims it is not the factor of the host community but because some of the migrants were illegal migrants. He said; The challenges they face is that they do not have freedom of movement due to their illegal migrant status and non-possession of work permit or valid ID card. They belief Nigeria government officials will send them out of the country. If they had work permit they will be very free (IDI//28years/Male Artisan). As for me, I have my cards but there are many of my people who do not have their cards, sometimes they are not free to move about or visit certain places as they like (IDI//48years/Male Artisan). This is not shocking as anecdotal evidences has revealed that due to the porosity of the Nigeria's land borders it is almost very easy for migrants from neighboring countries to move without restrictions into Nigeria and live for quite a number of years.

4. Conclusion

It is expected that perception defines attitudes towards migrants. On the other hand, the attitudes of host communities' is significant in that a negative attitude would likely create an environment in which prejudiced treatments of migrants might be tolerated while in the positive, would likely boost migrants' acceptance and integration [44-45, 47]. The study revealed that members of the host community perceived that the social vices in the community is being influenced by the migrants quite higher than the migrants perceive themselves to be. The host members believe most of the crimes committed are done by the migrants as much as the countable street urchins in the area. These is no shocking why they perceive the migrants are giving the media and the general public a negative impression of the community. However, in a much better light from the general perception, the migrants provide cheaper labour and not necessarily occupying jobs meant for members of host. This could also contribute to economic improvement in general as studies shown a strong link between migration and national development [31]. The migrants seem to be earning below the country's minimum wage, however their living condition is not that very bad, as some have made good use of the available opportunities to survive in the community. The study area is majorly populated by the rich class owing to the cost of housing unit [8] but on the other side, the presence of the low and middle income earners makes it proper to have public water and schools constructed in the community. In this the study, we find that the migrants are major users and a burden in that regards as perceived by the host. On integration, the migrants have in some ways assimilated by understanding the language spoken in the community, participate in community activities but there are still lapses in their communication. This is not surprising as understanding a language is only one aspect of breaking the barrier of communication, the other is speaking. The coexistence of legal and illegal migrants would likely remain in a country like Nigeria for a number of reasons and the process of integrating migrants into communities would in some areas prove very difficult because in all, the country as a whole has adopted but unimplemented her migration policy [12, 31]. Host communities would in their own way find it either necessary or unneedful to accept migrants and integrate them into the system, especially when it is not an obvious case of refugee migrants. However, integration is a two way process if it is to benefit both the host and the migrants,

such that hosts need to continue to encourage integration while the migrants need to make serious efforts to integrate themselves [17]. Coastal areas like the study area (Lekki) are vulnerable to flood impact [2-3] which is also reflected as most perceived challenge faced by the Benin migrants and the host in extension in this study. While the blame game goes on who to take responsibility of such impact [21] there is need for everyone to take into consideration the double impact of the presence poor urban planning and wastes in the area which likely compounds the issues when there heavy downpours [3, 7, 27]. There is more to be done in wastes management in Lekki environs as in other places of the state and country. This management can begin from plastic wastes [23]. Generally, we conclude by asserting that the perception of Benin migrants by their host, is a mix of positive and negative impact.

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