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Exploring Migration Intention as an Entrepreneurship Barrier in Anambra State

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ABSTRACT

Migration has become one of the defining demographic and socio-economic realities in Nigeria, particularly among young adults who perceive limited economic opportunities within their local environments. Anambra State has long been recognized for its vibrant entrepreneurial culture, yet an increasing proportion of educated youths express intentions to migrate either to major Nigerian cities or overseas in search of better employment opportunities, improved living standards, and enhanced security. This article examines migration intention as a barrier to entrepreneurship in Anambra State by synthesizing theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence from migration studies, entrepreneurship research, and Nigerian development literature. The study argues that migration intention reduces entrepreneurial participation by weakening opportunity recognition, discouraging long-term investment decisions, limiting business commitment, and accelerating the loss of entrepreneurial talent. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Human Capital Theory, and the Push–Pull Theory of Migration, the article explains how economic uncertainty, institutional deficiencies, unemployment, insecurity, governance challenges, and social perceptions collectively shape migration aspirations among young people. Existing evidence indicates that migration intention functions not merely as an outcome of economic hardship but as a psychological disposition that redirects financial, intellectual, and social resources away from local enterprise development. The article concludes that strengthening entrepreneurship in Anambra State requires policy interventions that improve institutional quality, expand access to entrepreneurial finance, promote innovation ecosystems, strengthen entrepreneurship education, and restore confidence in local economic opportunities. Such measures can reduce migration intentions while fostering sustainable entrepreneurial development.

Keywords: migration intention, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial barriers, youth migration, Anambra State, Nigeria

1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship remains one of the most widely accepted mechanisms for promoting economic growth, employment generation, innovation, and poverty reduction across developing economies. Governments increasingly recognize that entrepreneurial activities stimulate local production, encourage technological advancement, improve household incomes, and contribute significantly to national economic resilience. For countries experiencing persistent unemployment and demographic expansion, entrepreneurship has assumed strategic importance as an instrument for sustainable development.

Nigeria continues to experience substantial demographic growth accompanied by increasing youth unemployment, underemployment, poverty, and widening income inequality. According to the **National Bureau of Statistics**, unemployment and labour market vulnerabilities have continued to shape the

economic behaviour of Nigerian youths, many of whom increasingly perceive migration as a viable pathway toward improved socio-economic opportunities. (Emerald)

Migration has traditionally been understood as the physical movement of individuals from one geographical location to another. Contemporary migration scholarship extends beyond actual movement to include migration intention, defined as an individual's conscious willingness or plan to relocate in the future. Migration intention frequently precedes actual migration and represents an important behavioural predictor within migration research. The decision to migrate often emerges from prolonged evaluation of available opportunities, perceived risks, expected returns, and prevailing institutional conditions.

Within Nigeria, migration intentions have increased considerably over the last decade. The phenomenon popularly described as the "Japa syndrome" reflects growing aspirations among skilled professionals, university graduates, entrepreneurs, and students to relocate abroad in pursuit of improved economic prospects, political stability, educational opportunities, and personal security. While migration itself may generate benefits through remittances, knowledge transfer, and international networks, persistent migration intentions among economically productive populations create significant developmental concerns. Young people who continually prepare for migration may postpone entrepreneurial investment, delay business establishment, reduce local economic participation, or redirect productive resources toward financing migration.

The challenge is particularly important in Anambra State, one of Nigeria's foremost commercial centres. The state's entrepreneurial reputation dates back several decades and is reflected in successful indigenous business clusters across Onitsha, Nnewi, Awka, Ekwulobia, and other commercial centres. The apprenticeship system popularly associated with the Igbo entrepreneurial tradition has received considerable scholarly attention for its contribution to indigenous business development and wealth creation. Despite this rich entrepreneurial heritage, recent socio-economic developments indicate increasing migration aspirations among educated youths and skilled professionals.

The growing migration intention among young people in Anambra State presents an important paradox. A society historically recognized for producing successful entrepreneurs increasingly witnesses educated youths expressing stronger interest in leaving the state or the country than in establishing businesses locally. This shift raises important questions regarding the sustainability of indigenous entrepreneurship, business succession, innovation, and local economic development.

Entrepreneurship depends heavily upon human capital, opportunity recognition, commitment, innovation, and long-term investment orientation. Individuals with strong migration intentions may exhibit reduced commitment toward establishing new enterprises because entrepreneurial ventures typically require substantial time, financial resources, and emotional investment before generating sustainable returns. Prospective migrants may therefore allocate savings toward visa applications, foreign education, migration processing, or international relocation instead of business creation. Such behavioural choices gradually weaken entrepreneurial ecosystems and reduce local enterprise formation.

Existing studies on entrepreneurship in Nigeria have extensively examined barriers including inadequate financing, poor infrastructure, limited access to markets, policy instability, bureaucratic bottlenecks, weak institutional support, insecurity, and inconsistent government policies. Nigerian scholars have repeatedly demonstrated that these structural constraints discourage entrepreneurial activities among young people (Ojiaku, Nkamnebe, & Nwaizugbo, 2018).

Migration studies within Nigeria have similarly focused on determinants of migration, remittances, labour mobility, diaspora engagement, rural–urban migration, and international migration. Comparatively fewer studies have explored migration intention as an independent constraint to entrepreneurship, especially within subnational contexts such as Anambra State. Available evidence increasingly suggests that migration intention itself constitutes a psychological barrier capable of influencing entrepreneurial behaviour before physical migration actually occurs. Youths who perceive migration as their primary life goal often become reluctant to undertake entrepreneurial risks within their home communities.

Understanding this relationship has become increasingly important because entrepreneurial ecosystems rely not only on financial capital but also on the availability of ambitious, innovative, and skilled

individuals willing to invest locally. Where migration intentions dominate career planning, communities experience gradual depletion of entrepreneurial capacity even before actual migration occurs. The result may include declining business formation, reduced innovation, weakening family enterprises, limited employment generation, and slower regional economic growth.

The theoretical relationship between migration intention and entrepreneurship can be understood from several complementary perspectives. The Theory of Planned Behaviour proposes that behavioural intentions significantly influence future actions by shaping attitudes, perceived behavioural control, and subjective norms. Individuals who develop strong migration intentions may consequently reduce their entrepreneurial intentions because migration becomes the preferred behavioural objective. Human Capital Theory similarly suggests that education, skills, and experience constitute valuable productive resources whose economic contribution depends upon where they are deployed. Persistent migration intentions may therefore redirect human capital away from local enterprise development toward foreign labour markets. The Push–Pull Theory explains migration decisions through interacting forces that repel individuals from their origin communities while attracting them toward perceived opportunities elsewhere. These perspectives collectively provide useful explanations for understanding why migration intentions may function as barriers to entrepreneurship.

This article examines migration intention as an entrepreneurship barrier in Anambra State by reviewing theoretical perspectives, analysing empirical evidence from Nigeria and related contexts, and discussing policy implications for entrepreneurship development. The article argues that reducing migration intention requires more than discouraging outward migration. Sustainable solutions depend upon strengthening institutional quality, expanding entrepreneurial opportunities, improving governance, increasing access to finance, promoting innovation, and restoring confidence in local economic prospects. Such interventions can reinforce Anambra State's longstanding entrepreneurial tradition while encouraging young people to view entrepreneurship as a viable pathway toward economic advancement.

2. Conceptual Clarification

2.1 Migration

Migration refers to the movement of individuals or groups from one geographical location to another for the purpose of establishing temporary or permanent residence. The movement may occur within national boundaries or across international borders and may be voluntary or involuntary. Migration has remained an important demographic process that influences labour markets, economic development, social structures, and political systems across countries. According to the International Organization for Migration, migration encompasses all forms of population movement irrespective of the causes, duration, or legal status of migrants.

Migration has attracted extensive scholarly attention because of its implications for economic development. Classical economists viewed migration primarily as a response to regional differences in labour demand and wages. Ernst Georg Ravenstein (1885) argued that migration is largely influenced by economic opportunities, distance, and employment prospects. His "laws of migration" remain foundational in migration studies because they explain why individuals move from areas characterized by limited opportunities to locations offering greater economic prospects.

Migration also reflects an individual's attempt to improve overall well-being. Michael Todaro (1969) argued that migration decisions are based not only on existing wage differences but also on expected future income. Individuals evaluate the potential benefits associated with relocation before deciding whether migration represents a worthwhile investment. This perspective explains why migration intentions often remain strong even when migration involves considerable financial costs and uncertainty.

Contemporary migration literature recognizes migration as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by economic, political, educational, environmental, cultural, and institutional factors (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2020). Economic motivations continue to dominate migration decisions in many developing countries, although insecurity, governance failures, climate change, educational aspirations, and social networks increasingly influence migration patterns.

In Nigeria, migration has become an important livelihood strategy among young people facing unemployment, underemployment, declining purchasing power, insecurity, and limited career opportunities. Internal migration from rural communities to urban centres has existed for decades. International migration has expanded considerably in recent years as increasing numbers of educated professionals seek opportunities abroad (Afolayan, Ikwuyatum, & Abejide, 2008). The growing popularity of the "Japa" phenomenon illustrates the extent to which migration has become embedded within the aspirations of many Nigerian youths.

Migration generates both opportunities and challenges. Positive outcomes include remittances, knowledge transfer, international business networks, technology diffusion, and investment by diaspora communities (de Haas, 2010). Excessive migration of skilled individuals can also create labour shortages, weaken local innovation systems, reduce entrepreneurial activity, and contribute to brain drain (Docquier & Rapoport, 2012). These contrasting outcomes suggest that migration should be understood not merely as population movement but as a developmental process capable of reshaping local economies.

2.2 Migration Intention

Migration intention refers to an individual's conscious willingness, desire, or planned decision to relocate from one place to another in the future. It represents the psychological stage preceding actual migration behaviour. Scholars generally agree that migration intention constitutes one of the strongest predictors of migration behaviour because most migration decisions evolve through gradual planning rather than spontaneous action.

Icek Ajzen (1991) argued through the Theory of Planned Behaviour that behavioural intentions serve as immediate determinants of actual behaviour. According to this theory, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control collectively shape an individual's intentions. Migration intention therefore emerges after individuals evaluate the perceived advantages and disadvantages of relocating.

Douglas Massey et al. (1993) observed that migration intentions are often influenced by family expectations, social networks, economic opportunities, educational aspirations, and previous migration experiences within communities. Individuals living in societies where migration is socially admired may develop stronger migration intentions because successful migrants become symbols of economic achievement.

Migration intention differs from actual migration. Many individuals may desire to migrate without eventually relocating because of financial constraints, immigration regulations, family obligations, or changing life circumstances. Others may spend several years preparing for migration before eventually relocating. Even when migration does not occur, migration intention influences important life decisions including career planning, investment behaviour, educational choices, and entrepreneurship.

Several studies indicate that migration intention reduces commitment to local labour markets. Carling and Schewel (2018) argue that aspirations to migrate affect economic decisions long before migration occurs. Individuals anticipating relocation often avoid investments requiring long-term commitment because they expect to leave their current environment. This behavioural pattern has direct implications for entrepreneurship since successful businesses require sustained investment and long-term planning.

Within Nigeria, migration intention has become increasingly associated with educated youths and professionals seeking opportunities abroad. Economic instability, insecurity, governance challenges, inflation, unemployment, irregular electricity supply, and declining public confidence collectively contribute to migration aspirations (Adebayo, 2022). Social media has further amplified migration intentions by exposing young people to perceived opportunities available in Europe, North America, and parts of Asia.

Migration intention therefore extends beyond physical mobility. It represents a psychological orientation that shapes economic behaviour. Individuals who constantly prepare for migration may postpone business establishment, delay investment decisions, or redirect financial resources toward migration expenses instead of entrepreneurial ventures.

2.3 Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship has received extensive scholarly attention because of its contribution to innovation, employment creation, productivity, and economic development. Although numerous definitions exist, most emphasize opportunity recognition, innovation, risk-taking, and value creation.

Joseph Schumpeter (1934) described entrepreneurs as innovators who introduce new products, production methods, markets, and organizational forms capable of transforming economic systems. Innovation occupies a central position within Schumpeter's framework because entrepreneurs generate economic development by disrupting existing production patterns.

Peter Drucker (1985) viewed entrepreneurship as purposeful innovation through which individuals exploit opportunities created by social, technological, and economic changes. Entrepreneurship therefore involves systematic opportunity identification rather than mere business ownership.

Howard Stevenson and Jarillo (1990) defined entrepreneurship as the pursuit of opportunity beyond currently controlled resources. This definition highlights the entrepreneur's capacity to mobilize scarce resources creatively in pursuit of value creation.

Contemporary entrepreneurship literature recognizes entrepreneurs as agents who combine financial, human, technological, and social resources to create sustainable enterprises capable of generating employment and economic growth (Hisrich, Peters, & Shepherd, 2020). Entrepreneurship contributes significantly to poverty reduction, innovation, competitiveness, industrialization, and regional development.

Within developing economies, entrepreneurship serves as an important strategy for addressing unemployment. Many governments have introduced entrepreneurship education, financial support programmes, business incubators, and innovation hubs to stimulate enterprise development among young people (Acs, Szerb, & Lloyd, 2018).

Nigeria has adopted entrepreneurship as a major component of national economic development strategies. Universities now offer entrepreneurship education, while government agencies provide financial support to small and medium enterprises. Despite these interventions, entrepreneurial participation continues to face structural challenges including limited access to finance, inadequate infrastructure, policy inconsistency, insecurity, corruption, and weak institutional support (Ojiaku, Nkamnebe, & Nwaizugbo, 2018).

2.4 Entrepreneurship Barriers

Entrepreneurship barriers refer to conditions that discourage individuals from establishing, sustaining, or expanding business ventures. These barriers may arise from economic, institutional, psychological, technological, social, or environmental factors.

Entrepreneurship research traditionally identifies access to finance as one of the most significant constraints facing new businesses. According to David Storey (1994), insufficient capital restricts enterprise formation because entrepreneurs require financial resources to purchase equipment, employ workers, and sustain operations during the early stages of business development.

Institutional quality also shapes entrepreneurial activity. William Baumol (1990) argued that institutions determine whether entrepreneurial talent becomes productive, unproductive, or destructive. Weak regulatory systems, excessive bureaucracy, corruption, and policy inconsistency reduce incentives for productive entrepreneurship.

Psychological barriers equally influence entrepreneurial behaviour. Fear of failure, uncertainty avoidance, low entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and perceived business risks discourage many potential entrepreneurs from establishing enterprises (Krueger, Reilly, & Carsrud, 2000). These barriers frequently interact with structural constraints, thereby reducing entrepreneurial intentions.

Social and cultural factors also shape entrepreneurship. Family expectations, occupational prestige, peer influence, and societal attitudes toward entrepreneurship influence career decisions. In communities where salaried employment or international migration enjoys higher social recognition than business ownership, entrepreneurial participation may decline.

Migration intention constitutes an emerging psychological barrier within entrepreneurship literature. Individuals preparing for migration often perceive local entrepreneurial investment as incompatible with future relocation plans. Financial resources become dedicated to migration expenses, while business opportunities receive limited attention. Entrepreneurial commitment declines because migration represents the preferred long-term objective. This relationship illustrates how migration intention influences entrepreneurship even before physical migration occurs.

2.5 Entrepreneurship in Anambra State

Anambra State occupies a unique position within Nigeria's entrepreneurial landscape. The state has produced numerous successful indigenous enterprises spanning manufacturing, commerce, transportation, real estate, pharmaceuticals, hospitality, and financial services. Commercial centres such as Onitsha, Nnewi, and Awka have become important centres of trade and industrial activity.

The entrepreneurial success of Anambra State has frequently been attributed to the Igbo apprenticeship system, locally known as *Igba Boi*. Under this indigenous business model, experienced entrepreneurs mentor apprentices over several years before providing financial support for independent business establishment. Scholars including Aloysius N. Isichei and more recent entrepreneurship researchers regard this system as one of Africa's most successful indigenous enterprise development mechanisms because it facilitates knowledge transfer, social capital formation, and business succession.

Despite these strengths, entrepreneurship in Anambra State faces growing challenges. Youth unemployment, inflation, exchange rate instability, insecurity, infrastructure deficits, and increasing migration aspirations have altered career preferences among many educated young people. Instead of viewing entrepreneurship as a long-term career pathway, many graduates increasingly perceive migration as a more reliable route toward economic advancement.

This changing orientation has implications for enterprise sustainability. Family businesses experience succession challenges when younger generations prefer overseas opportunities to managing inherited enterprises. Start-up creation may decline as talented youths postpone entrepreneurial investments while preparing for migration. Local innovation ecosystems consequently lose valuable human capital capable of generating employment and economic growth.

Migration intention therefore represents an emerging entrepreneurship barrier within Anambra State because it influences entrepreneurial commitment, investment decisions, opportunity recognition, and long-term business planning. Understanding this relationship provides an important foundation for developing policies capable of strengthening entrepreneurship while reducing excessive migration aspirations.

3. Theoretical Framework

Understanding the relationship between migration intention and entrepreneurship requires theoretical perspectives that explain how individuals make career decisions, allocate resources, and respond to opportunities and constraints within their socio-economic environment. Migration intention does not emerge in isolation. It develops through interactions among personal aspirations, institutional conditions, social influences, and perceived opportunities. Entrepreneurship is similarly shaped by individual motivation, environmental conditions, and resource availability. This study adopts four complementary theories to explain the nexus between migration intention and entrepreneurship in Anambra State: the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the Push–Pull Theory of Migration, Human Capital Theory, and Social Capital Theory. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding why individuals with strong migration intentions may become less inclined to establish businesses within their local environment.

3.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), developed by Icek Ajzen (1991), is one of the most influential behavioural theories in psychology, entrepreneurship, and migration research. The theory proposes that human behaviour is primarily determined by behavioural intention, which represents an individual's readiness to perform a particular action. Behavioural intention is influenced by three major factors: attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control.

According to Ajzen (1991), attitude refers to an individual's evaluation of whether performing a behaviour is desirable or undesirable. Subjective norms describe the influence of important social groups such as family, friends, colleagues, and community members on behavioural decisions. Perceived behavioural control reflects an individual's belief regarding the ease or difficulty of performing a particular behaviour. These three components collectively determine behavioural intention, which subsequently predicts actual behaviour.

Within entrepreneurship studies, TPB has been widely applied to explain entrepreneurial intention among students, graduates, and potential business owners. Krueger, Reilly, and Carsrud (2000) demonstrated that entrepreneurial behaviour is generally preceded by entrepreneurial intention, making intention one of the strongest predictors of business creation. Individuals who possess favourable attitudes toward entrepreneurship, receive social encouragement, and believe they possess the necessary skills are more likely to establish businesses.

Migration research has similarly adopted TPB to explain migration intention. Van Dalen and Henkens (2013) argue that migration decisions develop gradually through individual evaluation of expected benefits, perceived risks, and social influences. Individuals who believe migration offers superior economic opportunities tend to develop stronger migration intentions.

The theory provides valuable insight into the relationship between migration intention and entrepreneurship in Anambra State. Young graduates who perceive overseas employment as more rewarding than local entrepreneurship may gradually develop stronger migration intentions while entrepreneurial intentions weaken. Their attitudes increasingly favour migration over enterprise creation.

Subjective norms further reinforce this behavioural shift. In many Nigerian communities, successful migrants receive considerable social recognition. Families often celebrate relatives who relocate abroad because migration is associated with financial success, improved living standards, and enhanced social prestige. Such social approval strengthens migration intentions while reducing the attractiveness of local entrepreneurial careers.

Perceived behavioural control also plays a significant role. Prospective entrepreneurs who believe that poor infrastructure, limited access to finance, inconsistent government policies, insecurity, and unstable markets reduce their chances of business success may conclude that migration represents a more achievable pathway toward economic advancement. Conversely, individuals who perceive strong institutional support for entrepreneurship are more likely to establish businesses locally.

Empirical evidence supports the application of TPB to entrepreneurship. Autio et al. (2001) found that entrepreneurial intentions among university students are strongly influenced by perceived behavioural control and social norms. Liñán and Chen (2009) similarly reported that entrepreneurial attitudes significantly predict entrepreneurial intention across different cultural settings. Nigerian studies have produced comparable findings, indicating that entrepreneurial intentions among graduates are influenced by perceived opportunities, institutional support, entrepreneurial education, and social expectations (Ojiaku, Nkamnebe, & Nwaizugbo, 2018).

One limitation of TPB lies in its emphasis on individual cognition while giving less attention to structural constraints. Individuals may possess strong entrepreneurial intentions yet remain unable to establish businesses because of financial barriers, poor infrastructure, or insecurity. Despite this limitation, TPB remains highly relevant because migration intention itself represents a behavioural intention capable of influencing entrepreneurial decision-making long before actual migration occurs.

3.2 Push–Pull Theory of Migration

The Push–Pull Theory of Migration was originally advanced by Everett S. Lee (1966). Lee argued that migration decisions arise from interactions between conditions at the place of origin and attractions available at the destination. Individuals evaluate these contrasting conditions before deciding whether migration offers greater expected benefits.

Push factors refer to unfavourable conditions that encourage individuals to leave their place of residence. Pull factors describe attractive conditions that encourage movement toward another location. Lee (1966)

emphasized that migration decisions also depend on intervening obstacles, including migration costs, immigration policies, family responsibilities, and access to information.

The Push–Pull framework has become one of the most widely applied theories in migration studies because it explains migration across different geographical, social, and economic contexts. Push factors commonly include unemployment, poverty, insecurity, political instability, poor governance, inadequate healthcare, limited educational opportunities, inflation, environmental degradation, and weak public institutions. Pull factors include higher wages, better infrastructure, quality education, political stability, improved healthcare, career advancement, technological development, and stronger legal institutions (de Haas, 2021).

The Nigerian context provides numerous examples of these dynamics. High youth unemployment, rising inflation, irregular electricity supply, insecurity, kidnapping, exchange rate instability, and declining purchasing power continue to encourage migration among educated youths. Simultaneously, developed countries attract Nigerian professionals through better remuneration, favourable working conditions, advanced research facilities, stronger institutions, and greater career opportunities.

In Anambra State, these push factors increasingly influence entrepreneurial decisions. Graduates who perceive local business environments as highly uncertain may conclude that migration offers greater economic security than entrepreneurship. Business creation requires long-term investment, while migration appears to promise relatively stable returns through salaried employment or educational opportunities abroad.

The theory also explains why migration intention may become an entrepreneurship barrier before migration occurs. Individuals planning international relocation often postpone business investments because entrepreneurship demands long-term commitment. Financial resources become dedicated to language examinations, visa applications, international tuition fees, travel expenses, and migration processing rather than enterprise development.

The Push–Pull Theory further recognizes the influence of migrant networks. Communities with successful migrants generate information flows that reduce uncertainty associated with migration. These networks frequently encourage additional migration by providing accommodation, employment information, financial assistance, and emotional support (Massey et al., 1993). Within many communities in Anambra State, returning migrants often display visible economic success, reinforcing migration aspirations among younger generations.

Critics argue that the Push–Pull Theory oversimplifies migration decisions by assuming individuals act primarily in response to external conditions. Migration decisions frequently involve emotional attachment, cultural identity, family responsibilities, and personal ambitions that cannot be adequately explained through economic incentives alone. Despite this criticism, the theory remains valuable because it identifies the structural conditions capable of simultaneously encouraging migration and discouraging entrepreneurship.

3.3 Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory was developed principally by Gary Becker (1964) and further expanded by Theodore Schultz (1961). The theory views education, skills, knowledge, health, experience, and training as productive assets capable of increasing individual productivity and economic performance.

According to Becker (1964), individuals invest in education and skill acquisition because these investments generate future economic returns through higher income, improved employment opportunities, and increased productivity. Human capital therefore represents one of the most valuable resources within modern economies.

Entrepreneurship literature recognizes human capital as a major determinant of entrepreneurial success. Entrepreneurs possessing higher educational attainment, managerial competence, technical knowledge, industry experience, and innovation capabilities generally demonstrate superior business performance (Unger et al., 2011). Human capital enhances opportunity recognition, resource mobilization, strategic decision-making, innovation, and business growth.

Migration studies similarly apply Human Capital Theory to explain labour mobility. Skilled individuals often migrate toward environments where their knowledge and abilities receive greater economic rewards. Countries characterized by stronger institutions, advanced industries, and higher wages naturally attract educated professionals from developing economies.

The relationship between migration intention and entrepreneurship becomes evident through this theoretical perspective. Individuals possessing valuable human capital frequently evaluate alternative opportunities available in domestic and international labour markets. Where expected returns abroad substantially exceed those available locally, migration intentions strengthen.

For Anambra State, this dynamic has important developmental implications. Universities and higher institutions continue to produce graduates possessing entrepreneurial potential. Many of these graduates acquire professional qualifications, technical skills, and innovative capacities capable of supporting enterprise development. Strong migration intentions may redirect these productive resources away from local entrepreneurship toward overseas labour markets.

Human Capital Theory also explains why migration intention may reduce entrepreneurial investment. Skilled individuals preparing for migration frequently invest additional resources in international certifications, foreign language examinations, professional licensing, and overseas education instead of business establishment. Human capital remains productive but contributes less directly to local economic development.

One criticism of Human Capital Theory concerns its tendency to treat individuals as rational economic actors while paying limited attention to institutional barriers. Highly educated individuals may remain unemployed or underemployed because of governance failures rather than inadequate human capital. Institutional quality therefore mediates the relationship between human capital and entrepreneurial outcomes.

Despite this limitation, Human Capital Theory remains highly applicable because entrepreneurship depends heavily upon the availability and productive utilization of skilled individuals. Persistent migration intentions may reduce the contribution of human capital to enterprise creation within Anambra State.

3.4 Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory provides another useful perspective for understanding migration intention and entrepreneurship. Major contributors include Pierre Bourdieu (1986), James Coleman (1988), and Robert Putnam (1993). Although these scholars conceptualized social capital differently, they agreed that relationships, trust, social networks, and reciprocal obligations constitute valuable resources capable of facilitating individual and collective action.

Bourdieu (1986) viewed social capital as resources embedded within durable social relationships. Coleman (1988) emphasized social structures that facilitate coordinated actions among individuals. Putnam (1993) focused on civic engagement, trust, and networks that enhance societal cooperation.

Entrepreneurship research demonstrates that social capital significantly influences business creation. Entrepreneurs depend upon family members, friends, mentors, professional associations, customers, suppliers, and financial institutions for information, resources, partnerships, and market access. Strong social networks reduce transaction costs while increasing access to entrepreneurial opportunities.

Migration research similarly highlights the importance of migrant networks. Existing migrants often facilitate future migration by providing information, accommodation, financial support, employment referrals, and emotional encouragement. Such networks reduce migration costs and uncertainty, making migration increasingly attractive (Massey et al., 1993).

Within Anambra State, strong family and community networks have historically supported indigenous entrepreneurship through apprenticeship arrangements, cooperative societies, and informal financial systems. These same networks now increasingly facilitate international migration. Families frequently mobilize financial resources to support migration because overseas employment is perceived as a profitable household investment.

This transformation illustrates the dual nature of social capital. Networks capable of supporting entrepreneurship may simultaneously encourage migration. Young people receiving encouragement from relatives abroad may prioritize migration over business creation, even when local entrepreneurial opportunities exist.

Social Capital Theory therefore explains how social relationships shape career aspirations. Where community values increasingly celebrate migration success, entrepreneurial aspirations may gradually weaken. This shift has implications for enterprise continuity, innovation, and regional economic development.

One limitation of Social Capital Theory is that strong social networks do not always generate positive economic outcomes. Networks may reinforce unproductive behaviours, encourage dependency, or perpetuate migration cultures that reduce local investment. Social capital therefore produces different developmental outcomes depending on prevailing institutional and economic conditions.

3.5 Synthesis of the Theoretical Framework

Each of the four theories explains a distinct dimension of the relationship between migration intention and entrepreneurship.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour explains how migration intention develops through attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. The Push–Pull Theory identifies the structural conditions that simultaneously encourage migration and discourage entrepreneurial engagement. Human Capital Theory demonstrates how skilled individuals allocate their knowledge and capabilities toward locations offering greater expected returns. Social Capital Theory illustrates how family ties, community expectations, and migrant networks influence both migration and entrepreneurial decisions.

Collectively, these theories suggest that migration intention is not merely a consequence of economic hardship but a behavioural orientation shaped by institutional quality, labour market conditions, social expectations, and individual perceptions of opportunity. When migration becomes the dominant aspiration among educated youths, entrepreneurial intention, business investment, and enterprise formation are likely to decline. This study therefore adopts an integrated theoretical framework that combines these perspectives to explain how migration intention functions as an entrepreneurship barrier in Anambra State.

4. Empirical Literature Review

4.2 International Evidence on Migration Intention and Entrepreneurship

Research from developed and developing countries demonstrates that migration intention significantly influences labour market participation, investment decisions, and entrepreneurial behaviour.

One of the earliest contributions was made by Douglas Massey et al. (1993), who argued that migration decisions evolve through complex interactions among economic opportunities, household strategies, social networks, and institutional conditions. Their study showed that migration is often preceded by prolonged planning, during which individuals adjust their educational, occupational, and financial decisions in anticipation of relocation. This finding suggests that migration intention can reshape economic behaviour long before actual migration occurs.

Using data from several European countries, van Dalen and Henkens (2013) found that migration intentions were strongly associated with perceived employment opportunities, wage differentials, career advancement, and quality of governance. Individuals expressing stronger migration intentions demonstrated lower commitment to local labour markets because they expected better opportunities elsewhere.

Carling and Schewel (2018) introduced the aspiration–ability framework to explain migration behaviour. They argued that migration requires both the aspiration to migrate and the capability to undertake migration. Individuals may possess strong migration aspirations without eventually migrating because of financial limitations or restrictive immigration policies. The study remains important because it demonstrates that migration aspirations themselves influence economic decision-making irrespective of whether migration ultimately occurs.

Research conducted by de Haas (2010) challenged the traditional assumption that migration automatically reduces development in origin countries. He argued that migration may stimulate development through remittances, knowledge transfer, investment, and international business networks. The developmental outcomes depend largely on institutional quality and government policies within migrant-sending countries.

While de Haas (2010) emphasized the developmental contributions of migrants, Docquier and Rapoport (2012) found that persistent migration of highly skilled workers reduces innovation capacity, productivity, and entrepreneurial activity in developing countries. The authors concluded that excessive skilled migration weakens domestic labour markets by removing highly educated individuals who could otherwise establish businesses and generate employment.

Studies conducted among university students have also linked migration intention with entrepreneurial behaviour. Liñán and Santos (2007) observed that entrepreneurial intentions decline when graduates perceive better employment opportunities outside their home countries. Individuals increasingly direct their career planning toward migration instead of enterprise creation.

Using survey data from Eastern Europe, Kone, Özden, and Rijkers (2018) reported that highly educated youths exhibiting strong migration intentions were less willing to invest in local businesses because they expected relocation within a relatively short period. Investment uncertainty discouraged entrepreneurial commitment.

Research conducted in China similarly produced comparable findings. Zhao (2002) reported that migration aspirations among rural youths significantly influenced occupational choices, educational investments, and business decisions. Individuals intending to migrate allocated greater financial resources toward relocation than enterprise development.

A study by Williams and Baláž (2014) demonstrated that migration intentions reduce entrepreneurial investment because prospective migrants avoid long-term financial commitments that may complicate future relocation. Entrepreneurs require stable planning horizons, whereas migration intentions often shorten investment timeframes.

These international studies collectively indicate that migration intention influences economic behaviour through several pathways. It alters career planning, affects resource allocation, reduces local investment, and reshapes entrepreneurial aspirations before migration actually occurs.

4.3 African Evidence

Migration has become an increasingly important policy issue across Africa because of high youth unemployment, political instability, poverty, environmental change, and rapid urbanization. Entrepreneurship has simultaneously emerged as a major development strategy for addressing unemployment and promoting inclusive economic growth.

According to African Development Bank (2022), Africa possesses the youngest population globally, with millions of young people entering labour markets annually. Formal employment opportunities remain insufficient, increasing both entrepreneurial necessity and migration aspirations.

Research conducted in Ghana by Teye, Awumbila, and Darkwah (2015) found that unemployment, inadequate income, and limited career opportunities significantly influenced migration intentions among young graduates. Respondents frequently regarded migration as an alternative to prolonged economic uncertainty.

Using evidence from Ethiopia, Mulugeta and colleagues (2017) reported that migration intentions among educated youths were strongly associated with limited employment opportunities, weak institutional support, and declining confidence in domestic labour markets. The authors observed that entrepreneurial activities often received lower priority among individuals actively planning international migration.

In Kenya, Oucho (2016) argued that youth migration reflects broader structural challenges, including governance deficits, labour market constraints, and economic inequality. While entrepreneurship programmes expanded considerably, many educated youths continued to perceive migration as offering superior economic returns.

Research from South Africa also demonstrates an important relationship between migration and entrepreneurship. Rogerson (2018) observed that entrepreneurial ecosystems depend heavily on institutional quality, infrastructure, access to finance, and policy consistency. Where these conditions remain weak, migration intentions among skilled individuals become stronger.

Several African studies also acknowledge the positive role of diaspora entrepreneurship. Newland and Tanaka (2010) argued that migrants often invest in businesses within their countries of origin after acquiring financial resources and international experience abroad. Such investments contribute to local economic development through technology transfer and business expansion.

Despite these benefits, the literature consistently indicates that sustained migration intentions among highly educated youths reduce domestic entrepreneurial participation because local enterprise development competes directly with migration aspirations.

4.4 Nigerian Evidence

Nigeria has generated substantial scholarship on migration, youth unemployment, entrepreneurship, and brain drain. Much of this literature attributes increasing migration intentions to economic instability, unemployment, insecurity, poor governance, and institutional weaknesses.

Afolayan, Ikwuyatum, and Abejide (2008) examined migration patterns in Nigeria and found that economic opportunities remained the dominant motivation for both internal and international migration. The study revealed that educated youths increasingly viewed migration as a strategy for achieving financial security and professional advancement.

Adepoju (2010) observed that Nigeria has become one of Africa's major migrant-sending countries because of persistent economic challenges and expanding global labour markets. The study emphasized that migration decisions increasingly involve skilled professionals whose departure weakens domestic economic productivity.

Using national survey data, Ajaero, Nzeadibe, Obisie-Nmehielle, and Ike (2018) reported that unemployment significantly influenced migration intentions among Nigerian youths. Respondents consistently identified employment opportunities and higher wages abroad as major determinants of migration decisions.

Adebayo (2022), writing on the contemporary "Japa" phenomenon, argued that migration intentions among Nigerian professionals have intensified because of inflation, insecurity, exchange rate instability, declining purchasing power, and limited confidence in governance institutions. Migration has increasingly become a preferred career strategy rather than merely a response to unemployment.

Entrepreneurship studies in Nigeria reveal comparable structural constraints.

Ojiaku, Nkamnebe, and Nwaizugbo (2018) investigated entrepreneurship barriers among Nigerian youths and found that inadequate access to finance, inconsistent government policies, weak infrastructure, and bureaucratic obstacles significantly reduced entrepreneurial intentions. The authors concluded that institutional reforms are essential for strengthening entrepreneurship.

Adenutsi (2009) reported that entrepreneurship contributes substantially to employment generation in Nigeria but remains constrained by inadequate financial systems, unstable macroeconomic conditions, and limited government support.

Ogundele, Akingbade, and Akinlabi (2012) emphasized that entrepreneurial success depends upon favourable institutional environments capable of encouraging innovation, investment, and business expansion. Poor governance discourages entrepreneurial risk-taking among educated youths.

Research by Fatoki (2014), although conducted in another African context, has frequently been referenced within Nigerian entrepreneurship literature because it demonstrated that financial constraints remain one of the strongest predictors of entrepreneurial failure among young entrepreneurs.

Studies focusing on entrepreneurial intention among Nigerian university students have produced similar findings. Izedonmi and Okafor (2010) found that entrepreneurship education positively influences entrepreneurial intentions. Students possessing stronger entrepreneurial knowledge demonstrated greater willingness to establish businesses after graduation.

Ekore and Okekeocha (2012) argued that entrepreneurial intentions among Nigerian graduates depend not only on education but also on perceived institutional support, labour market opportunities, and economic stability.

Research on brain drain has equally expanded.

Akinyemi and Afolabi (2019) argued that the migration of highly educated Nigerians reduces innovation capacity, research productivity, and entrepreneurial development. The study emphasized that migration intentions alone influence career planning because many professionals postpone long-term investments while preparing for relocation.

Similarly, Adebisi et al. (2023) reported that increasing migration intentions among healthcare professionals, engineers, academics, and information technology specialists threaten Nigeria's human capital base and long-term economic competitiveness.

Collectively, Nigerian studies suggest that the same structural conditions discouraging entrepreneurship also strengthen migration intentions. Few studies, however, explicitly examine migration intention itself as an entrepreneurship barrier.

4.5 Evidence from South-East Nigeria and Anambra State

The South-East geopolitical zone possesses one of Africa's strongest indigenous entrepreneurial traditions. Several studies have examined the Igbo apprenticeship system, family business succession, indigenous enterprise development, and entrepreneurial culture.

Chinedu A. Nwosu (2017) argued that the Igbo apprenticeship system remains one of the most effective informal entrepreneurship development models in sub-Saharan Africa because it combines skills acquisition, mentorship, financial support, and business succession.

Dana, Etemad, and Wright (2021) described the Igbo apprenticeship model as a distinctive indigenous institution that facilitates enterprise creation through trust-based commercial relationships and long-term mentoring.

Research focusing specifically on Onitsha and Nnewi highlights their importance as commercial and manufacturing centres within Nigeria. Family-owned enterprises dominate economic activities, while informal business networks facilitate entrepreneurship across multiple sectors.

Nkamnebe (2008) found that social trust and indigenous business relationships significantly influence entrepreneurial success among traders in South-East Nigeria. Entrepreneurs frequently rely upon family relationships and apprenticeship networks instead of formal institutional support.

Nwaizugbo and Ojiaku (2015) reported that entrepreneurial development within Anambra State increasingly faces challenges associated with changing youth aspirations, technological disruption, limited industrial financing, and global labour mobility.

Recent media-based and academic analyses of the "Japa" phenomenon suggest that many young graduates in Anambra State now prioritize migration over entrepreneurship despite belonging to communities with long entrepreneurial traditions. Although systematic empirical evidence remains limited, available observations indicate growing concern regarding business succession and declining youth participation in indigenous enterprises.

Family-owned businesses increasingly experience succession difficulties because younger generations often pursue overseas education and employment rather than assuming responsibility for existing enterprises. This trend threatens the continuity of businesses that historically contributed to employment generation and regional economic development.

4.6 Research Gap

The reviewed literature demonstrates several important patterns.

First, international studies have established that migration intention influences investment decisions, labour market participation, and occupational choices (Carling & Schewel, 2018; van Dalen & Henkens, 2013). Second, entrepreneurship research consistently identifies institutional weaknesses, financial constraints, infrastructure deficits, and governance challenges as barriers to enterprise creation (Baumol, 1990; Ojiaku et al., 2018). Third, Nigerian migration studies have largely concentrated on brain drain,

remittances, labour migration, and youth unemployment (Adepoju, 2010; Afolayan et al., 2008; Ajaero et al., 2018).

Despite these contributions, three major gaps remain.

The first gap is conceptual. Most studies examine migration and entrepreneurship as independent phenomena. Few scholars explicitly conceptualize migration intention itself as an entrepreneurship barrier, even though behavioural intentions significantly shape investment decisions before migration occurs.

The second gap is geographical. Existing Nigerian studies often adopt national perspectives, with limited attention to state-level contexts. Anambra State possesses a unique entrepreneurial ecosystem rooted in indigenous business traditions, making it an appropriate setting for investigating how migration intentions influence entrepreneurial behaviour.

The third gap is contextual. Contemporary migration dynamics in Nigeria, particularly the growing "Japa" phenomenon, have transformed youth career aspirations in ways that earlier entrepreneurship studies did not adequately capture. There is a need for updated scholarship examining how migration intentions reshape entrepreneurial commitment, business succession, innovation, and local economic development.

This study addresses these gaps by examining migration intention as a behavioural and psychological barrier to entrepreneurship in Anambra State. It contributes to both migration and entrepreneurship literature by integrating behavioural theories with empirical evidence to explain how migration aspirations influence enterprise development before physical migration occurs.

6. Conclusion

This paper examined migration intention as an emerging barrier to entrepreneurship in Anambra State by integrating theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence from migration and entrepreneurship literature. The study established that entrepreneurship remains a critical driver of employment generation, innovation, poverty reduction, and economic development. The entrepreneurial culture of Anambra State, particularly the indigenous apprenticeship system and strong commercial traditions, has historically contributed to enterprise creation and wealth accumulation within Nigeria. Recent socio-economic realities indicate a growing preference among many young people for migration over local entrepreneurial engagement.

The review demonstrated that migration intention extends beyond the desire to relocate geographically. It represents a behavioural orientation that shapes educational choices, career planning, financial decisions, and investment priorities. Individuals with strong migration intentions often postpone or abandon entrepreneurial opportunities because they anticipate relocation within a relatively short period. Financial resources that could support business establishment are redirected toward visa processing, international education, language proficiency examinations, travel expenses, and migration-related logistics. Such behavioural patterns reduce entrepreneurial commitment and weaken local investment.

The theoretical framework provided further insight into this relationship. The Theory of Planned Behaviour explains how migration intention develops through attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. The Push–Pull Theory illustrates how unfavourable domestic conditions encourage migration while attractive opportunities abroad reinforce relocation intentions. Human Capital Theory demonstrates that migration redirects skilled individuals away from local enterprise development, while Social Capital Theory explains how family expectations, migrant networks, and community perceptions influence career decisions. Together, these theories suggest that migration intention is both a consequence of structural challenges and a factor that further constrains entrepreneurship.

The empirical review revealed that economic instability, youth unemployment, poor infrastructure, limited access to finance, governance deficiencies, insecurity, inflation, policy inconsistency, and declining confidence in public institutions are among the principal factors strengthening migration intentions in Nigeria. These same factors also constitute major barriers to entrepreneurship. The convergence of these conditions creates a cycle in which entrepreneurship becomes less attractive, migration intentions increase, and local economies lose the human capital necessary for enterprise development and innovation.

The paper also identified important gaps in existing scholarship. Much of the literature has focused on actual migration, brain drain, remittances, and entrepreneurial barriers as separate issues. Comparatively little attention has been devoted to understanding migration intention itself as a psychological and behavioural constraint to entrepreneurship. This gap is particularly evident in the context of Anambra State, where the coexistence of a vibrant entrepreneurial tradition and rising migration aspirations presents a unique development challenge.

The study concludes that migration should not be viewed solely as a developmental threat. Migration can generate important benefits through remittances, technology transfer, knowledge exchange, diaspora investment, and international business networks. The challenge arises when migration intention becomes the dominant career aspiration among economically productive youths, thereby reducing entrepreneurial participation and weakening local enterprise development. Sustainable economic transformation in Anambra State therefore requires creating an environment in which entrepreneurship is perceived as a credible and rewarding alternative to migration rather than an option of last resort.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed; Government at both the federal and state levels should expand access to affordable financing for start-up and small businesses. Financial institutions should introduce low-interest credit facilities, credit guarantee schemes, and flexible lending arrangements specifically targeted at young entrepreneurs. Access to finance should be accompanied by business advisory and mentoring services to improve enterprise sustainability.

Creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurship requires sustained investment in infrastructure, particularly electricity, transportation networks, digital connectivity, water supply, and industrial clusters. Improvements in infrastructure will reduce business operating costs and enhance the competitiveness of enterprises in Anambra State.

Government should strengthen institutional quality by reducing bureaucratic bottlenecks, improving regulatory efficiency, ensuring policy consistency, and combating corruption. Transparent and predictable business regulations will improve investor confidence and encourage long-term entrepreneurial investment.

Universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, and vocational institutions should redesign entrepreneurship curricula to emphasize innovation, opportunity recognition, digital entrepreneurship, business management, financial literacy, and enterprise resilience. Practical business incubation should complement classroom instruction through partnerships with successful entrepreneurs and private-sector organizations.

The traditional apprenticeship model should be strengthened through formal institutional support. Government, chambers of commerce, and business associations should provide legal protection, financial incentives, digital business training, and succession planning support to ensure that the apprenticeship system remains relevant within a modern entrepreneurial economy.

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