

Comparative Study of Migration Governance in Nigeria and South Africa (2014-2024)

Emmanuella Opeyemi ADESANYA
LCU/PG/006449

**Being a MSc Thesis to the Department of Politics & International Relations,
Faculty of Management & Social Sciences,
Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria**

**In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of Master of Science Degree (MSc)
in International Law & Diplomacy**

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Certification

This is to certify that Emmanuella Opeyemi ADESANYA with matriculation number LCU/PG/006449 carried out this research work titled “A Comparative Study of Migration Policies in Nigeria and South Africa”, in the Department of Politics and International Relations, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, for the award of Master of Science Degree (MSc) in International Law and Diplomacy and that this work has not been previously submitted.

Professor Olu Ojedokun
(Supervisor)

Date

Dr. Adebola Alade
(Head of Department)

Date

Dedication

The thesis is dedicated to God Almighty.

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Acknowledgement

This research was conducted at Lead City University, Ibadan, within the Department of International Relations and Politics, under the Faculty of Management and Social Sciences. I express sincere appreciation to Lead City University, Ibadan for the opportunity and platform to pursue my academic ambition. I acknowledge the institutional and library resources of the University, as well as other academic databases that contributed to the successful completion of this study.

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Even though the above-mentioned institutions and persons have assisted in the process of this research work, I alone stand responsible for any errors, if any, found in this work.

Abstract

This study provides a comparative analysis of migration policies in Nigeria and South Africa between 2014 and 2024. The background of this study comes from the rising movement of people across Africa. Many people leaving their countries because of low income, insecurity, poor living conditions and the search for better opportunities. Nigeria, primarily a migrant-sending country, has struggled with the emigration of highly skilled professionals, particularly in the health and education sectors. Its policy responses, centered on diaspora engagement and repatriation incentives, have delivered limited results due to weak reintegration mechanisms, poor institutional coordination, and socioeconomic instability. Conversely, South Africa, one of the continent's leading migrant-receiving states, faces complex dynamics including large inflows of both skilled and irregular migrants, compounded by xenophobia, restrictive immigration laws, and inconsistent implementation of migration policies. Using a qualitative methodology, the study draws on legal instruments, national legislation, and reports from organisations such as the African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). This study is anchored on the Push–Pull, World Systems, and New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) theories. Findings show that both countries' migration systems work best when their national policies are in line with regional and continental goals. Effective migration management in both countries depends on strong institutions, clear laws, and the political will to reduce brain drain and irregular migration. The study contributes to knowledge by situating the migration experiences of Nigeria and South Africa within broader Pan-African discourses, offering insights into policy gaps, best practices, and strategies for sustainable human-capital retention. Recommendations emphasize strengthening reintegration frameworks, combating xenophobia and enhancing regional cooperation.

Keywords: Migration Governance, Brain Drain, Repatriation Policies, Regular Migration

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List of Acronyms

Abbreviation	Meaning
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AfDB	African Development Bank
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
BMA	Border Management Authority
CAR	Central African Republic
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EAC	East African Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GCM	Global Compact for Migration
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HPCSA	Health Professions Council of South Africa
ICG	International Crisis Group
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISS	Institute of Security Studies
MDCN	Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria
MPFA	Migration Policy Framework for Africa
NAPTIP	National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons

NARD	National Association of Resident Doctors
NCFRMI	National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and internally Displaced Persons
NELM	New Economics of Labour Migration
NESG	Nigerian Economic Summit Group
NIDCOM	Nigerians in Diaspora Commission
NIS	Nigeria Immigration Service
NMA	Nigerian Medical Association
NMP	National Migration Policy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAFLII	Southern African Legal Information Institute
SAIIA	South African Institute of International Affairs
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
SAPS	South African Police Service
SIHMA	Scalabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WHO	World Health Organization
ZEP	Zimbabwe Exemption