International Journal of Advancements in Psychological Research

IJAPR

THE STARK REALITY OF "JAPA" SYNDROME IN NIGERIA: INITIAL DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF YOUTHS' MIGRATION INTENTIONS SCALE

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Abstract

This study developed a standardized and objective measurement scale to assess youths' intentions to emigrate permanently, referred to as "japa"—the intent to leave one's home country without plans for return. A mixed-method approach was employed across three studies. The first study used qualitative methods, including focus group discussions, to identify factors driving the intention to migrate. The thematic analysis of qualitative data revealed key factors, which were subsequently translated into a 17-item instrument. The second study evaluated the psychometric properties of the scale through factor analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity confirmed the adequacy of the sample, meeting the International Test Commission's (2017) benchmarks. The scale demonstrated acceptable reliability, with a satisfactory Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Principal component analysis indicated that the scale was psychometrically sound, with a scree plot revealing a single dominant factor. The third study assessed the scale's validity, examining face, content, convergent, and divergent validity. The results confirmed that the instrument met all critical criteria for scale development and validation.

Keywords: Japa, Scale, Migration, Intentions, Development

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Introduction

A key trait of future-oriented and stable personalities is the ability to initiate, sustain, and complete critical personal projects that contribute to overall well-being (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Ugwu et al., 2021; Unemori, Omoregie, & Markus, 2004). This characteristic is essential across various domains, including education, skill acquisition, apprenticeship, careers, relationships, and recreational pursuits (Nnonyelu et al., 2023). Such determination is especially crucial in overcoming adversity, as it fosters motivation and persistence toward achieving set goals (Ugwu et al., 2021). However, this vital attribute appears to be diminishing among Nigerian youths. Recent observations and enrollment records from Nigerian tertiary institutions indicate that a significant number of students are abandoning their education to emigrate, often with no intention of returning to complete their studies (Ikuteyijo, 2020; Nwosu et al., 2022). This trend colloquially referred to as *japa* a term that signifies emigration without plans for return is not limited to students. Skilled professionals, employees, and workers from various sectors are also leaving the country under similar circumstances (Okunade & Owosusi, 2023). While migration is not inherently negative (Ikuteyijo, 2020), its implications depend on whether individuals prematurely abandon critical commitments without plans for resolution or continuity.

The growing *japa* phenomenon among Nigerian youths has short- and long-term consequences, most notably the exacerbation of brain drain. This mass emigration poses a significant threat to

Nigeria's economic and social systems, as those prepared to lead key sectors of the economy are leaving in large numbers without plans to return (Okunade, 2021). The issue transcends social class, affecting both the unemployed and professionals in various fields, including skilled workers, managers, and students (Odimegwu & Joe-Akunne, 2023). For example, offices of the Nigerian Immigration Service are reportedly overwhelmed with applicants seeking international travel documents, highlighting the scale of this exodus. Alarmingly, even elites, including public servants and professionals, are enabling this trend by sending their children abroad for education without plans for them to return to Nigeria (Ikuteyijo, 2020; Nwosu et al., 2022). While some leaders, such as politicians and business magnates, expect their offspring to return to assume familial or traditional roles, this expectation does not reflect the broader sentiment across society.

The widespread desire for migration spans all stages of life adolescence, early adulthood, and middle adulthood indicating the pervasive frustration with socio-economic conditions in Nigeria. This trend challenges established career development theories, such as Super's (1975) Career Development Theory, which outlines five stages of career progression: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement. Ideally, migration for career advancement aligns with specific developmental stages. However, the current situation in Nigeria deviates significantly, with individuals at all stages seeking to emigrate for "greener pastures," often without structured plans. Given the increasing trend of *japa* among Nigerian youths, there is an urgent need for a reliable instrument to measure and understand their migration intentions. Such a tool could provide valuable insights for offering migration counseling, assisting policymakers in addressing brain drain, and helping educational institutions prevent student dropout due to emigration. Additionally, it could inform efforts to mitigate the dangers of irregular migration, which often results from inadequate awareness of its risks (Nwafor & Okoye, 2023).

Understanding these migration intentions could enable the government to devise strategies to retain skilled individuals and counteract the adverse effects of brain drain on national development.

This study aimed to develop and validate a standardized instrument to measure migration intentions among Nigerian youths. Using a mixed-method approach, three studies were conducted. Study one employed qualitative methods, including focus group discussions, to identify the factors driving *japa*. Study two evaluated the psychometric properties of the resulting instrument, while study three assessed its validity.

The research objectives of this study were:

1. To explore the factors that drive *japa* among Nigerian youths.
2. To develop assessment items based on the identified factors.
3. To evaluate the psychometric properties of the instrument.
4. To assess the validity parameters of the instrument.

Methods

Study Design

The study employed a mixed-method exploratory design to develop and validate an instrument for measuring the intention to migrate (*japa*). The research comprised two main studies. Study one utilized qualitative methods, including focus group discussions (FGD), to identify factors contributing to *japa*. Study Two employed quantitative methods to assess the psychometric properties of the instrument developed from Study One.

Study One: Focus Group Discussion

Participants

Twenty youths participated in the FGD, with an equal representation of males (10; 50%) and females (10; 50%). The participants' ages ranged from 21 to 40 years (mean = 30.1; SD = 1.8). The group included undergraduate students (4), postgraduate students (4), unemployed graduates (3), and workers from different organizational levels (9). Ethnic representation included Igbo (10), Yoruba (4), Edo (3), and Benue (3). The discussions were conducted in English.

Procedure

Approval for the study was obtained from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Potential participants were invited to a meeting at Garuba Square on a Sunday afternoon to accommodate both students and working-class individuals. Following an introductory session, the discussion focused on four key themes:

1. Definition of *japa*.
2. Prevalence of *japa* across age groups.
3. Factors contributing to *japa*.
4. Advantages and disadvantages of *japa*.

The discussion lasted 2 hours and 20 minutes, divided into two sessions (1 hour, 20 minutes and 1 hour), with a 20-minute break to reduce fatigue. The sessions were designed to facilitate open communication and in-depth exploration of the themes.

Thematic Analysis

The FGD yielded the following key findings, organized by theme:

1. Definition of *Japa*: All participants agreed that *japa* refers to international migration without plans to return, regardless of the consequences.
2. Prevalence of *Japa*: While most participants agreed that *japa* primarily affects youths, some argued that it spans all age groups, including women in middle adulthood using *omugwo* (post-natal visits) as a pretext to emigrate.
3. Factors Driving *Japa*: Six key factors were identified:
    - Environmental**:** Natural disasters, farmer-herder conflicts, and floods.
    - Social**:** Poor infrastructure, religious intolerance, ethnic conflicts, and lack of inclusivity.
    - Educational**:** Strikes in tertiary institutions, mismatch between education and employment, and migration of academic staff.
    - Economic**:** Unemployment, underemployment, inflation, and poor remuneration.
    - Political**:** Corruption, poor governance, judicial bias, and human rights violations.
    - Security**:** Kidnapping, gang violence, and general insecurity.
4. Advantages and Disadvantages of *Japa*: Advantages included escaping life-threatening situations and poverty. Disadvantages highlighted brain drain, loss of skilled workers, and deterioration of societal structures.

One participant succinctly noted:

"Migration aimed at escaping dangers is necessary, but it is critical to return and contribute to rebuilding society. If everyone leaves, who will correct the anomalies?"

Study Two: Psychometric Assessment

Participants

A total of 350 participants were purposively selected, comprising males (200; 65%) and females (150; 35%). Participants' ages ranged from 21 to 50 years (mean = 35.6; SD = 1.6). The sample included undergraduate students (100), postgraduate students (75), unemployed graduates (75), employees (50), and businesspersons (50).

Procedure

Participants were drawn from multiple locations:

- Undergraduate and postgraduate students from Nnamdi Azikiwe University and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University.
- Workers from Jerome Udoji Secretariat, Awka, and secondary schools.
- Unemployed individuals from a state youth empowerment program venue.
- Businesspersons from Eke-Awka Market, Awka.

Participants were addressed in groups, the study's objectives were explained, and informed consent was obtained before administering the instrument.

Statistical Analysis

An exploratory design was used to analyze the psychometric properties of the developed instrument. The following statistical methods were applied:

- Reliability: Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient.
- Sampling Adequacy: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure.
- Data Suitability: Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity.

- Structure Analysis: Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Scree Plot.

Study Three

The findings from the third study extended the validation of the scale by evaluating its face, content, concurrent, and divergent validity. Face and content validity assessments involved distributing the developed instrument to ten expert assessors from relevant disciplines, including the Department of Psychology, the Department of Measurement and Evaluation, and the Center for Migration Studies at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Reports from the assessors indicated an average accuracy rating of 98%, deeming the face value of the instrument satisfactory. For content validity, the scale's items received a high rating of 98%, as they comprehensively addressed all aspects relevant to the study. This evaluation process, also referred to as inter-rater reliability, aligns with the standards set by the International Test Commission. Concurrent validity was assessed by correlating the Youths Migration Intention Scale (YMIS) with the Intention to Leave Scale (Susan et al., 2014), demonstrating a strong relationship. Divergent validity was established by correlating YMIS with the Intention to Stay Scale (Susan et al., 2014) and the Adolescents' Future Orientation Scale (Ugwu et al., 2021), where the expected inverse relationships were observed. These results collectively underscore the instrument's robust validity across multiple parameters.

Participants

One hundred and sixty (160) early adults were purposively selected from different units namely; Students from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, apprentices from Skill acquisition centers in Awka, workers from Anambra state government house and traders at Arroma junction and Nkwo-

Amaenyi market. Their ages ranged from 19 to 40 years with the mean age of 30.5and standard deviation of 2.6. Their genders consisted of male 78 (48%) and female 82 (52%). .

Procedure

The participants were selected from four groups; that is 40 students, 40 workers, 40 apprentices, and 40 traders. The objectives of the research were explained to the participants individually and those that gave consent were administered questionnaire.

Instruments

Youth Migration Intention Scale (YMIS)

This instrument was developed to measure the intention of youths in general to leave Nigeria. It is a seventeen (17) item scale with a 5- point Likert response pattern where 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree and 5= strongly agree. Samples of the scale items are: 1) I want to urgently leave this country because it is not safe here. 2) For me, I need to leave this country because it is not safe here. 3) I want to urgently travel out of this country because of cases of kidnapping. 4) I want to urgently leave this country because of harassments and restrictions of movement on some days that infringes on my right. 5) I want to urgently leave this country due to the lack of social amenities. The psychometric properties were established in study two above.

Future Orientation Scale (FOS)

The future orientation scale was developed by Ugwu et al (2021) to assess the future orientation of students. It is a 17 item scale, on a 5- point Likert response pattern where: 1= not very important, 2= not important, 3= don't know, 4= important and 5= very important. Samples of the items are: 1) To become very wealthy after school. 2) To be able to get a job after school. 3) To enter a

desired career. 4) Hope Nigeria economy will be good again. 5) Hope one day I will be happily married. Reliability coefficient of α = .92

Intention to Leave or Stay Scale (ILSS)

ILSS was developed by Susan et al., (2014) to assess the intention of individuals to stay or leave from their work place. The instrument was adapted by the present researchers to suite the present study so as to measure the intention of people to leave or stay in Nigeria. It is an 8-item scale and contains two subscales (intention to leave subscale and intention to stay subscale) with items 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 measuring the intention to stay and items 2 and 5 measuring the intention to leave. It has 5-pointingint Likert response pattern in which 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree, and 5= strongly agree. The overall Crobach Alpha coefficient for the scale was α = .89.

Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis

The 17-item scale demonstrated excellent psychometric properties:

- Reliability: Cronbach's Alpha was α = .948, indicating high internal consistency.
- Sampling Adequacy: KMO = .907, indicating the data was suitable for factor analysis.
- Data Suitability: Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded a significant result ($p < .000$).

The scree plot confirmed a unidimensional structure, supporting the scale's validity and reliability for measuring migration intentions.

Table 1

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.907
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1346.621
	Df	136
	Sig.	.000

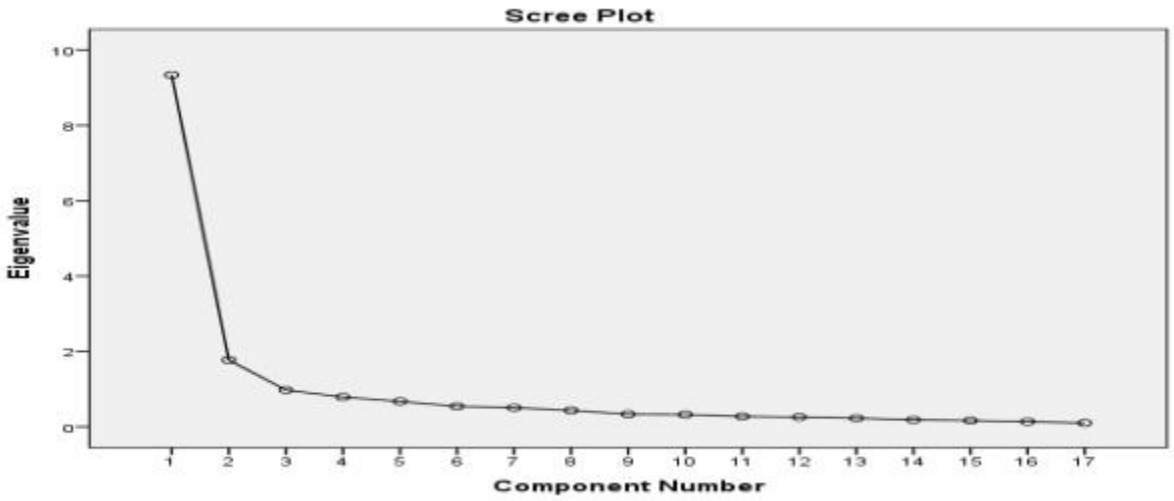
Table 2, Principal Component Matrix

S/NO	ITEMS	1	2
1	I want to urgently leave this country because it is not safe here.	.719	.175
2	For me, I need to leave this country because of killings.	.700	.535
3	I want to urgently travel out of this country because of incessant cases of kidnapping.	.727	.487
4	I want to urgently leave this country because of harassment and restriction of movement on some days that infringes on my right.	.700	.419
5	I want to urgently leave this country due to lack of infrastructure.	.829	-.142
6	I want to urgently leave this country because of religious intolerance	.775	.487
7	I want to leave this country because of ethnic conflicts/ war.	.715	.361
8	I want to urgently travel out of this country to escape poverty.	.807	-.343
9	I urgently want to leave this country to change the condition of my family.	.740	-.320
10	I want to urgently leave this country because of lack of employment opportunities.	.778	-.348
11	Continuous increase in the prices of goods and services makes me want to leave this country.	.776	-.283
12	I don't have any plan to return to this country when I migrate	.747	-.433

13	I want to leave this country because Naira value is fast depreciating.	.797	-.173
14	Corruption is too much in this country, so I want to leave.	.801	-.082
15	I want to leave this country because laws are against the common man.	.712	-.001
16	I want to leave this country because to me, there is no room for positive change.	.701	-.058
17	I want to leave this country because there is no hope of success here.	.749	-.068

Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis. a. 2 components extracted. In the same vein, the principal component analysis showed significant variance of initial factor component matrix that ranged from .700 to .829

Figure 1,



The scree-plot analysis showed that the eigenvalues 10 components are above 1, however, the scree-plot showed that only 1 factor that explained 2% of the variance is interpretable as a distinct factor.

Table 3, Divergent validity

S/no	Variables	1	2	3
1	Youths Migration Intention Scale	1		
2	Intention to Stay Scale	-.161	1	
3	Adolescents' Future Orientation Scale	-.072	.214*	1

P<.05

Table 4, Convergent validity

S/no	Variables	1	2
1	Youths migration intention scale	1	
2	Intention to leave scale	.271**	1

**P<.001

Discussion

The scale met the necessary requirements for construct development and validation based on the assessed parameters. Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, which produced results aligning with the International Test Commission (ITC, 2017) standards, requiring a

minimum value of .65 for acceptance. Additionally, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity demonstrated the robustness and suitability of the data, confirming that the scale was appropriate for use and adhered to ITC standards. The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) results showed factor loadings ranging from .70 to .84, exceeding the ITC's recommended threshold of .40 for factor extraction and loading. Finally, the scree plot indicated a clear single-factor structure, further validating the scale's construct reliability and unidimensionality.

The results in table 3 showed that the scale has significant divergent validity with intention to stay scale and adolescents' future orientation scale. It demonstrated that the youth migration intention scale is capable to measure the construct intended measure. On the other hand, youths' migration intention was not significantly related to intention to stay and adolescents' future orientation. Divergent validity is a type of validity that assesses the un-relatedness of one construct with others. It is a critical component in instrument development and validation (ITC, 2017; Ugwu et al, 2021). The finding was in tandem with ITC (2017) and some theoretical postulations of future time perspective theory (Trommsdoff, 1983). However, convergent validity result showed significant positive relationship between youths' migration intention and intention to leave. The finding showed relatedness of the two constructs. The convergent assessment of scale is one of the vital requirements for instrument development and validation (ITC, 2017). The finding was related to Push and pull Theory of Migration (Lee, 1966).

The present study explored factors that propel Nigerian youths to think to migrate from their country without plan(s) of returning to the country. The concept is referred to "japa" in Nigerian local parlance, which translate to emigration without plan of return to Nigeria. The concept is

dangerous because it threatens Nigerian viability, development and possible inward remittances, expected in international migration (Odimegwu & Joe-Akunne, 2023). Thus, gave rise to formulate a standardized measure that would be helpful in ascertaining individuals that conceive such intentions. It was believed that detection of youths with japa mindset, would aid provision of counseling services that may prevent engagement in irregular migration route. There are other benefits attached to early identification of youths with japa syndrome. The study was anchored on push and pull theory of migration (Lee, 1966).

In completing the study, triangulation approach was utilized. Three different studies were conducted to fashion the instrument. Study one adopted quantitative method through the use of focus group discussion to establish factors responsible for japa. The elicited quantitative data were thematically analyzed. The resulted provided factors that were converted to the items of the instrument. It yielded a total of seventeen (17) items that were subjected to further assessment. In study two, the formulated items were subjected to factor analyses that established their usefulness. KMO and Bartlet test of sphericity assessment met the International Test Commission (2017) instrument benchmark. The result was acceptable haven exceeded the normative value of .50 according to Kaiser (1974). The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was acceptable. The principal component analysis was within the acceptable psychometric parameters. The scree plot showed that one distinctive factor emerged. The psychometric properties manifested the utility and quality of the instrument haven met the International Test Commission requirements for scale development and validation.

Study three tested the validity parameters of the scale. The four important validity assessments conducted were face, content, convergent and divergent. The validities are paramount in

establishing the relatedness and otherwise of the scale with other constructs. The convergent validity was assessed by correlation of youth migration intentions scale and intention to leave scale. The result showed significant positive relationship, which implies that both are related factors. Contrarily, divergent validity was found when youth migration intention scale was correlated with intention to stay scale and adolescents' future orientation scale. There was no statistical significant relation among the factors, which indicated that the constructs were not related.

Conclusion

The findings from the third study underscore the reliability and validity of the Youths Migration Intention Scale (YMIS) as a robust instrument for measuring migration intentions among Nigerian youths. Its adherence to international standards for scale development and validation, as demonstrated through the evaluation of face, content, concurrent, and divergent validity, positions YMIS as a valuable tool for research and policy development. By providing a reliable mechanism for assessing migration intentions, the scale can guide interventions aimed at mitigating brain drain and addressing the underlying factors driving youth migration.

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