International Migrants’ Remittances, Kinship Networks and Social Constructions

Olayinka Akanle and Otomi Augustina Orohme
Department of Sociology,
Faculty of the Social Sciences,
University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
yakanle@yahoo.com,
o.akanle@ui.edu.ng,
olayinkaakanle75@gmail.com.

Abstract

It is within kinship networks that Africans construct identities and make sense of actions-including international migration and remittances. The intention to migrate and the subsequent decision to send remittances to kin left behind at the country of origin are therefore highly influenced by kinship networks. The narratives of social constructions of remittances can never be adequately understood outside kinship networks because they are the ultimate and influence direct beneficiaries of international migrants’ remittances. This article examines the understudied forces that influence remittances received from migrants, the social constructions of migrants’ remittances among left behind kin and influence of remittances on kin’s migratory tendencies. Social action and social exchange theories were employed as theoretical framework. Secondary and primary data were gathered for this article. Remittance to spouses, children and parents are more frequent (monthly and irregularly) and substantial than those sent to siblings and other relatives in migrants’ kinship networks. It was also found that the meanings attached to remittances are not mutually exclusive, but rather intertwined including as: survival mechanism, a sign of love or care as well as economic/business investment opportunity. Kin’s migratory tendency is not totally fostered by remittances but also as a result of the exposure to ways of life in the developed nations.

Keywords: kinship networks, migratory tendency, nigeria, remittances, social constructions.
INTRODUCTION

Kinship is one of the main organizing principles of society. It is one of the basic social institutions found in every society (Akanle, Fayehun, Adejare and Oroheme, 2019, Jegede, Ajala and Owoeye, 2012). This institution establishes relationships between individuals and groups. Kinship network is the interconnectedness of patterned social relationships that exist among individuals who are related by blood, marriage and or adoption (Akanle 2013). Kinship networks in the African and specifically in Nigerian context involves not only biological and social parents, and siblings, but also uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents, nephews, the family members of the spouse and in many cases “people with whom you can identify” such as friends and other non-relatives. All of these people are usually involved in the decision-making process of potential migrants and subsequently considered in sending remittances (Akanle, Fayehun, Adejare and Oroheme, 2019, Fleischer, 2006). Nigerians have an attachment for kinship networks and familial social relations. Even with globalization, urbanization and popularity of nuclear families, kinship networks could still bring to bear some degrees of influences on members who must abide by or adhere to kinship ethos (Akanle, 2013).

Given this background, it is pertinent to note that kinship network is central to understanding social construction of remittances and the nexus must be adequately investigated. Although many studies on kinship networks and international migrants’ remittances have largely focused on the impacts on households in economic terms (Akanle and Adesina 2017; Balde 2009; Devarajan 2008; Fonta et al. 2015; Kiiru 2010; Lu 2012; Uduku 2002; von Burgsdorff 2012), there is need to understand the social constructions of remittance by migrants’ kin left behind. It is not until kinship narratives of remittances are understood that remittance impacts can be properly valued and appropriated (Akanle 2012; Akanle and Olutayo 2012a; Dzingirai, Mutopo, and Landau 2014; Suitor 2016). This article therefore seeks to examine the understudied factors that influence the kind of remittances receive from migrants, the social constructions of migrants’ remittances among kin left behind and by implications the interface of remittance on kin’s migratory tendency. This is necessary and timely since the emigration rate in Nigeria is still on the increase and remittances have become well-liked sustenance/survival mechanism rivaling foreign aids and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Nigeria (Akanle and Adesina 2017b; World Bank 2013). This article provides contemporary narratives and interpretations of remittances in relation to kin’s social constructions of remittance from migrants’ kin through primary and secondary data to situate remittances in the important, deep-seated socio-cultural entity of kinship networks.
This article has three main research questions. First, what are the factors that influence the kind of remittance received from migrants? Second, what are the social constructions of remittance among kinfolks who receive remittance? And third, how does remittances influence kin’s migratory tendency? These research questions guided the research process and made crucial contributions to literature on this subject.

Migrant remittances are of fundamental importance to many migrant-sending households as they cope with poor local economies, limited job opportunities, and low wages (Suro et al., 2002). Remittances significantly increase household savings, facilitate the purchase of goods and alter the local income distribution (Osaki 2003). In sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria is the largest recipient of remittances, receiving nearly 65% of officially recorded remittance flows to the region and 2% of global inflows. The World Bank ranked Nigeria fifth among the highest remittance-receiving countries in the world (Akanle, 2012). Yet official data on remittances do not include monetary inflows through informal and unregulated channels, especially through friends returning to Nigeria and through goods sent to Nigeria which are readily converted into cash (Isiugo-Abanihe and IOM Nigeria, 2016). Remittances sent to their kinfolks left behind in the form of cash and goods play a very important role in subsidizing households’ livelihoods as they are used to purchase food and consumer goods, paying for medicine and health care, paying for education of the young as well as investing in long term capital projects such as paying for house/land rent, business, renovation and or building of houses and the purchase of land (Afaha, 2013). According to Isiugo-Abanihe and IOM, (2016), the kind of houses, businesses and development projects one sees from a visit to most villages in the south-east is an expressive evidence of the impact of migrants on enhancing human development in the countryside. However, the demographic characteristics of the migrant and migrant’s kin such as level of education, age, sex, marital status, employment status, occupation and household structure are in general predictors of remittance behaviour of migrants (Piotrowski, 2009).

The frequency of remittances can be also seen as a function of migrants' family status or their level of relationships to the migrant (Garip, 2008; Massey and García-España, 1987), migrants’ propensity to remit declines with the number of remitters in the household, and the decline is steepest for wealthier households, who need the remittances least. They argued that the migrant will be more likely to use remittances as a way of retaining ties if others in her social group are also doing so. However, the remittance behavior depends on the structure of social ties, as migrants are less likely to remit to households that are less connected, to which information about employment opportunities flows less freely. Among the
characteristics of the households of origin, particular importance is attached to a set of variables that measure its economic status. These include the monthly income those left behind, the number of durable assets; ownership of house, and amount of land owned. It is expected that migrants originating in poorer households, as measured by these variables, will be more likely to remit and to send larger amounts to support their kin left behind, if, as previous research suggests, migration of family members is a survival strategy for poor households (Garip, 2008).

Also, one can reasonably expect that migrants with a spouse and children left behind are likely to remit more because of their kin’s basic needs. Several studies found that the number of children at home had a positive effect on both the propensity to remit and the amount of remittances (Johnson and Whitelaw, 1974; Lucas and Stark, 1985; Massey and Basem, 1992). According to Hugo (1995), the evidence available from Indonesia showed that remittances acquired from international labour migration were primarily used for the acquisition of land and housing improvements. Children's education was another important use of remittances (Hugo, 1995). Therefore, individuals' likelihood of remitting decreases or increases with the socio-economic status of their household, potentially because socio-economic status signifies employment opportunities, as well as a form of wealth, in the origin, which provides an alternative to migration (Van Hear, 2002). While some families even sell parts of their belongings to sponsor one of their members. This investment, which involves many different people, is made only for family members who have proved to be responsible and reliable persons. In return, the parents expect that the migrants will later remit to take care of them and other family members e.g., their younger siblings (Van Hear, 2002).

METHODOLOGY

The study that informed this article was conducted in 2017 in Ibadan, the capital city of Oyo State, South-western Nigeria. Ibadan is one of the populous urban centres in Africa (Akanle, Adebayo and Busari, 2014).

However, Ibadan is also among the most traditional cities in Africa with a population of 5,591, 589 (National Population Commission [N.P.C.], 2010). It is the third most populous city in Nigeria, after Lagos and Kano. Ibadan is fast modernizing to suit the rate of growth and development of the 21st century especially as the city is very close to Lagos State - the fastest evolving Mega City in Africa (Akanle, Adebayo and Busari, 2014). Ibadan is 128 km inland northeast of Lagos and 530 km southwest of Abuja, the federal capital of Nigeria, and is a prominent transit point between the
coastal region and the areas in the hinterland of the country. Ibadan has a total area of 1,189.2 square ml, density of 2144.5/sq ml and metro density 647.5/sq ml. it is the largest geographical area in Nigeria (Ogunremi, 1998; and Areola, 1994).

The study population comprised parents/guardians, spouses, children, siblings, uncles, aunts, cousin, nephew, niece and friends of migrant(s) who are remittance recipients. The choice of this category of interviewees was based on the objective considerations of their peculiar In-depth knowledge of remittances sent by their kin migrant(s). A Descriptive Research Design was adopted for the study. The method of data collection was purely qualitative - In-depth Interviews (IDIs) because the subject matter of the study focuses on making sense of meanings kinfolks attach to remittances received. This involved 40 purposively selected interviewees who are either parents/guardians, spouses, children, siblings, uncles, aunt, cousin, nephew, niece and friends of migrant(s) who are remittance recipients from four locations in Ibadan-North Local Government Area namely; the University of Ibadan (UI), Old Bodija/Bodija Estate, Sango, and Ikolaba. The choice of these locations was based on objective considerations; as they are part of the most urbanized and populous areas in the local government areas in Ibadan where we got a considerable number of persons who have relative(s) who migrated abroad. 10 Interviewees were selected from each of these locations.

DATA PRESENTATION

Table 1: Summary Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>Number (40)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment Status/Occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed/Entrepreneur/Businessmen/Trader</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Servant</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Sector Employee &amp; Others (specify)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 – 25</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 – 30</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 35</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 – 40</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 – 45</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 – 50</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 – 55</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 – 60</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 and above</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced/separated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Educational Level</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary/B.A/B.Sc./LLB in-view</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hausa</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Igbo</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoruba</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data from authors’ Fieldwork, 2017
As shown in Table 1, the socio-demographic data on interviewees’ employment status/occupation shows that majority 40% (16) of the interviewees were self-employed; entrepreneur, trader, businessman/businesswoman, fashion designer, hairstylist, caterer/social worker. 25% (10) of the interviewees were employed in private sector and other occupations such as fulltime housewife. 22.5% (09) of the interviewees were civil servants; government employees. 12.5% (05) of the interviewees were students. During the course of the interviews, majority of the interviewees who are self-employed believed remittances help to boost their businesses and provide support in times of need. While those employed in government and private sectors opined remittances augment their earnings and assist them to meet their needs.

The distribution of the interviewees in relation to sex shows that 52.5% (21) of the interviewees were males while 47.5% (19) of the interviewees were females. This shows that both sexes were well represented to a very large extent though they are not equally distributed which is not one of the aims of the study. The result on marital status indicates that 62% (25) of the interviewees were married, 35% (14) were single and 2.5% (01) was widowed. The inference from the marital status is that the marital status of the interviewees affects the remittance behaviour of their kin migrant and the interviewees’ migratory tendency as well. The educational qualification shows that 12.5% (05) of the interviewees had secondary education and are currently pursuing their B.A., B.Sc., LL.B. and others, 87.5% (35) had tertiary education which include NCE, ND, HND, Bachelor degrees holders, Masters degrees holders and Ph.D. holders. Majority of the interviewees are highly educated as they have higher educational attainment and this was seen in their perception of international migration and remittances received from their kin migrant(s) as well their migratory tendency.

The next variable considered was the age distribution of the interviewees. The result shows that interviewees who were between 21 – 25 were 15% (06); also, 15% (06) of the interviewees were between the age range of 26 – 30; those between the range of 31 – 35 constituted 17.5% (07) and this was the highest within the age distributions; 15% (06) of the interviewees were between the age ranges of 36 – 40; 7.5% (03) fall under the age range of 41 – 45; 7.5% (03) also fall under the age range of 46 – 50; those between the range of 51 – 55 constituted 10% (04); 2.5% (01) of the interviewees were between the age range of 56 – 60 and those between age range of 61 and above constituted 10% (04) of the total interviewees. This implies that economic wise, majority of the interviewees were within the active age of economic production and they are actually engaged in one economic activity or the other. The inference from the age distribution and
remittance was that older kinfolks receive remittances more often than the younger ones.

With regards to religion, 87.5% (35) of the interviewees were Christians while 12.5% (05) of the interviewees were Muslims. With regards to ethnicity, 12.5% (05) of the interviewees were Igbo, 75% (30) of the interviewees were Yoruba, and 12.5% (05) of the interviewees were Esan, Ibibio, Anang, Urhobo, Edo. This implies that majority of the interviewees were Yoruba. This was due to the fact that the study was carried out in Ibadan, though a cosmopolitan state is a predominant Yoruba city in the southwestern Nigeria. It should be noted however that this study was unable to get any Hausa participant within the area of the study.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE KIND OF REMITTANCE RECEIVED FROM MIGRANTS

Studies on the demographic characteristics of migrants’ households as predictors of remittance behaviour of emigrants are copious in Africa and Nigeria in particular to some extent (Piotrowski, 2009; Stark, 2009; Afaha, 2013; Vullnetari, 2009; VanWey, 2004; Fleischer, 2006; Garip, 2008; Van Hear, 2002). Findings from this study are largely consistent with earlier studies in terms of level of relation to the migrant(s), frequency and obligation to remit to kinfolks at the origin country. However, this article went beyond these known narratives by examining factors that influences the frequency and kind of remittance migrants send to their kinfolks left behind. This is a relatively new contribution to scholarship on this subject (Akanle and Adesina, 2017). Interviewees related personal and kin’s experiences of how often they receive remittances and why they think their kin migrant(s) remit to them. Parents, spouses and children of migrants receive remittances more frequently (monthly and irregularly) than siblings and other relatives. In other words, aside the monthly obligation to parents, spouses and children, any time there is specific need to be met, migrants sends money or whatever that is needed (see also Johnson and Whitelaw, 1974; Lucas and Stark, 1985; Massey and Basem 1992; Hugo, 1995). For example, a returnee and a pensioner whose children are all in the United States provided the following in an In-depth interview session:

“When my car was bad, my children sent me a new vehicle and they send me money monthly. They remit to me because I am their father; family responsibility. This is Africa. You are your brothers’ keeper, the family’s keeper in Africa unlike Europeans who don’t care about their family.”

(IDI/Male/78 years/Pensioner & Returnee/17th November, 2017)
Another interviewee whose husband is in the United Kingdom observed:

“I receive N30, 000 monthly. He sends clothes, shoes, kitchen utensils, house equipments and anything that we ask of him. He sends us things because we are members of his family.” (IDI/Female/38 years/Fulltime housewife/11\textsuperscript{th} November, 2017)

Similarly, a 21 year old undergraduate student of the Unibadan whose father is in the United States in line with the above response shared her experience:

“My dad sends money for my up-keep, clothes, shoes, phones, laptops, bags etc. My allowance is monthly, but material items are irregular (whenever he sees somebody coming home he sends material items). Money has always been through Western Union Transfer. He remits to me because he is my dad.” (IDI/Male/21 years/Student/18\textsuperscript{th} October, 2017)

In related view, a fashion designer whose younger brother is in Dubai observed:

“I receive money, clothes, shoes, bags, toys (for my kids) and so on irregularly. For my mum he sent her money every month. He remits to me because am his blood. Even if I did not ask him to send anything to me, he is supposed to assist me even though I am married. Before he migrated, we were all roughing it together; he knows the situation back at home. So if he is making it over there and he is not sending anything home I will not be happy because it means that he migrated and forgot his family.”

(IDI/Female/36 years/Fashion designer/businesswoman/14\textsuperscript{th} August, 2017)

Aside remittances to migrants’ nuclear kin, migrants also remit to their extended kinship networks. Interviewees also gave instances of remittances from their uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, cousin, in-laws and so on. However, the frequency and nature of what is remitted differs. For instance, an interviewee whose cousin is in Canada said:

“I have received $10, 000 once and that was because I needed it to pay my fees when I was doing my Masters. Every other thing is cloths and gadgets.” (IDI/Female/21 years/Student/3\textsuperscript{rd} August, 2017)
A businesswoman whose aunt is in London also had explained that:

“…She sends toys (which I sell), kitchen utensils and shoes. For the business items (toys) twice in a year while for other items, whenever she sees people that are coming home she sends gifts through them. I think she remit to me because it a business opportunity for her as well because after selling the toys I send the capital back to her.”

(IDI/Female/35 years/businesswoman/4th August, 2017)

It is evident from the above excerpts that the frequency and kind of remittances migrants send to their kinfolks left behind is highly predicated on the level of relationship to the recipient in their kinship networks and the needs of the recipients. For example, remittances for upkeep of parents, spouses and or children are usually sent monthly by the migrant(s) as their responsibility based on the level of the kinship network that exist amongst parents, spouses and children.

This is so given the kinship ethos for husbands to provide for their wives and children, and children to take care of their aged parents in Africa and Nigeria in particular. Remittances become a survival mechanism and kinship network bond for some kin and for the migrants (Akanle and Adesina, 2017b). On the other hand, migrants also extend their remittances to extended kin.

This is so given the deep-seated socio-cultural social ties amongst kin in Africa and specifically Nigeria; migrants remit as well to their siblings, uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, cousins, in-laws, friends and so on though the frequency and nature of remittance may differs. From the data above, it can be deduced that though migrants remit to their kin because it is part of Africans way of life to show care and love to ones kin, it was also observed that the level of relations (either as wife, husband, child, parent, uncle, aunt, cousin, nephew, niece, in-law and so on) of the interviewee to the migrant, his or her occupational status also determine the nature and propensity of remittance behaviour of the migrant. These findings are consistent with those of Johnson and Whitelaw, (1974); Lucas and Stark, (1985); Massey and Basem, (1992) who also found that migrants with a spouse and children left behind are likely to remit more because of their families’ basic needs. Several studies found that the number of children at home had a positive effect on both the propensity to remit and the amount of remittances. It is also evident that obligations to family of procreation; the migrant’s immediate family will trump obligations to family of orientation; extended family. Migrant(s) remit to their extended family irregularly while the migrant remit to his or her family procreation regularly and more frequently.
Social Constructions of Remittance among Kinfolks Who Receive Remittances

Just as the frequency and kind of remittances received by kinfolks left behind are different, so are the meanings remittance recipients (kin) attach to remittances received differs. It is therefore important to examine the social constructions; that is, meanings remittance recipients derive from what is being remitted. These meanings are socially constructed based on the socio-demographic characteristics and expectations of the recipient/interviewee and also his/her relations to the migrant. However, it is important to note that the meanings attached to remittances are not mutually exclusive, that is, several meanings can be attached to a particular kind of remittance by an individual. In other words, remittance can be a survival mechanism, a sign of love or care as well as economic/business investment opportunity to a particular recipient. While to some other recipients, remittance may just be either a survival mechanism, a sign of love or care, or business investment opportunity and so on. For instance, a professor of economics during an In-depth interview session observed:

“May be because of my level it may be biased, to me it’s (remittance) a show of love and connection because the reason for remitting is not to empower me. I see it has an investment, because I have cared for them for years. Therefore, should be an obligation if they are grateful.”

(IDI/Male/55 years/Professor of Economics/1st August, 2017)

A researcher, in a related view of the above, gave his own meaning of remittances received:

“She remits to us because she loves us because she can’t just remit to anybody. It is just a normal thing because it is not like we are dependent on it. It is once in a while when you see some stuff or gadgets that you know you can’t get the original one in Nigeria. I can ask her to get it for me and she will just decide to pay for it. So it is more of a show of love to me and other members of my kinship network because at least, she is not as rich as most of my family members who are here. She is just trying to survive.”

(IDI/Male/26 years/Researcher/5th October, 2017)

Aside the meaning of love which is embedded in the notion that the remittances received are not to sustain the recipients but show that the migrant(s) care and that he or she has not forgotten his/her kinfolks left
behind, there are other meanings that are laden with socio-cultural and kinship norms. A civil servant gave the following information during an in-depth interview session:

“Remittances mean a lot to us. It gives us joy, happiness, it brings unity and make the family bond to be stronger. It also assures us that out of sight is not out of mind. It is part of their responsibility because in Nigeria, you help your family members when you have. Also, when they ask us to send some things to them, we send them garri, yam flour and other food items. There is a proverb in Yoruba which says; “omo oko ti o je buredi, a fi isu ranse si ile” (the villager that wants to eat bread must send yam to the town so the town people can send him bread). I think my relatives abroad owe me responsibility because he is my brother. If things are going well with him he should help his family. We are Africans we cater for the extended family not just our immediate family and also because there is love in sharing. When you share things with your family members it makes the love in the family to wax stronger.” (IDI/Male/40 years/Civil servant/15th August, 2017)

Contrary to the above, another interviewee; a civil servant also sees remittances as show of love but not a responsibility of the migrants:

“It (remittance) is also a show of love as well in the sense that they decided to send money to us to support ourselves without us asking. Even though they are my siblings they don’t owe me any financial obligation to sent remittance because I can’t put my burden on them. They remit on their own based on what they are hearing and see through internet of how civil servants are not being paid salaries and therefore send things at different times because they care. If there is any family occasion (social event) that brings all of us together in the extended family, we inform them in order for them to have a say and be part of what is going on, they send their own contributions.” (IDI/Female/49 years/Civil servant/7th August, 2017)

Findings from the study also show that some recipients live on the money that they receive as remittance. A fulltime housewife of a migrant gave the following information:

“For me and his mother, he sends remittance monthly and anytime. For me and grandma, remittance is a survival mechanism because that is what we live on. For me I
Some other interviewees see remittances as business investment opportunity both for themselves and the migrant. This is because they have been able to invest in a particular line of business as a result of the kind of items that is being remitted.

One of the interviewees constructed the meaning of what she has received from her kin migrant in the following way:

“For me remittance is ‘Sha gba’ (just take) and stop disturbing me. Because most times when they see calls from Nigeria they don’t bother picking it because they think I want to ask for money from them.” (IDI/Female/40 years/hairstylist/4th August, 2017)

From the ethnographic summaries above, the meanings remittances recipients construct out of remittances receive are not mutually exclusive; rather they are mutually inclusive and intertwined. Remittances are socially constructed to mean a show of love and care, support, survival mechanism, investment opportunity and so on. Migrant’s kinfolks at the origin country rely on migrant remittances for support in the event that local economic conditions deteriorate and activities at the origin fail to bring in sufficient income. The findings of this study are consistent with those of Lucas and Stark, (1985), Stark, (1991), that remittance as “household income, investment capital, life-saving assistance”. This is also in line with Carling, (2008); and Lindley, (2009) they see the remittance practice as a multidimensional entity. They view remittance as "a social obligation, a sign of love, a token of power, finance, a business opportunity, macroeconomic inflow".

The Interface of Remittance and Kin’s Migratory Tendency.

In order to adequately comprehend the interface of remittance and kin’s migratory tendency, the study first examined the impacts of remittance on the recipients and their kinship ties as well as the migratory tendency of other kinfolks at the origin country. An interviewee whose elder brother is in London observed:

“He (the migrant) is planning on taking me and two of my brothers to London. Also, our mum has been to London twice to take care of his kids. Before, we were living in Okoro where we were paying N150, 000 for rent and later the rent was increased to N200, 000. He thought of putting that money into the building at Ologuneru and last December, we moved into...
our own house that was single handedly built by my elder brother for the family. He sent a car that takes my mother to anywhere she wants to go to. My siblings and I also make use of the car when we need it. Remittances have increased the way we rapport.” (IDI/Male/41 years/Security man/11th November, 2017)

In a similar light, another interviewee; entrepreneur and boutique owner whose husband is in Angola observed:

“There are situations when they (migrants) intervene financially in the lives of members of the larger kinship group. They also extend remittance to relatives; uncles, nephews, cousins and so on. And sometimes, sponsor some of them; pay their school feels. Sometimes, extended relatives would call that they need money that they want to go into business that they need assistance and the migrants will give assistance. ...Is it that peanut that you gave me? In any case, if you had not given me, I would have still made it.” (IDI/Male/55 years/Lecturer/19th November, 2017)

Having examined the impact of remittance on recipients and their social ties/relations, the responses of majority of the interviewees show that remittance has made them to live a more comfortable life in terms of financial support from the migrant, some of the interviewees have been able invest in business, some other to further their education through remittance from their kin migrant, few have received cars from their kin migrant and so on. However, majority of the interviewees also said the migrant has been able to acquire land and build house(s) while few interviewees said their kin migrant has been able to build a family house for their kin group. These findings are consistent with those of

Akanle and Adesina (2017); Isiugo-Abanihe and IOM, (2016). As regards remittance and kin’s migratory tendency, it was found that it is not the remittances that they (interviewees) have received that made them desirous of migrating abroad. Rather it is the way of life in the western world; better opportunities in terms of job, education, basic social amenities, social welfare and so on compared to what obtains here in Nigeria. A professor of economics during one of the In-depth interview sessions noted:

“Remittances do not make me desirous of traveling abroad, but I may be an exception because I travel a lot but I do not intend to migrate to have a permanent residence. The quality of life in the western world is not comparable to the quality of life here (Nigeria). There
are facts and figures to the extent that if you do proper migration, the allowance that you will get from state when you don’t have employment is more than what a worker here is struggling to earn at the end of the month. Beyond that, looking at social, economic and security infrastructure, some of them (western countries) have insurance for health so the people do not need to worry if ‘I am sick tomorrow, how do I take care of myself’. Housing; ‘if you don’t go beyond your boundary, you will still get a roof over your head, you don’t need to dig bore-hole because you need water, and you don’t need a generator and so on. … If we can develop our own system to be comparable to the system in the west, migration will reduce. Remittance has not made me to encourage people to migrate as well. Anytime/any day I will preach to people to stay here (Nigeria) and let them know that they can make it if they are hardworking.” (IDI/Male/55 years/Professor of Economics/1st August, 2017)

Whereas, it was also found that to some extent, remittance foster migratory tendency among kin’s of migrant. An interviewee had this to say:

“Yes to some extent remittances have made me to encourage the migration of other kinfolds because since the person I have over there is sending things even I myself would want to migrate if there is a way. If for instance, you have somebody here who is working and in a year or two he has not been able to say take one kobo or even send money to his parents or siblings but somebody who traveled abroad is doing that, it is enough to encourage somebody to migrate.” (IDI/Female/45 years/Caterer/Social worker/12th October, 2017)

Having examined the interface of remittance and kin’s or recipient’s migratory tendency, the responses of most of the interviewees show that it is the way of life; to wit; basic social amenities, welfare system, a system of governance run on strict rules and regulations rather than favoritism, corruption and so on in the western world that is fostering the desire to migrate. Some others argued that what migrants send home from time to time and the kind of life they display when they come home during festive period are evident of how they are doing well abroad. Therefore, they would encourage anybody who has intention of migrating because those they know that have migrated are doing very well. However, one of the interviewees also argued that life is not easier in the western world compared to Nigeria because migrants abroad are working really hard to earn their pay and pay
their bills and it is because of the exchange rate that is making what they are earning look big in Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND THEORISATION

A combination of Social Action Theory and Social Exchange Theory are relevant to this study because migrants’ remittances are laden with meanings subjected to thought process of cost and benefit analysis. Migrants’ remittances are not just reaction to external stimuli (social facts) and that remittances can be explained in terms of cause and effect (Haralambos, Holborn and Heald, 2004). Migrants remit by defining situations and giving meanings to what is being remitted just as the kinfolks left behind also derive meaning from remittances. This is possible through the interpretive understanding which occurs only when the parties involved in social relations ascribe meaning to each other’s action (Omobowale and Adegoke, 2013). Social action therefore, is any action carried out by an individual or group of individuals which they; the actors attached interpretive meaning to. According to Haralambos, Holborn and Heald (2004), social action is also an action that takes in account the existence and possible reactions of others. It is pertinent to state that not every action is social especially if the action did not emanate from the subjective and conscious thought of the actor. An action is social when individuals are acting with others in mind.

Social action is that action that has subjective meaning built around the conscious thought of the actor, which is oriented to the reaction of others (Enaikele, 2013). Social action may be oriented to the past, present and expected future behaviour of others. It may be fostered by gratitude for a past kind act, reprisal for a past act of aggression, guard against the present or future aggression (Enaikele, 2013). On the other hand, Social exchange theory emerged out of the philosophical thrust of utilitarianism, behaviourism and neoclassical economics (Alexander, 1990; Cook, 2000). The guiding principle that guide people in exchange relations is the principle of reciprocity. Social exchange theory is based on the principle that one enters into relationships in which one can maximize benefits and minimize costs. Social exchange theory posits that people enter into relationships or interact with others with self-interest at the back of their minds (Thomas, 1995, Thibaut and Kelley, 1959).

The sending and reception of remittances is based on the meaning(s) attached to what is being remitted or received (see also Akanle, Fayehun, Adejare and Orohume, 2019). It is the meaning attached to remittance that will determine the behaviour of migrants to remit. That is, how often and eager migrants will be to remit to their kinfolks left behind. For instance, migrants from low socio-economic background, who remit in
order to meet family needs and invest in business, will remit more often than migrants from high socio-economic background who can afford what

is being remitted. However, remittances are also appreciated among high status family as it is perceived as a show of affection and love. For instance, a migrant from a low-status family, and if status at origin matters to the migrant and his family, remittances can be utilized as a status-elevating technique.

In such cases remittances is seen as a means of social mobility and status attainment for migrant who intends to elevate the status of his or her family while the family at home perceive the remittances as expected obligation more than attaching the meaning of love to the remittances sent home by the migrant. One reason why migrants’ remittances are so often channeled into improved housing is that a superior house is an unequivocal measure, or statement, of status yielding success, suggesting that the incentive to migrate in the first place was to acquire high status. On the other hand, migrant from high-status family, remittances to the household is more of exchange of affection since the migrant most often stands on the shoulders of his or her kin group in establishing his or her self in the area of destination.

Contextualizing this with social exchange theory, remittance creates a sense of belongingness and kinship networks that mobilize and sustain support both in the country of origin and destination. Exchanges of money, goods and assistance among kin are influenced by the intertwined lives of individuals and their kinship network. The decision of member of a kinship network to migrate is based on the economic calculation of the costs of migration (e.g. foregone family investment, travel expenses, helping the migrant during periods of unemployment) and benefits of migration (e.g. regular remittances, investment in local income generation, anticipated assistance during times of particular hardship). Thus, anticipated remittances are part of the migration decision, part of an implicit contract between the migrant and the remaining family.

International migration and remittances by migrants to their kinfolks at home is a bonding factor with unspecified obligations (unlike economic exchange) and the nature of the return cannot be bargained and remittances tends to engender feelings of personal obligation, gratitude, trust, love, strengthening social ties/bond and diffuse future obligations (see Akanle, Fayehun, Adejare and Oroborne, 2019). This is based on the interpretive understanding of what remittances mean to the actors in a particular kinship network. Moreover, migrants abroad are expected to take care of other relatives (especially younger siblings) in helping them to migrate to developed nations (Fleischer, 2006). In term of the cost and
benefit of remitting is that the migrant expect that their remittance will foster further affection and love with their kinfolks at the origin country and will result in a very close-knit kinship group (Hassan, 2014). Also, the benefit of remitting involves relatives acting as stewards of investments in the country of origin (reciprocal interactions). The migrant may, however, have assets that he wishes to preserve or retain control of and send his relatives money to do this. The cost of not remitting might also result in a weak kinship group.

CONCLUSION

Every member of a kinship network does not receive the kind of remittance from their kin migrant(s). The frequency and nature of remittance received is based on the level of relations to the migrant as well as the need/purpose the migrant is remitting for. Documenting the factors that influences the kind of remittances kinfolks receive is one of the main contributions of this article; most previous research emphasized the socio-economic status of migrants’ household as the main determinant of remittance. Given the findings from the study that inform this article, it is possible to conclude that the frequency and nature of remittance from international migrants to their left behinds is based on the level of relation to the migrant and also based on what the remittance is meant for. It was found that parents, spouses and children of migrants receive remittances more frequently (monthly and irregularly) than siblings and other relatives. That is, aside the monthly obligation to parents, spouses and children, any time there is specific need to be met, migrants sends cars, money to buy land or house, start up a business and or whatever need that is to be met. Also, remittance to spouses, children and parents are more substantial than those sent to siblings and other relative in the migrants’ kinship network.

Remittance recipients attach meanings to what is being remitted. These meanings are socially constructed based on the socio-demographic characteristics and expectations of the recipient/interviewee and also his/her relations to the migrant as well. While parents, spouses and children see remittances as the responsibility of the migrant, other relations in the kinship network may not perceive remittance as such. We found that the meanings attached to remittances are not mutually exclusive, that is, several meanings can be attached to a particular kind of remittance by an individual. In other words, remittance can be a survival mechanism, a sign of love or care as well as economic/business investment opportunity to a particular recipient. While to some other recipients, remittance may just be either a survival mechanism, a sign of love or care, or business investment opportunity and so on.
Particularly noteworthy is the finding that kin’s migratory tendency does not emanate totally from the frequency, nature and social construction of remittances. Rather, kin’s migratory tendency is also as a result of the way of life in the destination countries and how these societies are organized; economically, politically and socially. This is because a system where the benefit of hard work can be appropriated to attain social mobility will always pull immigrants. Given the finding that kin’s migratory tendency in Nigeria goes beyond remittances received from migrants, but also due to the way of life and how most developed nations are organized, it is recommended that the government should improve on the provision of basic social amenities, security, social welfare, enforce constitutionalism, encourage meritocracy against favourism, nepotism and corruption and so on to encourage migrants to return and stay at the origin country and help boost the economy through their investment.
REFERENCES


Fleischer Annett 2006. Family, obligations, and migration: The role of kinship in Cameroon Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research (MPIDR) Rostock, Germany.


