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Youth Migration and Its Socio-Economic Impact on Rural Development in Kwara State: A study of rural communities in Moro Local Government

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Abstract

Rural–urban youth migration has become a defining demographic and socio-economic phenomenon in Nigeria, with significant implications for rural development sustainability. This study examines the effects of youth migration on rural communities in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State, focusing on poverty dynamics, investment patterns in education, health and infrastructure, and changes in social cohesion and demographic balance. Adopting a descriptive survey research design, primary data were collected from 200 respondents using structured questionnaires and analyzed through descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. The findings reveal that while remittances associated with youth migration contribute to household income and poverty alleviation, the loss of productive agricultural labour undermines long-term rural economic sustainability. The study further shows that youth migration significantly influences investment decisions in social infrastructure and alters community social structures through population ageing and reduced participation in communal activities. The study concludes that youth migration presents both opportunities and challenges for rural development and recommends targeted policy interventions to harness remittance benefits while mitigating labour and social deficits in rural communities.

***Keywords*:** Youth Migration, Socio-Economic Impact, Rural Development, Rural communities, Moro Local Government.

Introduction

Rural-urban youth migration constitutes a significant demographic transition with profound implications for the sustainability and development trajectory of agrarian communities in sub-Saharan Africa. Distress migration is particularly acute among rural youth, as agricultural transformation must engage youth to increase global food production and balance out-migration from rural areas (Begho & Daubry, 2025). In Nigeria, this phenomenon has intensified in recent decades, with Kwara State exemplifying the complex interplay between youth mobility aspirations and rural development imperatives. This study examines the multidimensional socio-economic impacts of youth migration on rural development in Moro Local Government Area, Kwara State, with particular attention to three critical analytical dimensions: the dialectical relationship between migration and poverty alleviation through remittances versus agricultural labor depletion, migration-induced transformations in public and private investment patterns in education, health, and infrastructure, and the reconfiguration of social cohesion and demographic equilibrium within origin communities. The migration-poverty nexus presents a theoretical and empirical paradox requiring nuanced investigation. While remittances constitute a significant financial resource flow to rural households, potentially ameliorating immediate consumption poverty, the simultaneous withdrawal of productive labor, particularly among the most educated and entrepreneurial youth, fundamentally undermines agricultural output and long-term economic sustainability (Diendere & Yoda, 2023). Out-migration results in the phenomenon referred to as 'brain drain' as bright, motivated and ambitious youth leave rural communities (Cespedes-Reynaga, 2024). Brain drain refers to a phenomenon where the young population of a rural area leaves to establish themselves in a more urban area, creating what scholars increasingly conceptualize as selective migration patterns that disproportionately extract human capital from rural areas (Ndukwe & Fapohunda, 2024). The theoretical framework underpinning this investigation draws upon Harris-Todaro migration models, which emphasize rural-urban wage differentials, alongside more contemporary frameworks addressing non-economic migration determinants, including social capital erosion and cultural identity transformation. Furthermore, youth out-migration fundamentally alters the demographic architecture and social fabric of rural communities through accelerated population aging, gender imbalances resulting from differential migration propensities, and the attenuation of intergenerational knowledge transfer mechanisms

essential for cultural continuity (Keho, 2024). Rural communities see aging populations, school closings, declining downtowns, and other signs that youth out-migration and brain-drain are real issues, with those communities that lose too much of their youth population in danger of becoming unsustainable (Mohamed et al, 2024). This study situates Moro Local Government within this broader discourse, employing empirical investigation to illuminate how youth migration patterns influence investment decisions in human capital development infrastructure, reshape age-dependency ratios, and potentially erode the institutional capacity necessary for endogenous rural development.

Statement of the Problem

Rural communities in Moro Local Government Area, Kwara State, face an acute development crisis precipitated by sustained youth out-migration, creating a tripartite challenge that threatens agricultural sustainability, socio-economic advancement, and community viability. The outmigration of young and able-bodied individuals seeking better opportunities in urban areas hampers agricultural productivity and rural development perpetuating cycles of rural underdevelopment. Research demonstrates that this exodus results in reduction of agricultural labour force, low agricultural productivity, and high cost of labour (Oboh & Kushwaha, 2016), fundamentally undermining food security and household incomes. With the exit of youths and young adults from villages and rural communities, the aged, women and children are left behind to labour on farms which leads to reduction in agricultural output with its attendant effect on the gross domestic product of the nation (Olugbenga, 2018).

In looking beyond immediate agricultural implications, youth migration generates ambiguous effects on poverty alleviation and income distribution. While remittances provide monetary transfers to rural households, migration severely impacts agricultural productivity, resulting in lower income and food production suggesting that financial flows inadequately compensate for lost productive capacity. Furthermore, the demographic reconfiguration resulting from selective youth migration, whereby the most educated and entrepreneurial individuals depart, creates aging populations, gender imbalances, and diminished social capital essential for collective action and community development initiatives. Despite fast growing opportunities, many rural youths are opting out of farming in search of non-existent white-collar jobs in the cities, leading to unprecedented levels of rural-urban migration This research addresses critical knowledge gaps regarding how youth migration patterns influence investment decisions in education, health, and infrastructure, alter social cohesion mechanisms, and reshape the developmental trajectory of rural communities in Moro Local Government Area.

Research Questions

1. How does youth migration influence income distribution and poverty levels in rural communities of Moro Local Government Area, Kwara State?
2. What role does youth migration play in shaping rural investment in education, health, and infrastructure in Moro Local Government Area?
3. How does the outflow of youth affect social cohesion and demographic balance in rural communities of Moro Local Government Area?

Research Objectives

General Objective: To examine the socio-economic impacts of youth migration on rural development in Moro Local Government Area, Kwara State.

Specific Objectives:

1. To assess whether youth migration alleviates or exacerbates rural poverty through remittances and agricultural labor shortages in Moro Local Government Area.
2. To evaluate the influence of youth migration on development spending patterns in education, health, and infrastructure within rural communities of Moro Local Government Area.
3. To examine the effects of youth out-migration on social cohesion, age structure, community participation, and cultural continuity in rural communities of Moro Local Government Area.

Research Hypotheses

H_{01}: Youth migration has no significant effect on income distribution and poverty levels in rural communities of Moro Local Government Area.

H_{02}: Youth migration does not significantly affect investment patterns in education, health, and infrastructure in rural communities of Moro Local Government Area.

H_{03}: Youth out-migration has no significant impact on social cohesion and demographic balance in rural communities of Moro Local Government Area.

Conceptual Review

Youth Migration: Youth migration represents a complex, multidimensional socio-demographic phenomenon encompassing the spatial and temporal mobility of young individuals during critical life transitions. (Robertson et al., 2018). argue for the need to combine youth and migration studies in a new conceptual framework for researching youth mobility, emphasizing that participants are often reluctant to identify themselves as economic migrants and that the focus should be on the dynamics of mobility rather than on static labels, which may change over the course of the journey. This conceptualization recognizes that youth migration transcends simple geographical relocation, embodying instead a fluid process wherein young people navigate complex decisions regarding education, employment, identity formation, and future aspirations within contexts shaped by structural inequalities and evolving opportunities. Mazzucato develops mobility-based categories for studying young people with and without a migration background, arguing that in a globalizing world the ability of young people to move is increasingly a marker of difference and therefore needs to be considered when studying young people's lives, with mobility entailing migration but also other kinds of trips such as study abroad, vacations, gap years, and family visits (Mazzucato, 2024). The conceptual understanding of youth migration has evolved beyond linear conceptualizations of movement from country A to country B toward more dynamic frameworks acknowledging circular patterns, onward migration trajectories, and the maintenance of transnational connections.

Engbersen & Snel, (2013) conceptualized six key elements of liquid migration: most migrants tend to follow a circular or onward migration pattern rather than settle permanently, labor migration is dominant but student migration also characterizes liquid migration, migration flows are often sudden and spontaneous, and many liquid migrants are young and single people postponing marriage and children, reflecting the rise of individualization in decision-making. This framework emphasizes the temporality and fluidity characterizing contemporary youth migration patterns, wherein young people increasingly view migration not as permanent settlement but as strategic positioning within broader life trajectories. Doumas and Avery conducted an explorative literature review examining the content and methodologies of recent empirical studies on the aspirations of youth in situations of migration in Europe, analyzing 30 peer-reviewed social science publications for the period 2010-2022, finding that studies broadly situated themselves within constructivist traditions, occupying a mid-position between deterministic and agency-oriented epistemologies (Doumas & Avery, 2024). Youth migration decisions emerge from complex interactions between structural constraints, household strategies, individual aspirations, and social networks. The conceptual framework necessarily integrates multiple analytical levels, from macro-level economic and political conditions shaping migration opportunity structures, through meso-level household dynamics determining resource allocation and risk management strategies, to micro-level individual agency and subjective assessments of life possibilities. Young migrants simultaneously navigate multiple identities and roles, experiencing migration not merely as physical displacement but as transformative processes affecting psychological acculturation, social integration, cultural adaptation, and identity reconstruction. Understanding youth migration therefore requires analytical frameworks that capture this complexity while acknowledging the heterogeneity of migration experiences across different socio-economic contexts, cultural settings, and individual circumstances.

Rural Development: Rural development constitutes a comprehensive, multidimensional process aimed at improving the economic prosperity, social welfare, institutional capacity, and environmental sustainability of populations residing in rural areas through integrated interventions addressing interconnected challenges of poverty, infrastructure deficits, human capital limitations, and resource management constraints. Li and colleagues propose an integrated framework for measuring sustainable rural development towards the Sustainable Development Goals, establishing a conceptual connection between

rural development and the SDGs in the context of rural revitalization, wherein a rural system comprises economic, social, and ecological subsystems that are interconnected with neighboring villages or cities, with diverse functions (Li et al., 2024). Various conceptual frameworks have been developed to incorporate multiple dimensions of evaluation indicators for rural sustainability, such as economy-society-ecology, population-economy-infrastructure-resources, structure-process-function-interactions-driving-path, and pressure-state-response frameworks (Hu et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023).

Contemporary rural development paradigms have evolved from traditional sectoral approaches privileging agricultural intensification toward holistic frameworks recognizing the interconnectedness of economic opportunities, social services, environmental stewardship, governance structures, and cultural vitality in determining sustainable developmental trajectories. China's rural revitalization policy systematic review reveals significant progress across three interconnected domains including poverty alleviation initiatives achieving 12.3 percent reduction in rural poverty through integrated agricultural modernization and targeted support programs, demonstrating the critical nexus between poverty reduction, food system resilience, and environmental sustainability in rural transformation (Li et al., 2025). Goodwin-Hawkins et al propose a conceptual framework for nexogenous rural development emphasizing rural service hubs and socially innovative rural-urban linkages, shifting the lens on service hubs from place-based solutions towards a broader, multi-scalar and multi-level perspective on rural connectivity, illustrating how diverse service hub models mobilize social innovation, networks, scale and proximity to support service access and provision (Goodwin-Hawkins et al., 2021).

The conceptualization of rural development necessarily encompasses multiple interrelated dimensions operating simultaneously across different spatial and temporal scales. Economic development involves agricultural modernization, rural entrepreneurship, market integration, income diversification, and value chain development creating sustainable livelihoods beyond subsistence agriculture. Social development addresses education access, healthcare provision, gender equality, social protection systems, and community empowerment enabling rural populations to participate meaningfully in development processes. Infrastructure development encompasses transportation networks, energy systems, telecommunications connectivity, water supply, and sanitation facilities forming foundational prerequisites for economic activity and quality of life improvements. Environmental sustainability ensures natural resource management, climate change adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and ecosystem services maintenance recognizing that long-term rural viability depends upon ecological integrity. Institutional development strengthens governance structures, policy frameworks, financial services accessibility, and community organizational capacity necessary for effective collective action and sustained development momentum. (Khan et al., 2022) propose a framework for sustainable rural development through entrepreneurial initiatives in emerging economies, emphasizing that sustainable rural development and higher income levels of a rural community can be achieved through indigenously owned resource-based corporations, with successful entrepreneurs being those who contribute to the community and are supported by the village community This comprehensive conceptualization recognizes that sustainable rural transformation requires addressing structural constraints, empowering marginalized populations, fostering innovation and adaptation, strengthening rural-urban linkages, and creating enabling environments wherein rural communities possess the agency, resources, and institutional support necessary to chart their own developmental pathways while maintaining cultural identity, social cohesion, and environmental integrity essential for intergenerational sustainability.

Theoretical Framework

New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM)

The New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing youth migration as a household-based livelihood and risk-management strategy, particularly in rural economies characterized by structural constraints. Unlike neoclassical migration theory, which emphasizes individual income maximization, NELM argues that households collectively decide to send members to migrate in order to diversify income sources, reduce vulnerability, and overcome failures in credit, labour, and insurance markets (De Haas, 2021). This perspective is especially relevant to rural Nigeria, where agricultural income is seasonal and access to formal financial institutions remains limited. Recent empirical studies reinforce the relevance of NELM in understanding rural migration dynamics. Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa shows that remittances play a critical role in stabilizing household income and

smoothing consumption during economic shocks, thereby reducing rural poverty levels. In Nigeria, rural households increasingly rely on migrant remittances to finance education, healthcare, and housing improvements, highlighting migration as a strategic response to structural deprivation rather than a spontaneous individual choice (Ajaero & Madu, 2022).

However, NELM also acknowledges that the developmental outcomes of migration are not uniformly positive. While remittance inflows may enhance household welfare, the out-migration of youth can generate labour shortages in agriculture-dependent communities, leading to reduced farm productivity and rising labour costs. This situation may disproportionately affect non-migrant households, thereby worsening income inequality within rural communities. Moreover, remittance utilization patterns influence whether migration supports long-term development or reinforces dependency. Studies indicate that when remittances are channeled primarily into consumption rather than productive investment, their contribution to sustainable rural development remains limited (Carling & Talleraas, 2021). Nonetheless, where households invest remittances in education, small enterprises, and farm inputs, migration can stimulate rural economic resilience. In the context of Moro Local Government Area in Kwara State, NELM offers a valuable analytical lens for examining how youth migration shapes income distribution, poverty levels, and household investment behaviour. Emphasizing on collective decision-making and remittance flows, the theory aligns directly with this study's focus on whether migration alleviates or exacerbates rural socio-economic inequalities.

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory conceptualizes education, skills, and health as productive investments that enhance individuals' economic potential and lifetime earnings. Within migration studies, the theory explains youth migration as a rational response to spatial inequalities in the returns to human capital, where individuals relocate to environments offering better employment opportunities and higher wages (Todaro & Smith, 2020). This framework is particularly relevant in developing economies, where rural areas often fail to absorb educated and skilled labour. Recent empirical literature demonstrates that youth migration is strongly associated with disparities in educational and employment opportunities between rural and urban areas. Studies from Nigeria reveal that rural youth with higher educational attainment are more likely to migrate due to limited local labour market absorption and low wage prospects (Ogunniyi et al., 2021). As a result, rural communities experience a selective loss of skilled and economically active individuals, contributing to concerns about brain drain.

At the household level, migration influenced by human capital considerations can generate positive spill-over effects. Research indicates that remittances from migrant youth significantly increase household expenditure on education and healthcare, thereby enhancing human capital accumulation among non-migrant family members (Abdul-Salam & Phimister, 2020). This supports the argument that migration can indirectly promote human capital development in migrant-sending communities. Nevertheless, the long-term implications of sustained youth out-migration remain ambiguous. Persistent loss of skilled youth may weaken local innovation capacity, reduce community leadership, and limit rural institutional development (UNDP, 2022). Evidence from West Africa suggests that while remittances improve household welfare, high rates of youth migration can undermine local labour quality and productivity if return migration and skills transfer are minimal (Awumbila et al., 2019). Human Capital Theory therefore enables a nuanced examination of youth migration in Moro LGA by linking migration decisions to education, labour quality, and development outcomes. It provides a critical lens for assessing whether migration strengthens rural development through remittance-financed human capital investment or undermines it through the depletion of skilled youth necessary for long-term rural transformation.

Social Capital Theory and Migrant Networks

Social capital theory provides a robust analytical framework for understanding how youth migration fundamentally transforms the social fabric, demographic architecture, and collective action capacity of rural communities in Moro Local Government Area. Migrant social capital is defined as information about or assistance with migrating provided by prior migrants through migrant networks, which are a set of interpersonal ties based on kinship, friendship, or shared origin community that connect migrants and nonmigrants (Garip, 2008). This theoretical perspective is particularly salient to how youth out-migration affects social cohesion, age structure, community participation, and cultural continuity in rural communities. Recent scholarship

emphasizes the multidimensional nature of social capital in migration contexts. Analyzing migration from the perspective of social capital, as opposed to economic and human capital, can better reveal the underlying mechanisms behind social integration (Zhang et al., 2024). Building on Putnam's theory of social capital, bonding social capital grows within relationships that involve high levels of mutual trust and reciprocity, while bridging social capital connects people from different backgrounds (Putnova et al., 2023). Youth migration simultaneously erodes bonding social capital within rural communities through the physical departure of young adults who traditionally serve as organizational leaders, cultural transmitters, and community mobilizers, while potentially creating bridging capital through transnational networks linking rural and urban spaces.

More people move between places which are better connected with bridging social capital, as these networks provide information about potential localities, and friends and relatives create support and services for each other (Lőrincz & Németh, 2022). The selective nature of youth migration disproportionately affecting educated, entrepreneurial individuals depletes precisely those human resources essential for maintaining robust social networks and institutional capacity within rural communities. After controlling several socio-economic and demographic variables, research finds a positive association of social capital with both migration aspiration and migration capability, suggesting that social connections may play a role in disseminating favorable information about migration benefits (Shirzad et al., 2024). Furthermore, this cumulative causation effect means that initial migration facilitates subsequent migration, creating self-reinforcing patterns that progressively deplete rural communities of their youth cohorts. The experience of disconnection between desired and experienced sense of community represents a distinct influence on young professionals' intentions to leave rural areas within the next five years (Wolfe et al., 2020). In the migration context, strong migrant networks may channel entire age cohorts toward urban destinations, regardless of individual aptitudes or rural development needs, thereby accelerating demographic imbalances and threatening community sustainability. Out-migration results in reductions in community infrastructure, including the closure of schools, sporting teams, shops and other facilities, with ramifications for the long-term viability of rural towns (Eacott et al., 2020). Rural communities in Moro Local Government must strategically leverage migrant networks while simultaneously strengthening local social cohesion to maintain intergenerational cultural transmission, sustain collective institutions, and preserve the demographic balance necessary for long-term community viability.

Empirical Review

The empirical literature on youth migration and rural development demonstrates considerable global variation in outcomes, with context-specific dynamics increasingly recognized as critical determinants of developmental trajectories. Using PMG and difference GMM estimators on data from 36 developing and 30 advanced economies from 2005 to 2023, research finds that remittances reduce poverty in developing economies but worsen it in advanced ones (Nguyen Van Bon, 2025). This counterintuitive finding underscores the heterogeneity of migration–poverty relationships across developmental contexts. Empirical findings from both static and dynamic models overwhelmingly confirm that remittances significantly reduce poverty in sampled countries across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, with household consumption expenditure and poverty headcount indicators demonstrating consistent improvements in recipient households (Gonzalez et al, 2024). Regional analyses reveal nuanced patterns. Remittances play a significant role in mitigating energy poverty in the Latin American region, particularly in rural areas, with economic growth and financial development acting as mediators allowing remittances to indirectly contribute to mitigating energy poverty (Klaufus, 2023). Research examining welfare impacts in rural Vietnam using panel data and instrumental variables finds that remittances significantly improve income, reduce poverty, and enhance food security among recipient households (Thanh & Saito, 2024). In Nepal, the probability of households falling into poverty reduces by 4.8 percent with a one percent rise in household assets, with approximately 38 percent of rural households receiving remittances in 2018 (Byanjankar & Sakha, 2021).

The African context presents particularly complex empirical patterns. African migration continues to experience persistent upward pressures, with limited economic opportunity, conflict, repressive government, growing youth populations, and climate change as primary drivers behind approximately one million new migrants annually, adding to the estimated 43 million African migrants overall (African Development Bank, 2024). Most of the estimated millions of Africans residing abroad are highly educated professionals, and this migration has

resulted in loss of expertise in vital economic sectors. Both rural and urban areas are targeted by migrant investments in land and infrastructure, where land pressures are already high, such as in peri-urban areas, contributing to the present land rush and soaring land prices, which means that local youth can no longer afford to buy land and are pushed to more marginal areas (Fisher et al., 2019). Nigerian empirical evidence provides critical insights directly relevant to this study. Research finds that youth migration has negative and statistically significant effects on both political and socioeconomic growth in Nigeria at the 5% level of significance (Adepoju, 2021). Migration is one of the many drivers of social change, with migrants mobilizing social and cultural value exchange between societies which affects societies as they struggle to maintain a cohesive society (Bakewell, 2018). Migration patterns play a pivotal role in shaping Nigeria's evolving population structure, particularly in terms of rapid population growth, a significant youth population, and urbanization, emphasizing the importance of understanding demographic consequences of migration patterns and economic drivers behind international migration. Infrastructure investment patterns reveal concerning trends. Most of Africa lacks the infrastructure, including transport and reliable electricity as well as stable governments needed to attract investment, with Africa's per capita GDP growing slowly relative to emerging economies (Calabrese, 2024). Land scarcity has been driving rapid changes in land ownership and distribution patterns over the past decade, shaping employment and migration decisions of rural youth, with the share of individual labor time devoted to farming declining over time across age categories and gender (Jayne et al., 2020). These empirical findings collectively demonstrate that youth migration generates multifaceted impacts varying significantly across geographical contexts, necessitating location-specific policy interventions that address both origin and destination challenges while recognizing the complex interplay between remittances, labor market dynamics, infrastructure development, and social cohesion in determining ultimate developmental outcomes.

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design to systematically examine the socio-economic impacts of youth migration on rural development in Moro Local Government Area, Kwara State. Social surveys are designed to produce systematic and structured data, to describe in a quantitative way selected aspects of the population under study, providing statistics and quantitative descriptions on a wide range of topics (Salamońska, 2022). This design is appropriate for testing the formulated hypotheses and establishing relationships between youth migration and rural development indicators through statistical analysis.

Population of the Study

The target population comprises all youths residing in Moro Local Government Area, Kwara State. Following international conventions, youth are operationally defined as individuals aged 15-35 years, consistent with the African Youth Charter framework. This population encompasses both migrants and non-migrants living within the rural communities of the local government area.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A two-stage sampling procedure was employed to select respondents for this study on youth migration and rural development in Moro Local Government Area. The first stage involved the purposive selection of seven (7) rural communities where youth populations are most prominent and migration patterns are observable within the study area. These communities were selected based on their demographic characteristics, agricultural activities, and accessibility for data collection purposes. The second stage involved sampling of youths based on a sampling frame from each of the five selected communities using simple random sampling technique, which ensured that every youth within the identified communities had an equal probability of being selected for participation in the study. A total of 400 youths were identified across the five communities, from which 50% were randomly selected, yielding 200 potential respondents. Ultimately, 200 completed questionnaires were retrieved and analyzed, representing a 94.9% response rate. This sample size was considered adequate for statistical analysis based on Yamane's formula at 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Table below presents the distribution of respondents across the selected communities.

Table 1: Summary of Sampling Procedure

Communities	Youth Population	Sample (50%)	Retrieved Questionnaires
Shao	100	50	50
Oloru	50	25	25
Malete	50	25	25
Bode-Saadu	50	25	25
Elemere:	50	25	25
Jebba	50	25	25
Ajanaku	50	25	25
Total	**400**	**200**	**200**

Source: Field survey, 2024

Sources and Methods of Data Collection

Primary data constitutes the main source of information for this study, collected directly from respondents through structured questionnaires administered in selected rural communities. The questionnaires were administered through face-to-face interviews to ensure clarity, maximize response rates, and address any queries respondents might have regarding specific items.

Research Instrument

The research instrument consists of a structured questionnaire divided into sections addressing demographic characteristics, migration patterns, income distribution, poverty levels, investment in social infrastructure, social cohesion indicators, and demographic balance. Items were developed based on extensive literature review and adapted from validated instruments used in previous migration studies, employing primarily Likert-scale responses to measure attitudes, perceptions, and experiences related to youth migration impacts.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Content validity was established through expert review by migration scholars and rural development specialists who assessed the appropriateness, relevance, and comprehensiveness of questionnaire items. Alpha was developed by Lee Cronbach in 1951 to provide a measure of the internal consistency of a test or scale; it is expressed as a number between 0 and 1, with internal consistency describing the extent to which all items in a test measure the same concept or construct (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Analysts frequently use 0.7 as a benchmark value for Cronbach's alpha, with values at this level and higher indicating that items are sufficiently consistent to demonstrate the measure is reliable (Frost, 2024). Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with values above 0.70 considered acceptable for research purposes.

Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis employed both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize demographic characteristics and migration patterns. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine relationships between youth migration and rural development indicators, testing the formulated hypotheses at 0.05 significance level. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software facilitated the analytical procedures, enabling systematic examination of associations between variables and hypothesis testing.

Data analysis and Interpretation

The demographic characteristics of the 200 respondents provide valuable insights into the socio-economic profile of youths involved in migration-related dynamics in the study area.

	Respondents	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	123	62%
	Female	77	39%
Age	15–19 years	33	17%
	20–24 years	53	27%
	25–29 years	55	28%
	30–34 years	59	30%
Educational Qualification	SSCE	39	20%
	OND/NCE	66	33%
	HND/B.Sc.	60	30%
	Post garduste	35	18%
Nature of Business	Farming	16	8%
	Trading/Business	33	17%
	Student	98	49%
	Artisan	30	15%
	Unemployed	23	12%
Have you migratied before	Yes	198	99%
	No	2	1%

Source: Field survey, 2024

Gender Distribution: The gender composition shows a higher participation of male respondents in the study. Males account for 62% (123 respondents), while females constitute 39% (77 respondents). This indicates that male youths are more prominently represented in the sample, suggesting that migration and related economic activities may be more prevalent among males in the study area. However, the substantial proportion of female respondents also reflects notable female involvement in youth mobility and livelihood decisions.

Age Distribution: The age distribution reveals that respondents are largely within the economically active youth category. The highest proportion falls within the 30–34 years age group, representing 30% (59 respondents), followed closely by those aged 25–29 years at 28% (55 respondents) and 20–24 years at 27% (53 respondents). Respondents aged 15–19 years constitute the smallest group at 17% (33 respondents). This pattern suggests that youth migration is most common among individuals in their late twenties and early thirties, a stage often associated with increased economic responsibility and employment-seeking behavior.

Educational Qualification: The educational profile indicates a relatively moderate to high level of educational attainment among respondents. Those with OND/NCE qualifications form the largest group at 33% (66 respondents), followed by HND/B.Sc. holders at 30% (60 respondents). Respondents with SSCE account for 20% (39 respondents), while postgraduate qualification holders represent 18% (35 respondents). This distribution suggests that a significant proportion of the youth population possesses post-secondary education, which may influence migration decisions, employment opportunities, and the effective use of remittances.

Nature of Business/Occupation: In terms of occupation, the majority of respondents are students, accounting for 49% (98 respondents). This is followed by those engaged in trading/business at 17% (33 respondents) and artisans at 15% (30 respondents). The unemployed constitute 12% (23 respondents), while farmers represent the smallest proportion at 8% (16 respondents). This distribution highlights a strong student presence, suggesting that education-related migration and future employment aspirations may play a significant role in youth mobility patterns.

Migration Experience: With respect to migration history, an overwhelming majority of respondents reported having migrated before. Specifically, 99% (198 respondents) indicated Yes, while only 1% (2

respondents) reported No. This overwhelming proportion confirms that migration is a common experience among youths in the study area, reinforcing the relevance of examining its economic, developmental, and social implications.

Hypothesis testing

H_{01}: Youth migration has no significant effect on income distribution and poverty levels in rural communities of Moro Local Government Area.

Variables	*Correlation Co-efficient*	*Observations*	R^2	*P-value*
Youth migration income distribution and poverty levels	0.71	200	0.46	0.01

Source: Field survey, 2024

This hypothesis examined whether youth migration has a significant effect on income distribution and poverty levels in rural communities of Moro Local Government Area. Based on 200 observations, the correlation coefficient of 0.71 indicates a strong positive relationship between youth migration and income distribution and poverty levels in the study area. This suggests that changes in youth migration are closely associated with variations in household income patterns and poverty conditions within rural communities. The R^2 value of 0.46 implies that 46% of the variation in income distribution and poverty levels in rural communities can be explained by youth migration. This indicates that youth migration plays a substantial role in shaping rural economic outcomes, although other factors also contribute to income and poverty dynamics. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.01 ($p < 0.05$) confirms that the observed relationship is statistically significant. Based on the decision rule, the null hypothesis (H_{01}), which states that youth migration has no significant effect on income distribution and poverty levels in rural communities of Moro Local Government Area, is rejected. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis is accepted, indicating that youth migration has a significant effect on income distribution and poverty levels in rural communities of Moro Local Government Area.

H_{02}: Youth migration does not significantly affect investment patterns in education, health, and infrastructure in rural communities of Moro Local Government Area.

Variables	*Correlation Co-efficient*	*Observations*	R^2	*P-value*
Youth migration investment patterns in education, health, and infrastructure	0.66	200	0.33	0.02

Source: Field survey, 2024

This hypothesis examined whether youth migration significantly affects investment patterns in education, health, and infrastructure in rural communities of Moro Local Government Area. Based on 200 observations, the correlation coefficient of 0.66 indicates a moderately strong positive relationship between youth migration and investment patterns in education, health, and infrastructure. This suggests that youth migration, particularly through remittances and exposure to urban development practices, is associated with increased household and community-level investments in key social sectors. The R^2 value of 0.33 implies that 33% of the variation in investment patterns in education, health, and infrastructure can be explained by youth migration. Although this indicates a meaningful explanatory power, it also suggests that other socio-economic and institutional factors contribute to investment decisions within rural communities. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.02 ($p < 0.05$) confirms that the relationship between youth migration and investment patterns is statistically significant. Based on the decision rule, the null hypothesis (H_{02}), which states that youth migration does not significantly affect investment patterns in education, health, and infrastructure in rural communities of Moro Local Government Area, is rejected. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis is accepted, indicating that youth migration has a significant effect on investment patterns in education, health, and infrastructure in rural communities of Moro Local Government Area.

H_{03}: Youth out-migration has no significant impact on social cohesion and demographic balance in rural communities of Moro Local Government Area.

Variables	*Correlation Co-efficient*	*Observations*	R^2	*P-value*
Youth migration social cohesion and demographic balance	0.46	200	0.18	0.02

Source: Field survey, 2024

This hypothesis examined whether youth out-migration has a significant impact on social cohesion and demographic balance in rural communities of Moro Local Government Area. Based on 200 observations, the correlation coefficient of 0.46 indicates a moderate positive relationship between youth out-migration and changes in social cohesion and demographic balance. This suggests that youth out-migration is associated with noticeable shifts in community social structures and population composition. The R^2 value of 0.18 implies that 18% of the variation in social cohesion and demographic balance in rural communities can be explained by youth out-migration. While this explanatory power is relatively modest, it nonetheless indicates that youth migration contributes meaningfully to social and demographic changes, alongside other influencing factors such as economic conditions, cultural norms, and local institutions. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.02 ($p < 0.05$) indicates that the relationship is statistically significant. Based on the decision rule, the null hypothesis (H_{03}), which states that youth out-migration has no significant impact on social cohesion and demographic balance in rural communities of Moro Local Government Area, is rejected. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis is accepted, indicating that youth out-migration has a significant impact on social cohesion and demographic balance in rural communities of Moro Local Government Area.

Discussion of Hypothesis Findings

The three hypotheses examined in this study provide compelling evidence of youth migration's multifaceted impact on rural communities in Moro Local Government Area. These findings align substantially with existing scholarly literature on migration dynamics in developing regions.

The strong positive correlation (0.71) between youth migration and income distribution/poverty levels demonstrates that changes in youth migration are closely associated with variations in household income patterns. This finding corroborates research by Mughal (2023), who found that a 10% increase in remittances per capita resulted in a 3.5% decrease in poverty ratios across developing countries. The 46% explanatory power (R^2=0.46) indicates youth migration substantially shapes rural economic outcomes, consistent with Bernsen et al (2022), who demonstrated that remittances have a direct poverty mitigating effect and improve the welfare of poorer rural households in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, evidence from Mali by Azizi (2019) shows that while international remittances decrease poverty indicators, internal remittances alone can increase poverty incidence in some contexts, suggesting the migration destination matters significantly.

The moderate positive relationship (0.66) between youth migration and investment in education, health, and infrastructure reflects how remittances enable long-term investments in children's education, healthcare, and skill improvement (Awuse, Offi & Acakpovi, 2020). The 33% variance explained aligns with findings by Cox Edwards and Ureta (2003), who established that remittances enable households to overcome capital constraints and contribute to building productive assets. Research by Bouoiyour and Miftah (2014) indicates migrant associations actively participate in constructing and improving infrastructure in their localities of origin, reinforcing how youth migration catalyzes community development beyond individual household benefits.

The moderate correlation (0.46) for social cohesion and demographic balance, though showing the weakest relationship among the three hypotheses, remains statistically significant. This finding reflects empirical evidence by Yegenah et al. (2024), showing migration leads to demographic shifts, labor shortages, and disruptions to traditional social cohesion. Studies by Stecklov and Menashe-Oren (2019) confirm youth out-migration accelerates population aging, creates situations where school enrollments decline, and reduces skilled workers in the local economy. Furthermore, research by Haq (2024) and Luca et al

(2023) demonstrates that migration and urbanization have contributed to destabilizing traditional values, as the introduction of consumerist and individualistic values associated with urban life has weakened the collective ethos traditionally central to rural communities. The relatively modest 18% explanatory power suggests that while youth migration contributes meaningfully to social and demographic changes, other factors such as economic conditions, cultural norms, and local institutions also play significant roles in shaping community cohesion. These findings collectively underscore youth migration's dual nature as both a development opportunity and a source of structural challenges for rural communities, necessitating comprehensive policy responses that maximize benefits while mitigating adverse effects.

Recommendations

The findings from this study reveal that youth migration significantly impacts income distribution, investment patterns, and social cohesion in Moro Local Government Area. Drawing from these results and relevant scholarly evidence, the following recommendations are proposed.

Governments should establish financial education programs for families receiving remittances to facilitate productive investment in microenterprises and agricultural development, as research indicates that only a small proportion of remittances is typically invested in productive assets (Sitoe, 2015). Building support structures such as extension services, veterinary facilities, and supply stores would ensure remittances have greater developmental impact on rural communities (Bhandari & Ghimire 2016). Policies should aim to reduce remittance transfer costs, particularly to rural areas where recipients often travel great distances to collect funds, as African remittance costs remain disproportionately high compared to other regions. Authorities must develop context-specific policies that address the real rural challenges experienced by youth rather than those imagined by policymakers, incorporating youth participation at every stage of policy formulation, design, and implementation (Mutyavaviri, 2022). Balanced growth through viable regional planning strategies is essential to reduce the perceived urban-rural gap in opportunities, incomes, and social services that drives youth migration (Khanal et al., 2015). Zone administrations should diversify economic opportunities in both farm and non-farm sectors to widen job opportunities for educated youth in their localities (Demissie et al., 2023). Establishing mechanisms that leverage migrant associations' contributions to infrastructure development in origin communities would amplify the positive developmental impacts of migration. Governments should create legal pathways and documentation systems enabling migrants to send remittances effectively through formal financial circuits while safeguarding their interests abroad (Sitoe, 2015). Finally, comprehensive policies must address the demographic imbalances and social cohesion disruptions caused by youth out-migration through programs that strengthen community institutions and preserve cultural values while accommodating necessary economic transitions.

Conclusion

This study examined youth migration's effects on income distribution, investment patterns, and social cohesion in rural communities of Moro Local Government Area. The findings conclusively demonstrate that youth migration significantly influences all three dimensions of rural development. The strong positive correlation (r=0.71) between youth migration and income distribution/poverty levels confirms that migration, primarily through remittances, substantially reshapes rural economic outcomes by reallocating resources and improving household welfare. Similarly, the moderately strong relationship (r=0.66) with investment in education, health, and infrastructure validates that remittances enable families to overcome capital constraints and make long-term human capital investments (Awuse et al., 2020). However, the study also reveals migration's challenging consequences, particularly regarding social cohesion and demographic balance (r=0.46), manifested through accelerated population aging, labor shortages, and weakened traditional community structures (Stecklov & Menashe-Oren, 2019). These findings underscore youth migration's dual nature as simultaneously a development opportunity and a source of structural vulnerability for rural communities. The phenomenon represents what rural transformation scholars describe as both a symptom of limited local opportunities and a potential catalyst for positive change when properly harnessed (Yeboah et al., 2020). Consequently, policy interventions must adopt a comprehensive approach that maximizes migration's developmental benefits while mitigating its adverse social and demographic consequences. As the International Fund for Agricultural Development emphasizes, migration should be a choice rather than a necessity driven by desperation Achieving this requires integrated policies addressing root causes of

distress migration, creating viable rural livelihood alternatives, facilitating productive remittance investment, and strengthening rural institutions to maintain social cohesion amid demographic transitions. Only through such holistic policy frameworks can Moro Local Government Area and similar rural communities transform youth migration from a development challenge into a genuine opportunity for sustainable rural transformation and inclusive growth.

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