

## IMMIGRATION, CRIME AND DEVELOPMENT: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

MUHAMMAD MUBARAK HUSAIN

Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences,

Federal University, Dutse, PMB 7156, Nigeria

[mubarakmhammad2011@gmail.com](mailto:mubarakmhammad2011@gmail.com) [mmubarak21@ymail.com](mailto:mmubarak21@ymail.com)

+2348069482320, +2347054426559

### Abstract

*This paper seeks to add to the immigration works by examining how the immigrants' crimes impact on development. The work presents conceptual and theoretical explanations on that. The perception that immigrants increase crime in the destination areas seems to be very rampant. Some of the literature explored confirmed such assertion. In this paper, improved economic viability and the security of property serve as proxies of development. Over decades, there have been both, optimistic and pessimistic arguments about the efficacy of immigration to actualize one or more aspects of development. Hence, the impacts of immigration on development cannot be predetermined with certainty. They do depend upon the qualities and aspirations of the actor(s) as well as the socio-economic and socio-political structures of the place of destination. The paper recommends revisiting immigration laws and policies. In particular, there should be proper scrutiny of prospective immigrants at the points of entry with a view to ascertaining their visions for appropriate decision and complete documentation of immigrants' data. Additionally, the socio-economic and socio-political structures of the destination areas ought to be favourable for the mutual benefits of both, the host community and the immigrants. Internationally, beneficial immigration policies should be designed and adhered to by countries.*

**Keywords:** *concept, crime, development, immigration, theory*

### Introduction

The uneven distribution of wealth and resources across the globe, human curiosity, political and religious reasons are among the major factors that make people migrate from one place to another. Human beings seem to be inherently mobile, as they search for these and other valuables of life. The entire talks on human beings according to Kubat (1976, p 11) was seen as "an account of migrations of people all in search of a place to stay". Aina (1995, p 42) considered migration as a "spatial residential relocation over a relatively long period of time". It was typified into internal and external, based on the geo-political space covered by the migrant. While the former refers to the intranational move, (within a country), the latter implies movement from one country to another (ibid). Adepoju (2002) contended that migration has three main actors viz the migrant, place/country of origin and place/country of destination.

Finding people in every nook and cranny is evidence that, the history of migration is as old as the history of mankind (Weeks 2005). However, the availability of cheap transportation and communication means has added a new dimension to the phenomenon (ibid). In addition, low transportation fare facilitates international migration and upholds ties between migrants and their places of origin by giving impetus to frequent moves to the sending country (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2009).

It was revealed that globally, in the year 2005, the cumulative number of people living in countries other than theirs was about 191 million, representing three percent (3%) of the then World Population (ibid). Besides, the estimated total number of international migrants rose from 150 million in the year 2000 to 214 million in the year 2011. This implies that, one out of every 35 persons did live, and one out of every 33 persons lives in a country other than his/her's, in the year 2000 and 2011 respectively (International Organisation for Migration, 2011). In addition, this indicates that, there has been a slight upward change in the percentage of international migrants (out of the World population) from 2.9 in the year 2000 to 3.1 in 2011 (ibid).

Almost exclusively, studies on migration and crime focus on immigration, obviously because it is the destination/receiving place that is impacted in the process. It was documented that, both, pro- and anti-immigration commentators subscribe to the idea that the current immigration wave has the potential of significant impact on the society than other issues, as we do enter the new millennium (Suarez-Orozco 1998; Brimelow 1996, cited in Martinez and Lee, 2000). Moreover, it was made clear that largely, stereotype rather than reliable empirical data formed the basis of immigrant-crime link argument (Espenshade and Belanger 1998; Simon 1985, cited in Martinez and Lee, 2000). Spenkuch (2013) corroborated this position by maintaining that, there has been ascendancy of both the share of immigrants and crime rates in America, and that about 75% of Americans associated immigration with crime increase, despite the non-availability of supporting research findings. According to Bianchi, Buonanno and Pinotti (2010), for the receiving countries, immigration remains a contentious issue because of the widely shared expectation that immigrants add to the ascendancy of crime rate, an issue they considered as largely unexplained. Nunziata (2014) asserted that, the economic and social implications of ascendancy of immigration in affluent societies are issues that have dominated the political debate in the contemporary era. To Cesar, Garoupa and Vazquez (2011) crime-immigration link has been a controversial matter globally.

From the foregoing and arguments advanced by scholars like Peterson (1961), Weeks (2005), Haas (2007), and Bianchi, Buonanno and Pinotti (2010) it can be said that most immigration studies concentrate on either increase in the occurrence of crime or development – in form of remittance, social integration and economic viability, not the two together at a time. In other words, immigration studies rarely combine openly how immigration affects both, crime rates and development. Thus, a great research vacuum exists in this regard. This paper attempts laying foundation to this research gap. It seeks to make conceptual and theoretical enquiry in that direction. Seeing boosting economic viability and property security as proxies for development, the work attempts extending the effects of crimes committed by immigrants by viewing how these proxies are affected. In other words, the impact of immigration is not restricted to crime rates only, but also development aspects.

### **Crime, Immigration and Development: Conceptual Clarifications**

In a typical rural society, norms, the socially standardised patterns of behavior guide the interactions and relationships of people. In the contemporary societies, however, strongly respected norms are turned into laws by virtue of the existence of legislative and legal institutions. Crime is a violation of law by behaving contrary to what it states. Laws are formal and legislative declarations on behavior patterns. Usually negative sanctions follow crime committing, if convicted. Many confuse crime with deviance, though the two are different. As emphasized by Giddens (2009) the scope of deviance is much broader than that of crime. Hence, all crimes are deviant acts, but not vice versa. Tierney (2010, p9) further illuminated our understanding of crime by categorically stating that “crime only exists because laws exist”

Immigration refers to the moving in, to a particular area by a migrant. As stated in the introductory part, most crime-immigration studies do concentrate more on the place of destination.

Certainly, development more than most concepts has been receiving sustained attention from the international community, continental and regional organisations, governments, international and national organisations, intellectuals and academics across the world. Simply put, development is always about uplifting the well-being and standard of living of people by removing barriers of access to goods, services and opportunities. The concept has multiple dimensions. Thus, it leaves no single affair of human being untouched. For decades now, plans and programmes globally revolves around one or more aspects of development. Both, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are about development. Similarly, various continental and regional organisations all aim at development in one way or another. Involvement of migrants in criminal activities may adversely affect, directly or indirectly one or more aspects of development.

### **Immigration, Social Problems and The Chicago School: The Classical Connection**

The early link between between social problems, from which criminal activities emanate, and migration, or specifically immigration can be traced to the happenings and circumstances surrounding the transformation of Chicago into a city. Gould (1981, cited in Cullen and Agnew, 2011) argued that, individualistic theories of crime gained currency in the United States of America as the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

approached. These theories have the understanding that, crimes emanate from specific individuals with some distinctive biological and personal traits.

However, in the early part of this century (20<sup>th</sup>), crime individualistic theories received condemnation for their myopia; forces outside individuals were given attention. Social critics with this view premised their argument on what they saw as the unavoidable link between the residential area, population growth, migration (including the share of immigrants from Africa, Europe and other parts of the world) and booming industries, among other factors and crime. Origin and prevention of criminal conduct for this group of scholars must be linked to these external factors. Thus, attention was placed on ecology of crime (Cullen and Agnew, 2011).

For instance, with regards to population growth which immigration might have great share, these scholars documented that the population of Chicago as argued by Palen (1981) rose from 4, 000 in 1833 to 1 million in 1890, and in 1910, reached 2 million. Among the scholars responsible for developing social disorganisation theory according to Cullen and Agnew (2011) were Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay (1942), a pair of scholars greatly influenced by the thought of University of Chicago sociologists, and that worked at the Chicago Institute for Social Research.

### **The Ambivalent Nature of Migration: Optimistic Versus Pessimistic Stands**

Like other acts of human beings, migration has for long been generating debate as to whether it is good or bad, or the positive impacts out-weight the negative ones. Despite the apparent tripartite gains migration seems to play by benefitting the migrant(s), sending and receiving place/country in some kind, scholars expressed ambivalent views about migration – while some are optimistic about the capability of the migration to bring about positive changes, others remain pessimistic. According to Addo (1968) migrants play an important role to the socio-economic development of the society by energizing the economy of the receiving area. He however, pointed out that, uncontrolled migrants with low skills and education might become liability thereby inhibiting the socio-economic development of the host. While commenting on its effect on population, Kammeyer and Ginn (1986) were of the view that, migration could cause both societal integration and social conflict.

Perhaps Haas (2007) provided what may be considered as the most elaborated historical perspective about whether migration is good or bad. Though, aligning his argument explicitly to the sending country/community, implicit in Haas's analysis is that, receiving country/community is also involved. He contended that, hitherto, people have been expressing both, optimistic and pessimistic views on migration. Neoclassical economists added by emphasising that, the process of migration helps in ensuring the optimum allocation of productive factors, thereby benefitting all (ibid).

Implicit in the empirical findings and historical structuralists and dependency views that predominated from 1973 - 1990 is the understanding that the host community benefits from immigrants in terms of brain gain and energizing economy. The period between 1990 – 2001 witnessed the expansion of research on migration and consequently continued skepticism about having positive or negative stand as to how migration affects development. Since the year 2001, migration is being reconsidered as it brings about brain gain and more remittances among others, hence a resurgence of optimistic stand on migration (ibid).

It was concluded that, neither the optimistic position of developmentalists and neoclassical economists, nor pessimistic stand of historical structuralists and dependency opinion should be whole-heartedly considered as axiomatic. To him, both seem to be too deterministic and none can therefore explain adequately, the intricate realities of migration and development nexus. He conditioned the efficacy of migration in ameliorating structural development problems on the state's ability to implement proper social and economic reforms (ibid).

Maintaining the position that, the effect of migration should not be solely reduced to decrease and increase to the sending and receiving destinations respectively, Peterson (1961) and Weeks (2005), opined that, migration influences the socio-economic structure and population composition of both points (sending and receiving places).

### **Theoretical Perspectives on Immigration and Crime**

Different explanations have so far been put forward to make sense from the large volume of data derived from immigration and crime nexus studies (Martinez and Lee, 2000). As pointed out by Waters and Simes (2013) three set of theories exist that underlie most current research on immigration-crime linkage. These are the stress/opportunity structure theories, cultural theories and social disorganization theories. Social disorganization theories have already been discussed in one of the preceding section of this paper. Below is the brief presentation of the other two theories:-

#### **(i) Opportunity Structure/Strain Theories**

These theories dwell on the material and social structures that have great influence on the values and activities of group as explained by Bankston (1998, cited in Martinez and Lee, 2000). Though this sub explanation was developed with reference to the American society and groups, it can rightly be applied to explain the involvement of immigrants in the third world societies of Africa. Innovation (which may be in form of crime) often results from the difficulties faced by a group due to the blockage of legitimate opportunities for wealth and status. Long before Bankston (1998) postulation, Merton (1938) discussed at length on how the restriction of the disadvantaged groups (which usually includes immigrants) from legitimate means like education somehow force them to innovate by committing crimes.

#### **(ii) Cultural Theories to Immigration and Crime Nexus**

Martinez and Lee (2000) cited the culture of poverty thesis as propounded by Lewis (1965) as an explanation in which cultural forces can lead to the criminal involvement of people, especially immigrants. Lewis explanation is based on the argument that the poor adapt to their conditions poverty in ways and manners that perpetrate and often aggravate their poor conditions. For instance, the pessimistic perception poor has may make them unable to sponsor and keep their children schooling, and by extension losing future economic prosperity.

Another variant of cultural approach on the relationship between immigration and crime as documented by Martinez and Lee (2000) was the sub culture of violence thesis as developed by Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1976). This thesis argued that, violence (which immigrants crime can be part of) can be a normal and institutionalized means of dispute resolution in areas of low economic profile. Most immigrants settle in economically disadvantaged locations due to the usual low income they have for rent or purchase of house.

Processes of adaptation to the culture of the host community/country also received attention as one of the explanations of cultural approaches that make immigrants engage in criminal activities (Padilla, 1980, in Martinez and Lee, 2000).

### **Immigrants and Criminalities: A Look at Literature**

Based on the police administrative record, Bianchi, Buonanno and Pinotti (2010) observed the relationship between immigrants flow and crime rate across Italian provinces between the period 1990 – 2003. They found that; the more number of immigrant population, the more the incidence of property crimes and the overall crime rate. In other words, immigrant population size was positively correlated with the crime rate.

An empirical investigation was made by Cesar, Garoupa and Vazquez (2011) on the relationship between immigration flow in Spain and the crime rate from 1999 – 2009. They found that, within this period, Spain had large wave of immigration from different parts of the world and crime rates increased. Compared with other European countries that experienced similar volume of immigration within the period, the increase in crime rates of Spain was considerably less. Thus, other European countries had higher crime increase than the Spain.

Utilizing the 1980 – 2000 decadel panel data of United States of America (USA) counties, Spenkuch (2013) revealed a significant impact of immigration on crime. Empirically, the researcher established that, a 10% increase in the flow of immigrants was forecasted to bring about a circa of 1.2% increase in the property crime rate. However, the 10% increase in the immigrants share left unaffected, the rate of violent crimes.

Not all studies show correlation between immigration and crime to the destination areas. For instance, Spenkuch (2013) documented a research by Bell et al. (2011) on the United Kingdom. In that study, no impact was observed on violent crime by immigration, but on property crime.

Piopiunik and Ruhose (2015) found significant positive relationship between immigration and crime; they did discover that, the immigration of more than 3 million people to Germany, substantially increased crime.

### **Discussion on Immigration, Crime and Development**

What laid the foundation for the study of immigration and crime in the field of Sociology and Criminology was certainly the large influx of people Chicago experienced from the second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. A number of theories presented in this paper explored how immigration causes crime. For instance, social disorganization theories explained how the volatility of Chicago social environment or ecology as conventionally called, induced the proliferation of crimes. Crime in turn, is inextricably linked to some development issues. This work considers improving economic viability and property security as proxies for development.

Breakage of law alone is a great impediment to most, if not all components of development. This is based on the fact that, insecurity situations bred by criminal acts make vulnerable the property and necessary enabling conditions for achieving sustainable development.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Works presented under review confirmed the popular view that immigration causes crime in the destination areas. This paper considers improving economic viability and the security of property of the destination area as proxies for development. Available literature and scholarly explanations about the relationship between immigration development cannot be adequately depended upon to make a categorical conclusion on whether immigration affects positively or negatively one or more aspects of development. Whereas some migrants are important for nourishing the economy of the host place/destination some do engage in criminal activities thereby jeopardising the development of the host community. Hence, no clear cut conclusion can be made. What seem to be the most determining factors are the quality and aspirations of the immigrants as well as the socio-economic and socio-political structures and arrangements of the host community/country.

This paper recommends polishing the existing immigration laws and policies by individual countries of the world. Most importantly, there should be complete examination of the potential immigrants during entry to various countries. In this way, crime prone individuals can be identified and appropriate action taken. Complete documentation of immigrants' data will also help by serving as tracer to any immigrant who may commit crime. These can deter immigrants from engaging in criminal activities. The host community should also revisit their socio-economic and socio-political structures for mutual benefits of the community members and the immigrants. At the international level, countries can fashion out beneficial immigration modalities under which measures will be taken to discourage immigrants from engaging in criminal conduct and encourage them to help in the development of the host community.

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