



POLAC INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ECON & MGT SCIENCE (PIEMS)  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS & MANAGEMENT SCIENCE  
NIGERIA POLICE ACADEMY, WUDIL-KANO



## THE IMPACT OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION ON SECURITY CHALLENGES IN KATSINA STATE

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### Abstract

*This study investigates the impact of irregular migration on security challenges in Katsina State, Nigeria. Katsina has become a hotspot for security issues such as banditry and kidnapping, exacerbated by porous borders and socio-economic factors. The aim is to understand how irregular migration contributes to social restiveness and insecurity, providing evidence-based policy recommendations. The study is grounded in the Push-Pull Theory of Migration and Crime Opportunity Theory, examining how economic hardships push individuals to migrate irregularly and the resulting security implications. The target population includes residents of Katsina, irregular migrants, and relevant security officials, utilizing a mixed-methods approach with quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. Findings reveal that irregular migration intensifies competition for scarce resources, undermines social cohesion, and contributes to increased crime rates. This feedback loop perpetuates restiveness and insecurity, highlighting the intricate relationship between migration dynamics and socio-economic conditions. The seminar paper concluded that the root causes of irregular migration is crucial for enhancing security in Katsina State. Recommendations include strengthening border security, implementing socio-economic development programs, promoting community engagement, and improving inter-agency collaboration to effectively manage irregular migration and its associated challenges.*

**Keywords:** Irregular Migration, Security Challenges, Socio-Economic Factors, and Policy Recommendations

### 1. Introduction

Irregular migration, defined as the unauthorized or unlawful movement of people across borders, has emerged as a significant issue affecting social stability and security in Nigeria, particularly in Katsina State (Growing Scholar, 2021). Katsina State, located in Nigeria's northwest, has witnessed increasing irregular migration due to factors such as poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, and insecurity. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported a rising trend of irregular migrants originating from Katsina, with many youth crossing borders through dangerous routes in search of better economic opportunities, often falling victim to trafficking and exploitation (Voice for African Migrants, 2024). These

migration patterns exacerbate existing social tensions and contribute to increased restiveness in communities.

Social restiveness in Katsina State manifests through protests, communal clashes, youth unrest, and criminal activities including banditry and trafficking. Studies indicate that irregular migration contributes to this restiveness by straining limited local resources, undermining social cohesion, and fueling insecurity (Growing Scholar, 2021). The movement of young people not only reduces the labor force in rural communities but creates gaps exploited by criminal gangs and militant groups, further destabilizing the region (Lawal-Halliru, 2019). These dynamics threaten the socio-political fabric of Katsina State and present challenges for governance and peace-building efforts. Environmental factors, notably climate change-induced

drought and desertification, have worsened livelihood conditions in Katsina (Lawal-Halliru, 2019). Reduced agricultural productivity and natural resource depletion push vulnerable populations toward migration as a coping strategy. This rural exodus often results in demographic shifts that increase unemployment and inflame ethnic and religious tensions, contributing to cycles of violence and social unrest.

Given these challenges, it is critical to investigate how irregular migration fuels social restiveness and security challenges in Katsina State. This study seeks to understand the drivers and consequences of irregular migration and its role in aggravating insecurity, aiming to provide evidence-based policy recommendations. Addressing irregular migration's impact on social stability is necessary to promote sustainable development, ensure human security, and advance peace in Katsina State.

Katsina State has increasingly become a hotspot for security challenges, including banditry, kidnapping, and cattle rustling, intensifying the region's social restiveness and undermining development. Its porous borders with Niger Republic and proximity to difficult terrains make it vulnerable to trans-border crime, complicating efforts to secure the area. Irregular migration through these borders has exacerbated insecurity, as migrants—often fleeing conflicts or seeking economic opportunities—get entangled with criminal networks or contribute to resource competition. Despite government efforts like increased border patrols and security personnel deployment, challenges such as inadequate manpower, poor intelligence, and weak regional cooperation persist, limiting success in curbing crime.

The influx of irregular migrants strains local resources and fuels tensions among indigenous communities already grappling with poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment. These pressures have led to frequent violent incidents, displacement, and disruption of socio-economic activities, threatening peaceful coexistence and regional growth. The inability to fully control migration flows and associated criminal activities has eroded public trust in security agencies and hindered

effective conflict resolution. Against this backdrop, it is essential to investigate how irregular migration contributes to social restiveness and security challenges in Katsina State, to inform targeted strategies aimed at sustainable peace and stability in the region.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Conceptual Clarification**

#### **Border Security**

Border security is a critical concept when examining the impact of irregular migration on security challenges in Katsina State. Katsina's geographic location along Nigeria's border with Niger makes it particularly vulnerable to cross-border crimes, including irregular migration, armed banditry, smuggling, and trafficking of weapons. Porous borders, insufficient patrol personnel, poor intelligence gathering, and limited technological resources severely constrain effective border control in the region (Momoh, Adadu & Caleb, 2025). These weaknesses facilitate the unchecked movement of irregular migrants, some of whom may have links to criminal or extremist networks, thereby exacerbating insecurity.

Irregular migration strains border security as it often occurs through unofficial routes that evade government monitoring. Migrants' movement can destabilize local communities by intensifying competition for scarce resources, triggering social tensions and conflicts. Moreover, the proliferation of illicit arms and contraband compounds security problems linked to irregular crossings. The concept of border security in Katsina should thus encompass enhanced surveillance technologies such as drones and CCTV, increased border patrols, intelligence sharing between Nigeria and Niger, and robust community policing initiatives to build trust within border communities. Strengthening legal frameworks and regional cooperation through ECOWAS protocols is also vital to address the transnational nature of security challenges induced by irregular migration (Momoh et al., 2025).

## Socio-Economic Competition and Community

Socio-economic competition is a critical concept for understanding the impact of irregular migration on security challenges in Katsina State. Irregular migration increases population density in certain areas, intensifying competition for scarce resources such as land, jobs, housing, and access to social services (Lawal & Umar, 2022). Katsina, like many border regions, already experiences high rates of poverty and unemployment, creating a fragile economic environment. The influx of irregular migrants adds pressure to this limited resource pool, straining local economies and social infrastructures, often leading to increased poverty and economic marginalization among both migrants and host communities.

This competition can exacerbate social tensions, weakening community cohesion and fostering resentment between migrants and natives, which sometimes manifests as xenophobia or ethno-religious conflicts (Garba, 2021). The disruption of traditional social structures undermines trust and cooperation necessary for community security. Additionally, economic frustrations among youth, exacerbated by irregular migration dynamics, can increase vulnerability to recruitment by criminal or extremist groups, further destabilizing Katsina.

Addressing socio-economic competition requires integrated policies that promote inclusive economic development, equitable resource distribution, and social integration strategies to foster peaceful coexistence and mitigate security risks arising from irregular migration.

## Criminal Networks and Armed Violence

Criminal networks in Katsina State significantly exacerbate security challenges, intertwining with irregular migration to fuel armed violence. Katsina, located along Nigeria's porous border with Niger, has become a hotspot for criminal gangs often referred to as "bandits." These groups engage in kidnappings, cattle rustling, armed robberies, and extortion, operating from forest hideouts near border areas (Momoh, Adadu & Caleb, 2025). The bandits exploit irregular migration

routes to move freely, recruit new members, and traffic weapons and illicit goods, increasing insecurity.

The violence linked to these criminal networks undermines community safety, disrupts socio-economic activities, and inhibits development. Attacks frequently target vulnerable rural populations, leading to displacement and destruction of livelihoods, which further propagates cycles of poverty and crime. Moreover, some armed groups have pledged allegiance to extremist factions like Boko Haram, intensifying the insurgency's regional impact (BBC News, 2020).

Combating this interplay of criminal networks and armed violence requires coordinated security operations, intelligence sharing, and community policing. Strengthening institutional capacity and regional cooperation with Niger is critical to dismantle these networks and restore peace in Katsina state

## 2.2 Empirical Review

### Irregular Migration and Socio-economic

Ghosh and Enamib (2015) examined the social impact of irregular migration on host communities in Latin America, with a focus on how it affects social cohesion and community trust. The study was anchored in social disorganization theory, which posits that rapid demographic changes, such as those caused by irregular migration, can weaken social bonds and lead to disorganization within communities. Methodologically, the authors used a case study approach, focusing on border communities in Mexico and Brazil (Ghosh & Enamib, 2015). They employ a combination of surveys and interviews to assess the effects of irregular migration on social trust, participation in community activities, and intergroup relations. Key findings from the study suggest that irregular migration has a destabilizing effect on social cohesion in host communities, particularly in areas with high levels of economic inequality. Moreso, irregular migrants were often viewed with suspicion, which weakens trust and social bonds within the community. On this note, Ghosh and Enamib concluded that irregular migration can erode social cohesion if not properly managed. They advocate for better integration programs and legal pathways for migrants to reduce

social tensions and improve trust between host communities and migrants (Ghosha & Enamib, 2015).

Demireva and Heath (2014) investigated how increasing diversity through irregular migration impacts social cohesion and civic engagement within host communities in the UK. It seeks to assess whether diversity disrupts or enhances neighbourhood cohesion and trust among different ethnic groups. The study draws on contact theory, which posits that increased interaction among groups can reduce prejudice, and bonding and bridging social capital theories, emphasizing the role of intra-group and inter-group connections in promoting social cohesion. Using survey data from the Managing Cultural Diversity Survey (MCDS) and the Ethnic Minority British Election Study (EMBES), the researchers adopt a quantitative approach. They analyse responses on trust, civic engagement, and perceptions of inter-group relations, focusing on both majority and minority communities (Demireva & Heath, 2014).

### **Impact of Social Restiveness and Irregular Migration on Local Security and Crime Rates**

Ayeni *et al.* (2023) conducted a study titled "Implications of Irregular Migration on National Security in Nigeria" The aim of the study was to examine the impacts of irregular migration on Nigeria's national security and analyse the government's responses to these security threats. The study was anchored on the securitization theory developed by the Copenhagen School of Security Studies, which posits that security issues are socially constructed through intersubjective processes, where influential actors frame certain phenomena as existential threats requiring urgent policy responses beyond normal political procedures. The authors applied this lens to analyse how irregular migration has been securitized as a threat to Nigeria's national security. Methodologically, the study employed a qualitative approach, relying solely on secondary data sources. The researchers conducted an extensive literature review, gathering data from scholarly articles, textbooks, government reports, media accounts, and publications by non-governmental organizations. They employed thematic content analysis to identify and

classify key themes emerging from the data, connecting these to the study's objectives (Ayeni *et al.*, 2023).

The study's findings revealed several key implications of irregular migration for Nigeria's national security. First, the authors found that the porosity of Nigeria's borders has facilitated large-scale undocumented migration, with an estimated 2-3 million irregular migrants entering the country between 1975 and 1982, primarily from Ghana, Togo, and Benin. This influx has been linked to various security challenges, including violent crimes, arms smuggling, and religious conflicts. The study highlighted specific security threats associated with irregular migration. For instance, the study cited the case of Muhammadu Marwa (Maitatsine), an illegal immigrant from Cameroon who led a violent religious insurrection in Kano in 1980, resulting in thousands of deaths. Additionally, the authors noted that Nigeria accounts for approximately 70% of illegal small arms in the West African sub-region, with many of these weapons smuggled across porous borders by transnational criminal networks (Ayeni *et al.*, 2023).

The study also found a connection between irregular migration and the activities of terrorist groups, particularly Boko Haram. The authors argued that the porous borders in north-eastern Nigeria have facilitated the movement of foreign fighters and weapons, exacerbating the insurgency and posing significant threats to national security and regional stability. Furthermore, the study uncovered links between irregular migration and human trafficking. The authors reported that foreign children, primarily from Benin and Togo, are trafficked into Nigeria for exploitative labour and commercial sexual exploitation. According to the study, children as young as five years old have been found working in exploitative conditions in Nigerian mines (Ayeni *et al.*, 2023).

Regarding the Nigerian government's response to these security threats, the study found that measures have been largely reactive and ad hoc (Ayeni *et al.*, 2023). The authors noted several instances of border closures and mass expulsions of irregular migrants, such as the expulsion of an estimated 1.3 million immigrants in 1983. However, the study suggested that these efforts

have been limited in their effectiveness due to a lack of sustained political will, inadequate security personnel, and the persistent porosity of borders. On the premise of these findings, the authors concluded that irregular migration poses significant and multifaceted threats to Nigeria's national security (Ayeni *et al.*, 2023). They argued that the government's failure to effectively securitize the issue of irregular migration, moving beyond political rhetoric to implement comprehensive border management strategies, has allowed these security challenges to persist (Ayeni *et al.*, 2023).

## 2.3 Theoretical Framework

### Push-Pull Theory of Migration

Everett Lee's Push-Pull Theory of Migration (1966) is a foundational framework for understanding population movements, based on four key factors: conditions at the origin, at the destination, intervening obstacles, and personal factors. Lee proposed that migration decisions result from a mix of positive and negative aspects in origin and destination areas. Positive factors encourage residence or draw migrants, negative factors push people away, while neutral factors have less impact. Migrants generally have a clearer understanding of their origin but may misjudge conditions at destinations.

Intervening obstacles such as distance, legal barriers, and costs influence migration patterns but are not always dominant. Personal factors like awareness and social connections also affect decisions. Migration decisions are complex and often not fully rational, with some migrants moving as part of family units.

Lee hypothesized that migration volume is affected by area and population diversity, economic cycles, and development level; migration flows develop in streams and counter-streams influenced by push and pull factors; and migrant characteristics vary based on motivations and obstacles faced.

The Push-Pull Theory's relevance lies in explaining drivers of irregular migration in regions like Katsina State, where economic challenges at home push individuals away, while opportunities and social networks pull them in. Intervening obstacles shape migration routes and outcomes. This comprehensive

theory helps analyze migration's impact on social cohesion and security, making it useful for studying irregular migration's effects in border regions.

### Crime Opportunity Theory (COT)

This theory shifts focus from offenders' traits to environmental factors that create crime opportunities. It argues that crime occurs when an environment presents low risk and high reward, emphasizing that criminal behavior is opportunistic. Rooted in Routine Activity Theory, it highlights three elements necessary for crime: motivated offenders, suitable targets, and absence of capable guardians. Changes in social routines can increase crimes by creating more opportunities, such as unguarded homes during the day.

COT's practical applications include crime prevention by altering environments—installing street lighting or surveillance reduces opportunities. This theory is relevant to Katsina's irregular migration issue, where porous borders and weak control increase chances for crimes like smuggling and theft. Migrants facing poverty may turn to crime, and competition for resources fuels social restiveness.

COT offers useful policy insights, suggesting crime can be lowered by reducing opportunities, not just addressing individual motives. However, it faces criticism for neglecting broader socio-political causes like poverty and governance failures. Also, focusing on situational prevention may displace crime geographically.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

Mafuwane (2012) defines research design as a strategic plan linking research questions to their execution. This study adopts a cross-sectional design, best suited for assessing the prevalence of phenomena by sampling a population at one point in time (Kumar, 2011). The design integrates quantitative and qualitative methods through an explanatory sequential mixed-method approach, collecting quantitative data followed by qualitative data to elaborate and contextualize initial findings.

### 3.2 Target Population, Sample, and Sampling Procedure

Given resource constraints, the study focuses on select Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Katsina State, Nigeria, including residents (both irregular migrants and natives), Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) officers, and Nigerian Police Force (NPF) officers. The total population approximates 2,497,500.

### 3.3 Sample Size and Technique

Using Cochran's formula, the sample size for resident participants is 384, selected via cluster sampling across eight LGAs to represent geographical and socio-economic diversity. For government officials, 30% of the target populations of 150 NIS and 150 NPF officers each were sampled, totaling 90 participants, via convenience sampling with strict eligibility criteria to ensure data validity.

### 3.4 Nature and Sources of Data

The study employs primary data collected through structured surveys, focus groups, and interviews, alongside secondary data from academic literature, reports from agencies like NIS, NPF, NBS, IOM, and UNHCR. This mixed data approach ensures comprehensive analysis.

Data Requirements include socio-demographics, migration drivers, socio-economic conditions, community perceptions, and security reports.

### 3.5 Methods of Data Collection

Primary data collection involves self-developed Likert-scale questionnaires addressing demographic and study objectives, complemented by focus groups and interviews to enrich quantitative findings.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The findings from the study on the impact of irregular migration on social restiveness in Katsina State reveal a complex and interconnected relationship between migration dynamics, socio-economic conditions, social cohesion, and security challenges. The demographic analysis highlights that the predominant migrants are

young males aged 18-35, who face significant economic hardship and insecurity, which serves as a major push factor driving irregular migration. This youth bulge, combined with limited employment opportunities and educational mismatch, contributes to widespread frustration and social discontent. The study reveals that irregular migration exacerbates competition over scarce resources such as jobs, housing, and social services, deepening socio-economic disparities and fueling resentment within host communities. This competition undermines social cohesion, as evident by the widespread erosion of trust, weakened communal bonds, and increased social tensions reported by respondents. The fragmentation of traditional values and community structures heightens the risk of social restiveness, manifesting in protests, crime, and conflicts.

Furthermore, the research identifies a significant link between irregular migration-induced social restiveness and deteriorating local security. Increased crime rates, involvement in banditry and smuggling, and pervasive feelings of insecurity further destabilize the region. The feedback loop created by migration-driven socio-economic decline and weakened social cohesion thus plays a central role in perpetuating restiveness and insecurity in Katsina State. These findings underscore the need for holistic policy responses addressing economic development, social integration, and security reforms to mitigate the challenges posed by irregular migration.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Irregular migration significantly impacts security challenges and social stability in Katsina State. The interplay of economic hardship, resource competition, and weakened social cohesion exacerbates local tensions, leading to increased crime and unrest. This study underscores the urgent need for comprehensive policies addressing the root causes of irregular migration, promoting economic development, and enhancing community resilience. By fostering social integration and strengthening security measures, stakeholders can mitigate the adverse effects of migration and work towards sustainable peace in the region. Collaborative efforts are essential to restore trust

within communities and ensure a secure environment for all residents. Ultimately, addressing these challenges is vital for fostering long-term stability and prosperity in Katsina State.

Based on the findings, the study recommends:

- i. Enhance border security through increased surveillance, community policing, and technology to effectively monitor irregular migration and related criminal activities.
- ii. Implement targeted socio-economic programs to address poverty and unemployment, reducing

the push factors driving irregular migration in Katsina State.

- iii. Encourage local community involvement in security initiatives to build trust and cooperation between migrants and host communities for better integration.
- iv. Facilitate improved coordination among security agencies, immigration services, and local governments to develop comprehensive strategies for managing irregular migration.

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