

CONTRIBUTIONS OF SEASONAL MIGRANTS FISHERMEN TOWARDS FISHING ACTIVITIES IN BAGA, KUKAWA LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF BORNO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Seasonal migration is a short-term, repetitive or cyclical movement of people from one geographical location to another for the purpose of improving the economic position of their household. It is influenced by "Push" factors (food shortage, poverty etc) and "Pull" factors (better income, job, food supply etc) which make them to move from their area of origin to a more lucrative environment. Seasonal migration to Baga area is not a new phenomenon, people from neighbouring countries and part of the country come in for fishing and farming activities. This study sought to identify the reason for migration to and from the study area, the contributions of each migrant to fishing activities and identify the categories of the migrants. A total number of 80 respondents were interviewed, twenty from each community of which fifteen were seasonal migrants and five were permanent resident fishermen in the study area. The findings revealed that the seasonal migrant fishermen pattern of migration is not uniform. However, majority of the migrant came to the study area in the month of August and leave in the month of January. The research revealed that 75% of the respondents claimed that the major push factor for their migration from their states of origin is due to the seasonality nature of fish availability in their local rivers, while the pull factors of migration to the study area as stated by 95% of the migrants was the abundance of fish in the Lake Chad basin. Measures should be taken towards resuscitating the disappearing Lake Chad which serves as the pull factor of the migrants to the area.

Keywords: *Fishing, Migration, Pull factor, Push factor and Seasonal.*

INTRODUCTION

Migration is the movement of people or animals from one geographical area to another for the purpose of taking permanent or semi-permanent residence, while seasonal migration is the periodic movement of a population from one region or climate to another in accordance with the yearly circle of weather and temperature changes. These systems of migration are undertaken to improve the economic status of the household. Rao (1994) also sees seasonal migration as characteristically short term,

repetitive or cyclical in nature and adjusted to the annual agriculture cycle. According to the push/pull theory of migration, people respond to various factors by migrating from their usual or permanent place of residence to another. The factors (favourable climate, better food supply, freedom, profitable employment availability of water for fishing or wetland for cultivation during dry season etc) that attract them to change their destination are the "pull" factors, while the factors (shortage of food, poverty, flood, lack of job to do in a particular season etc) that compelled them to move out are the "push" factors (Priya and Daniel, 2003). Ravenstein (1880) put forward the following laws about the push/pull factors of migration.

- (i) Migration increases when distance is close, but as distance increases, the rate of migration decreases.
- (ii) As migrants emigrate from their source area, another immigrant would fill the empty vacuums, which is a continuous process.
- (iii) Migrations occur from less opportune to more opportune rich areas.
- (iv) Women are more migratory than men over a short distance.

There are different explanations for the motivation that compels people to migrate. At one extreme, there is involuntary migration. This denotes extreme economic and often social hardship and is undertaken mostly by landless or land poor, unskilled and illiterate poor laborers (Ramana, 1991). Seasonal migration is often undertaken to improve the socio-economic status of the household; accumulating migration has also been noted by recent research in India. For example, Rao (2001) refers to three kinds of migration in his study of socio-historical contexts as: Type 1: migration which is for coping and survival. Type 2: migration is defined as migration for an additional work/income. This takes place when the work in village is over, normally after harvesting all crops. Type 3: is migration for better remuneration, work environment and opportunity to use skills or acquire new skills.

Dupe (1975) in her study of causes of migration especially from rural-rural area which is existing in several parts of this country states that the situation arises mainly from the pressure of the population on the land. Some landless farmers, who would still like to continue farming, move to another rural area where land could be obtained for farming on perhaps a share-cropping basis. Farmers migrate to the Lake Chad basin to farm seasonally; likewise fishermen do migrate to the Lake Chad area to fish seasonally. Fregene (2007) in his study of the profile of fishermen migration in Nigeria and implication for a suitable livelihood observes that the main reason why fishermen migrate is because of the seasonality in fish catch.

Seasonal migration is a common phenomenon throughout West Africa and Africa at large and in a large part of the Asian continent. It operates at various levels within the entire region or areas, however, the cause of seasonal migration in each case is basically the same; mainly the economic and social conditions of migrants from their place of origin and would-be destination. Most of these movements involve farmers, fishermen, labourers etc who either move from their district to where farmland can be secured; moving for dry season farming in areas of sufficient water

for irrigation; moving from areas of poor vegetation (Grasses) to an area of vegetation for animals to graze; or moving from an area of poor fishing activity to an area of high fishing activity with abundant fish stocks. Seasonal migration around Lake Chad is not a new phenomenon. It has been existing for a very long period of time. However, paucity of information or literature on seasonal migration for fishing and farming activities persists, hence, very little or no records are available for reference. Many people migrate to other places to explore the resources that are available for example, fisheries resources, agricultural opportunities etc. Seasonal migration to Baga area is because of the seasonality in the availability of fish and agricultural cycle associated with the Lake. Migrants are either farmers or fishermen. Most of these migrants migrate to Baga because majority of the rivers they fish in their areas of origin are seasonal rivers, some will even dry up during dry season; so for those whose fishing is their sole profession, they have no other option than to migrate to other areas where fishes are available like the Lake Chad.

Seasonal immigration to Baga area by fishermen is a regular cyclical occurrence. Their migration whether seasonal or permanent has its own effects on the destination. This is centred on the exploitation of particular resource that attracts the migrants. The aim of this study was to assess the contributions of seasonal migrant fishermen towards fishing activities in the study area while the specific objectives are to:

- (i) Identify the push factors (reason for leaving their area of origin)
- (ii) Ascertain the quantity of fish they catch
- (iii) Examine the categories of people involved in the migration and contributions made towards fishing activities.

PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURES

Baga is situated on Latitude 13° 07' North and Longitude 13° 46' East. Baga is located in Kukawa Local Government Area in Northern Borno State. Baga falls in the Sudano Sahelian vegetational zone of Nigeria, which is characterised by scanty tree vegetation which is xyrophytic in nature, thorny, thick barks and tiny leaves to withstand the harsh weather condition. The trees in the area include Acacia family, Balanite and Neem trees, the shrubs include *Calotropis procera*. The area experiences two distinctive seasons' wet and dry. The rainy season which last for three Months July to September and the rain is sporadic in nature and the dry season beginning from the Month of December with harmattan to the Month of June (Udo, 1970). To the North and the East of Baga is the Lake Chad, which is one of the largest Inland Lakes in West Africa. The indigenes of the area are Kanuris and the Budumas from the Kanembu origin. The area also consists of other minor tribes such as the Hausas whom because of their fishing and farming activities migrated to the area.

The study was carried out at the Lake Chad portion of Baga area, four landing sites were selected namely: Kwatan Daban Masara, Kwatan Dogon Chuku, Kwatan

Turare and Fish Dam. The respondents were the seasonal migrant fishermen and the permanent resident fishermen, which were stratified and randomly selected. A total of 80 respondents were interviewed using structured questionnaire, 20 for each fishing community in which 15 were administered to seasonal migrant fishermen while 5 to permanent resident fishermen. However, secondary sources of background information were also gathered from other research papers, journals and reports. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

State of Origin of The Migrants: Among the seasonal migrants that came to the study area, Jigawa State had the highest percentage of influx of the migrants, followed by Kebbi State and Benue State, while Yobe State had the lowest number of seasonal migrants (Figure 1). The migrants' states of origin fall within the Northern and central parts of Nigeria, they travel less than 1200 kilometers to Baga. Majority of the respondents were Hausa (73.33%), Jukun (25%) and Manga origin (1.67%). Hausa people are very well known in fishing as well as migrating seasonally.

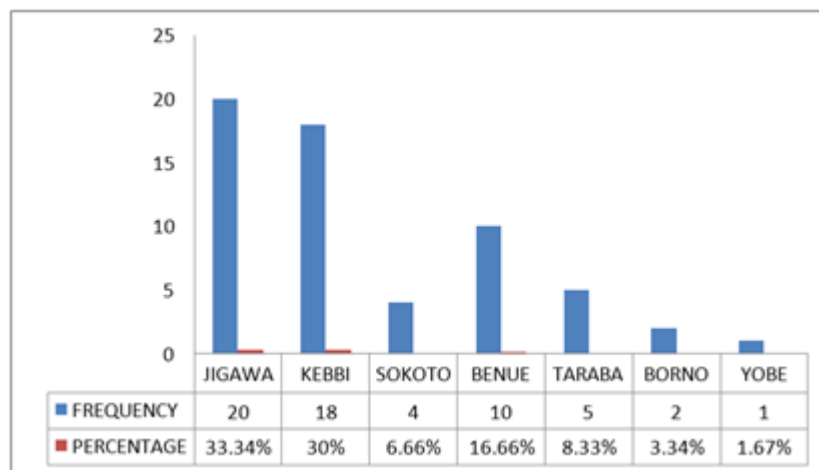


Fig1: Percentage distribution of migrants according to State of origin

Age Category of the Seasonal Migrants: Majority of the seasonal migrants were in the age group of 31-40 years as shown in Figure 2. 21.66% were in the age group of 21-30 and 41-50 respectively, while 1.67% were under the age category of 61-70 years. This signifies that majority of the migrants are in their active production age, and they migrate to Baga ready to make a living.

Literacy Level of the Migrants and their Occupation in their State of Origin: The study reveals that 45% of the seasonal migrants do not have formal education but rather Quranic education, and 25% are illiterates. 23.32% attended primary school, while 3.34% attained the level of secondary education and grade II respectively (fig. 5). 48.33% of the migrants maintained their original occupation as fishermen from their states of origin. Various factors led to the practice of seasonal migration

which has helped them to maintain their profession as fishermen. 30% of these migrants are farmers in their states of origin they migrate to the study area and become fishermen after they must have finished planting their crops in their states of origin and 18.33% rear animals in their state of origin, while 1.67% of the migrants are into blacksmithing in their state of origin. This indicates that not all these seasonal migrants are fishermen in their state of origin. This makes their pattern of movement not in uniformity (Fig. 3).

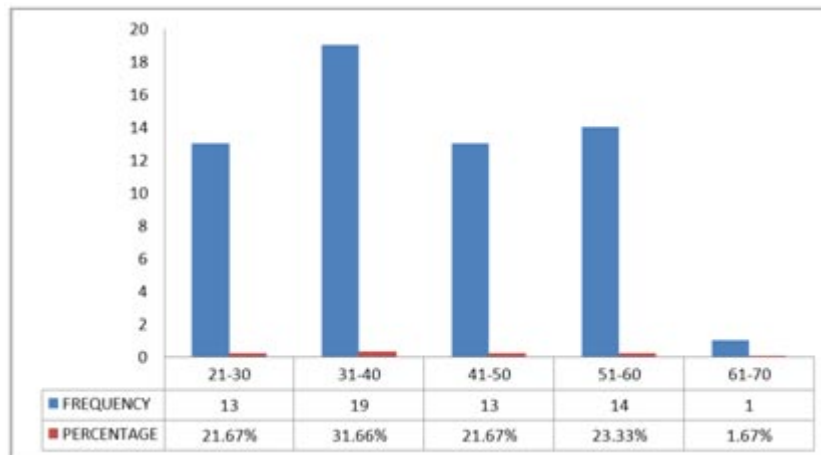


Fig 2: Distribution of seasonal migrants according to age group

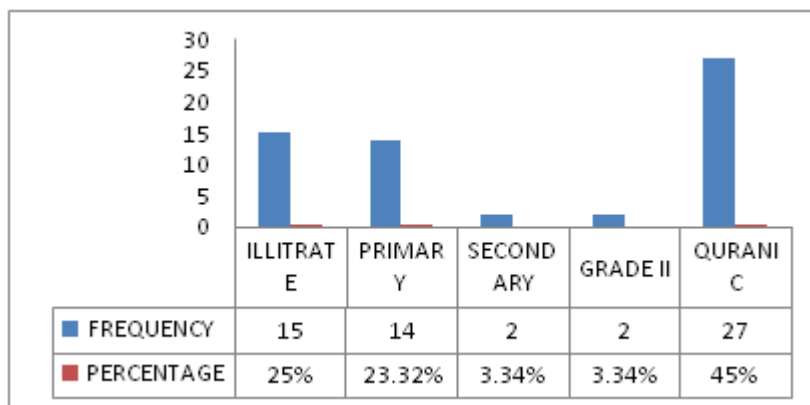


Fig 3: Distribution of Seasonal migrants according to literacy level

Nature and Pattern of Migration to the Study Area: Lake Chad is endowed with fish throughout the year, though there are particular periods for the peak and off peak periods for abundance of fish, fishermen from various parts of Nigeria and the neighboring countries take advantage of the lake in order to earn a living. There are fishermen who seasonally come for fishing on the lake and after earning some profit from fishing they move back to their areas of origin until another season. The pattern of migration of these seasonal migrants is not uniform in nature, because it depends on the area and what they were doing in their area of origin at a particular period of time before coming to Baga. Some of them have to finish planting their crops at the

inception of rainy season especially for those with multiple occupations before they move to the study area for fishing, while others will come over when the rivers in their area of origin have started drying up since the rivers are seasonal in nature. Likewise the period of leaving the study area by the migrants is also not uniform; some will return to their area of origin at the inception of rainy season while others at the inception of dry season. Figures 4 and 5 show the period of migrating into and from the study area. Majority of the migrants move to the study area in the month of August, July and September respectively, while 1.67% move to the study area in the month of May, October and November respectively. This shows that August is the period when the study area experience heavy influx of seasonal migrants' fishermen.

It has been observed that some of these migrants leave the study area that particular year, in the months of November and December. While majority leave the study area in January, February and March and 1.67% leave the study area in the months of April and May respectively of the subsequent year. This study shows that the flow of seasonal migrants to the study area is not uniform because the migrants are not coming from the same area and the nature of their occupation in their area of origin also differs.

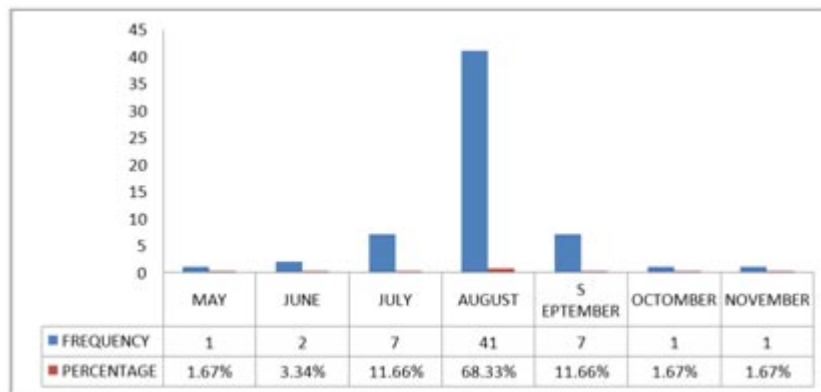


Fig 4: Percentage of Immigrants to the study area

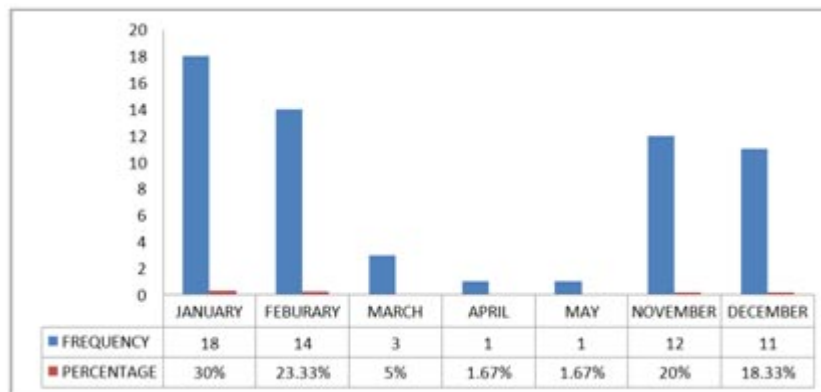


Fig 5: Percentage of emigrants from the study area

Push Factors of Migration: The seasonal migrant fishermen leave their state of origin for the study area for some reasons (Push factor). These include inadequate

availability or abundance of fish as stated by 75% of the migrants, 18.33% migrated to the study area because of the seasonality nature of the rivers in their areas of origin, while 6.67% of the respondents migrated to the study area because at that particular period of time, they don't have any serious job as shown in the Figure 6.

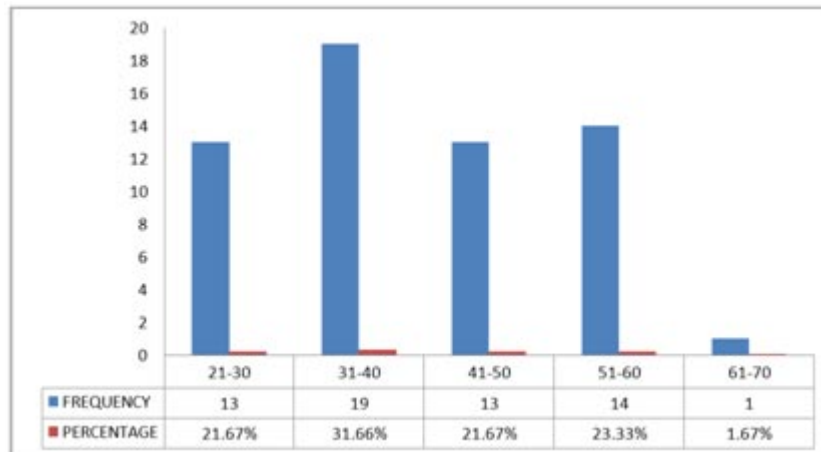


Fig 6: Reasons for migration to the study area

Pull Factors of Migration: The seasonal migration of the respondent to the study area was as a result of certain factors that attracted them, which might be probably be lacking in their states of origin. According to 95% of the respondents, availability of fish in Lake Chad is the first attraction, while 5% are attracted because of the availability of water, and where ever a natural large water body is available, fish is likely to be there in abundance.

Fish Catch by the Migrant: The migrants daily catch of fish is tremendous. Though not all the catches could be assessed because they have to sell some of the fishes fresh to cater for their daily needs yet majority of the catches are processed (Smoked or Sun dried). The average daily fresh fish catch that the migrant sold for their daily need ranges between ½ - 1 basin as stated by 63.33% of the migrants, 28.33% sold between 4-5 basins while 3.34% sold 6 and above basins on a daily basis. According to them, there are days that they have to leave their traps to stay for two days. This finding shows that there is daily inflow of fresh fish to Baga main town as well as Maiduguri, which means that the seasonal migrants are also contributing to the availability of fresh fish in the study area. While averagely on weekly basis (fish market days) the migrants also contributed in the supply of processed fish to the fish market. As shown in figure 7, 70% of these migrants do send or take their processed fish of between 2-3 cartons(Rothmans or Benson cartons) to the fish market, and 23.33% bring between 4-5 cartons while 3.33% bring between ½ - 1 and 6 and above cartons respectively to the Doro-Baga fish market on a weekly basis.

The price of fish (Fresh and Processed) fluctuates in the market based on demand and supply, averagely the price of a carton of Clarias cost between N15,000

- N18,000 and Tilapia per carton cost between N8,000 - N9,000. While a basin of fresh Clarias cost between N9,000 - N13,000 and Tilapia per basin cost between N4,000 - N7,000. For example a migrant that will sell average of one basin of Clarias (fresh) 4 times a week, and can carry an average of 4 cartoons of processed Clarias per week to the Doro-Baga fish market and intends to stay in the study area for only three months will make the following amount assuming the price of a basin of Clarias is N11,000 and a cartoon of processed Clarias is N16,500 and all things being equal.

Fresh fish

$N11,000.00 \times 4 \text{ basin} = N44,000.00$

Then $N44,000.00 \times 4 \text{ weeks in a month} = N176,000.00$

Then $N176,000.00 \times 3 \text{ months} = N528,000.00$

Processed fish

$N16,500.00 \times 4 \text{ cartoons} = N66,000.00$

Then $N66,000.00 \times 4 \text{ weeks in a month} = N264,000.00$

Then $N264,000.00 \times 3 \text{ months} = N792,000.00$

Total $N528,000.00 + N792,000 = N1,320,000.00$

The presence of the migrant fishermen contributes immensely to the supply of fish in the study area and at the same time the migrants also earn or benefit a lot from the sales of the fish.

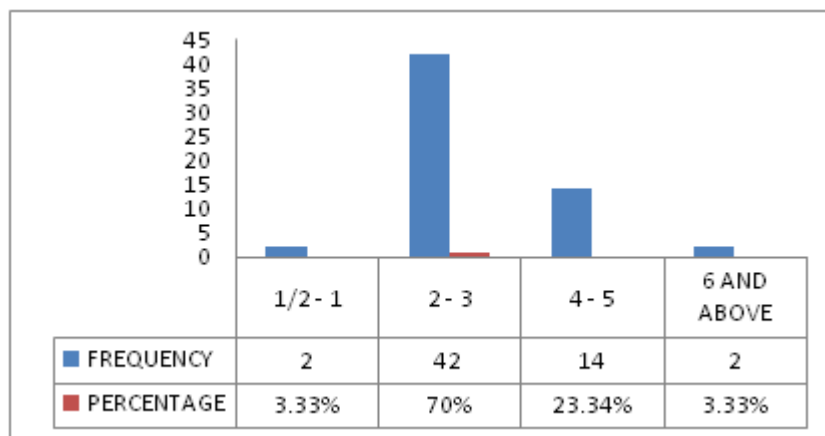


Fig 7: Weekly supply of processed fish to fish market

The Problems or Conflict Associated with the Migrants: According to the migrants, they don't have any conflict or problems in the study area. However 1.67% of the migrants stated that "the permanent resident fishermen make use of their fishing gears in their absence even when they were not given permission to use it. The likely problem is their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and other related sexually transmitted diseases, because 89% of the migrants do not come to the study area with their families, only 11% come along with their families. According to the permanent fishermen of the study area, the migrant do create conflict in the course of fishing

activities as the migrants usually drag aside their beach seine net, and this normally provoke the permanent resident fishermen of the study area. Apart from that, they have a cordial and good working relationship with the seasonal migrant fishermen.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research work has attempted to bring to focus the contribution of seasonal migrants fishermen in fishing activities in Baga, Kukawa Local Government Area. Based on the finding of this study a conclusion can be drawn that indeed seasonal migrant fishermen of the study area contribute immensely to the supply of fish (both fresh and processed) in the country as Baga is known as one of the largest fish market in West Africa. It can also be deduced that the seasonal migration of the fishermen to Baga area or Nigerian portion of Lake Chad is purely an economic migration and majority of these fishermen move alone leaving their families behind. The idea of seasonal and circular labour migrations were first articulated in the 1970s (Nelson, 1976). Based on the problems associated with the presence of the seasonal migrants fishermen it is recommended that measures should be taken towards resuscitating the disappearing Lake Chad which serves as the pull factor of the migrants to the area. By resuscitating the Lake Chad to its former status could not only improve the quantity of the fish but equally the level of income of the migrants. As shown by the paper that the majority of the migrants are within the ages of 30 to 40, which implies that they are not only at their productive age but also at their reproductive age as such should move with their families to avoid been infected with sexually transmitted diseases that could reign their lives.

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