

MEDIA PERSPECTIVES ON NIGERIA'S MIGRANTS TO LIBYA AND BEYOND: REFLECTIONS ON EDITORIALS AND GUEST WRITERS' OPINIONS FROM SELECTED NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract

This paper set out to examine the direction of newspaper editorials and guest writers' views on the issue of Nigerian migrants to Libya and other parts of Europe. Most young Nigerians have been repatriated quarterly from Libya since the year 2017. The study employed qualitative content analysis as its research design. The units of analysis are editorials and guests' comments from six (6) selected newspapers namely: *The Nigerian Standard*, *Vanguard*, *The Tide*, *This Day*, *The Nation* and *Daily Sun* newspapers of between 2017 and 2018. After the submission of the instrument (the editorials and guest writers' articles) for confirmation of reliability, the data (editorial comments and opinion contents) were subjected to a single unit of analysis. A total of seven (7) editorials and guests writers' opinion comments made up the sample size for this study. The editorials and opinion articles were selected using the simple random technique. Findings revealed that newspaper editorials and opinion writers gave massive attention to the issue of illegal migrations of Nigerians to Libya and other parts of Europe and blamed the Federal Government of Nigeria

for harsh economic conditions that have paved way for this saga. The editorials condemned the activities of supporters of these illegal movements and the failed responsibilities of those saddled with the duties of checkmating the trend. This study recommends that Nigerian leaders should comply with the agenda set by the media by creating a conducive environment in the country for youth empowerment. This could be achieved by guaranteeing citizens' welfare and security. Massive enlightenment campaigns to educate the populace about the associated dangers of travelling illegally through Libya is pertinent.

Keywords: Editorials, Libya, Media, Migrants, Newspapers, Opinions,

INTRODUCTION

Newspapers report events as they happen daily. However, this oldest medium of modern communication has opportunities for both objective and subjective reporting. Objective reports inform the readers through news stories written by beat editors without interference of any personal opinion. Objective reporting has the benefit of promoting absolute belief in a story. Subjective reporting includes opinions, feelings and perception of the story writers. In the newspapers, opinions, comments and perceptions of writers on burning issues in the society are reflected in the editorial written by the editor of the paper on behalf of the editorial board, opinion write-ups, cartoons (editorial cartoons) and photographs, graphs or charts. With regards to the focus of this paper, Sagheer (2017) describes the editorial as the heart and soul of the newspaper which can inspire, motivate or mobilise readers towards a particular course of action. Thus, apart from being attractive in nature, the editorials are thought-provoking and debatable, reflecting the newspapers' news policies.

The issue of human migration is so dehumanizing to have attracted the front burner of Nigerian news media but the contrary is the case. According to Guanah, Ijeoma and Obi (2019), the frequency of migration stories in the Nigerian newspapers had returned to the low status after the Libya selling migrant saga. Human migration, the movement by people from one place to another, with the intention of settling permanently or sometimes temporary in a new location, is a socio-ecological issue that has attracted the attention of the world as a topical discourse, owing to the contemporary exigencies of the 21st century.

The aspect of illegal migrations has raised more concerns in human migration issues. Joshua and Makama (2017) define illegal migration as the movement of people across national borders in a way that violates the immigration laws of the destination country and opine that there is a rising trend in illegal migration worldwide, especially from poorer to richer countries with most illegal migrants found within and outside Africa. Illegal immigrants are also referred to as unauthorized/undocumented immigrants. Ikuteyijo (2012) also states that forgery of passports, visas and other travel documents, marriage under false pretenses, bogus claims for asylum, human smuggling and human trafficking are various illegal migration issues associated with youths aged 18-35 in Nigeria.

Egbuta (2019) reports that most Nigerians migrate illegally despite the associated risks and subject themselves to inhumane treatment but many are repatriated once they are caught. The issue of illegal migration in Nigeria assumed topical discourse in the media, especially in the newspapers between 2016 and 2018. Normally, editorial comments and opinions from newspaper are based on the news and current issues of concern to a nation. Within the period of the illegal migrations, many Nigerian newspapers recorded news,

commentaries and opinions on the phenomenon. News reports were based mainly on the repatriation of the migrants and some state governments and the Federal Governments' efforts to re-settle the returnees. Some newspapers conducted interviews with the returnees in order to gather first-hand information about their experiences and future expectations. Pictures of the migrants flooded the pages of most Nigerian newspapers. Some pictures conveyed images of migrants drowning on the sea. The experiences narrated by some of the returnees were more pathetic.

The concern of the editorials and opinion writers focus more on the panacea to illegal migrations of Nigerians. The editorial comments and opinions of the newspapers target the United Nations, the Federal Government of Nigeria, and the African union, the International Organization on Migrations, victims of illegal migrations, law enforcement agencies and many more. The calls address prevention, control and resettlement of illegal migrants.

The thrust of this paper is to examine the relevance of the media Agenda Setting Theory on social issues in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper holds the media Agenda Setting Theory in high esteem but questions the extent to which the Federal Government finds it relevant. This study is based on the assumption that, factors such as: poor state of the Nigerian economy, corrupt practices and lack of political will on the part of Nigeria to combat illegal migrations militate against the effective application of the media Agenda Setting Theory in the country. The problem of the study is government authorities' inability to consider and comply with very relevant suggestions from News Analyses, Commentaries, Editorials and guests' opinions from mass media channels and certain factors may be responsible for this.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

This study sought to:

1. Identify the dimensions of coverage of illegal migrations of Nigerians to Libya and beyond on the editorial comments and opinions of writers from selected newspapers.
2. Ascertain the direction of the narratives of newspaper editorials and opinion writers on possible solutions to illegal migrations of Nigerians to Libya and beyond.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions are a guide to the study:

1. What are the dimensions of coverage of illegal migrations of Nigerians to Libya and beyond as reflected on the editorial comments and guest writers' opinions of selected newspapers?
2. What is the direction of the newspaper editorials and guest writers on possible solutions to illegal migrations of Nigerians to Libya and beyond?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is based on Maxwell Comb and Donald Shaw's Theory of Agenda Setting propounded in 1972 and Urie Bronfenbrenner's Model of Socio-Ecological Change developed in 1979. The Agenda Setting Theory states that the media determines the importance placed upon particular issues. Discussing this theory, Larson (1992:337) states that the public agenda – the issues people discuss, think and worry about (and sometimes ultimately press for legislation about) is powerfully shaped and directed by what the news media choose to publicize. The justification for the theory is embedded in the fact that the agenda setting function enables editorial comments and opinions of newspapers to give the audience what to think about as solutions to societal issues but with regards to this study, whether such 'agenda' will be a force to reckon with depends on the feasibility of existing realities.

Philosophy of Newspaper Editorials and Opinions

Generally, philosophy deals with the study of the nature, meaning and set of principles that explains the operations of any discipline of anybody. The ‘newspaper’, according to Ike (2005) is any publication containing current public news, editorial, feature articles and advertising printed for sale and published periodically or daily. The nature of newspaper from the foregoing portends that the contents and the publication of the paper must contain news and editorial qualities, including specialized write-ups about people events or places and adverts. A newspaper should importantly be made public.

Thus editorial occupies a primordial position in deciding what a societal phenomenon is and what it should be. With the advent and advancement in information and communication technology (ICT), the newspaper as a tangible instrument of mass communication has also assumed an online posture, where it operates on World Wide Web and internet platforms for easy accessibility. The online newspapers and their contents can be accessed and read by anybody anywhere in any part of the world. The online newspapers and their contents, including the editorials or opinions therefore, reflect the image of a nation in the mirror of the international community and in the face of societal realities.

Periodically, Hasan (2013) categorizes newspapers as daily or weekly. Geographically, newspapers are categorized as local, national and international based on their areas of existence and global point of accessibility especially by members of the international community. This implies further that the editorials, opinions, news reports and feature articles reflected in the newspapers can be accessed widely and interpreted subjectively by the readers who are entitled to their opinions. The newspaper editorial is always inherent on a separate page called the ‘editorial page’ and the editorial’s objective is to

present the position of the newspaper management or organization on news items of the day.

Ike (2005) defines 'editorial' as an article in a publication that expresses the opinion of its editors or publishers; a commentary on radio or television expressing the opinion of the station or network.

Sagheer (2017) describes the nature of editorial as:

a section in newspaper or magazines in which the writers or editors share their opinion on ongoing topics. It is believed to be a brief essay on current issues; the writers share their opinion in regards to the publishing house which is seen as the opinion of the entire publishing house. If an article is written by someone else who belongs to the outsiders, then the disclaimer is shared.

Sagheer (2017) further identifies four types of editorials namely interpretational editorial (explains the news), criticism editorial (presents the good and bad features of the news), editorial of appreciation (praises those who have done well in their work) and entertainment editorial (presents opinions interesting topics that are light in nature). Hasan (2013) supports the assertion that editorials are the newspapers' point of view usually handled by an editor outside the news division. The main editorial reflects the point of view of the newspaper and appears on an editorial page, which Hasan (2013) says is set in larger types than ordinary body type used for news; set in wider columns, boxed and set with a mast head at a lower position and set with photographs though rarely. The letters to the editor and opinion articles on the op-ed (op-ed refers to a page in a newspaper that is opposite the main editorial page) contains columns articles,

letters to the editor and other items (cartons, photographs) expressing writers' opinions.

Hasan (2013) states that the editorial and the op-ed pages are the most read sections of the newspaper:

Letters are always among the best read section of any newspaper, for this is where readers express their opinions. Some newspapers limit letters to a certain number of words, 150, 250 or even 300, while others publish letters of virtually any length. Op-ed articles (a contraction of opposite – editorial page) usually run 850 to 1,000 words. Newspapers make space for letters to the editor and op-ed articles freely available as part of their contribution to civic dialogue.

The idea of editorial revolves around the opinions of the newspaper organization and its audience (the readers). Ike (2005) considers 'opinion' in the light of newspaper as the "expressed subjective view of the writer usually found on designated pages". The subjectivity of opinions held by the editorial team is generally constructive, fair and targeted at proffering solutions to issues in the news of the day. Such opinions though uncertain, are not necessarily bought and implemented by policy makers. The opinions in letters to editor are much more critical of news events. Irrespective of whether the opinions are from the team of editors or the readers through their letters, Larson (1992:184) argues that "opinions do not at all affect behavior only that they sometimes exert weak influence".

African Migration Crises and Media Coverage

Migration is a phenomenon that involves both humans and animals but the focus in this discourse is on human migration which is the movement by people from one place to another. Generally, certain questions on migration are: what are the causes and effects of migration? Who are the migrants? What is the nature of migration? The lexicon *New Age Encyclopedia* (1981:78) attempts to answer some of these questions thus:

Migration, the movement of people from one area to another, has always been one of the mechanisms of population growth and decline within a given area and a means of preserving equilibrium where there are differences in birth and death rates between areas. Primitive peoples often undertake mass migrations to secure new food supplies and more living space or to escape from natural catastrophes or hostile invaders or ... in response to social and economic change.

The above assertion suggest that attitude of migration is caused by man's insatiable needs and the search of some basic needs of life including food, clothing, shelter and more, as postulated by Abraham Maslow's Theory of Hierarchy of needs cited Iyorza (2015). To search for food and shelter, migrants certainly need lands to farm on or to build new houses to start new families. Apart from the physiological needs, Maslow's theory also acknowledge 'safety needs' of man as another reason for migration. As asserted above, most migrants embark on adventurous journeys to escape from economic hardships

and natural disasters such as earthquakes or man-made disasters such as the hostile Fulani herdsmen's invasion of various communities as it happened in Nigeria mostly between 2017 and 2018.

The beginning of African migration crises has been written by some social economic forces in history, beginning within the 1860s. Gates (2013) reports that at least 12 million Africans were forcibly taken to the America - then known as the "New World" - by the 1860s by European settlers. The forced migration is recorded in history as the world's largest at the time, relocating some 50 ethnic and linguistic groups on the continent of Africa. The unfortunate and forced migration of Africans at that time was initiated and propelled by the Europeans and some African slave merchants who instigated communal wars and promoted acts of betrayals and deceptions among Africans with the view to capture slaves, transport them to Europe sell them and enrich themselves or satisfy some of their economic and social needs.

The early African migrants from this discourse were forcibly taken to Europe as slaves who were meant to work on the farms, or in the homes of their slave masters. When slavery was abolished in 1865, Tolnay (2003:209-232) recounts that the black populations, specifically African Americans, were the largest number of migrants in the world. A phenomenon christened "the great migration" became descriptive of the over 6 million African Americans who migrated from Northern to Southern America. Contemporary history scholars have established that most African migrants tend to originate from nations with less developed economies. In contemporary times, the migrants are not actually forced like in the previous years. They migrate willingly for continuous search for economic wellbeing and higher wages in developed countries. Other reasons for African migration crises as inferred from the above discourse include poverty, conflicts and natural environmental factors, especially in African countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Togo and Cote d' Ivoire.

Issues in the African migration crises are summarized by the Institute of Development Studies (2018) thus:

- i. Africans are increasingly seeking to migrate to other countries in search of jobs within the international labour market in order to earn a better livelihood.
- ii. More than 50 million migrants in the world are from African countries including Cote d' Ivoire, South Africa, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Senegal, Cape Verde, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mali, Gambia, Zimbabwe and Nigeria.
- iii. African migrations to Europe and United States in the 21st century are predominantly of educated individuals giving rise to considerable concern over the issue of 'brain drain'. Examples are regional migrants: doctors and nurses seeking greener pastures in South Africa and Namibia.
- iv. Most African migrants who have succeeded in reaching developed countries are not really enjoying better living conditions and jobs. Most are victims of xenophobic attacks.
- v. Most African migrants do not get to their desired destinations; they lost their lives in the sea or in the desert; go hungry or die in the process of severe illness or suffer repatriation at the end.

Media coverage of the African migration crises is dominantly reported and commented upon through numerous newspaper editorials and opinions. Newspaper editorials (in the case of Nigerian illegal migrations to Libya) have called for the initiation of strong policy to check illegal migrations, including massive media enlightenment campaigns to educate the intending migrants on the dangers of traveling illegally through Libya. This is one of the newspapers' efforts to help check further illegal migrations from Nigeria.



Source: Egbuta (2019): The Migrant Crises in Libya and the Nigeria Experience

Sadly, there is a dearth of media enlightenment campaigns to educate the Nigerian youths on many social issues including the issue of illegal migrations to Libya and other parts of Europe and the perpetrators of the crime are not relenting in encouraging the trend. Madueke (2017) states that the activities of the trafficking gang in Nigeria are still responsible for the estimated 60 – 80% of the sex workers in Italy who are from Nigeria. International reports shows that the adoption of prosecuting human traffickers is supported by the 2003 United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime which entered into a force (called ‘protocol’) to prevent, suppress and punish traffickers in persons, especially in women and in children. Out of the 193 member states to the United Nations, 171 states became party to the protocol including Nigeria, yet little or no effort is done in the country to arrest and persecute human traffickers.

Media coverage of illegal migrations have taken the dimensions of calls, appeals and critical arguments for the Government to step up efforts at tracking, arresting and sanctioning

trafficking gangs in Nigeria but the media efforts appear to be frustrated as there is a continuous exodus of Nigerian youths to Libya with the hope of proceeding to Europe as indicated by most newspaper reports of 2019. It is evident that the promoters of this illegality still find the country a safe haven for operations. Thus, they have not been arrested and prosecuted in the glaring eyes of Nigerians in support of the media condemnations to the illegal migrations. Citing the US Department of State Trafficking in Persons reports, Vieson (2017) states that Nigeria has failed to provide evidence to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons.

There is adequate newspaper coverage on illegal migrations of Nigerians to other countries yet the human factor in the form of lack of willingness by the respective authorities and emergent world policies challenge the efforts of the media and their good intentions to help in taming the menace. Vieson (2017) explains that globalization allows traffickers to set up complex routes and systems within and across the borders while enforcement and persecuting officers compromise their duties by collecting bribes to allow the perpetrators to have their way. Thus, the lack of the will power and corruption on the other hand are factors capable of jeopardizing the efficacy of media calls for a better society.

Media coverage on illegal migrations in Nigeria has also figured out lack of youth empowerment, welfare and security failures as reasons for illegal migrations of most Nigerians to Europe through Libya. Offiong (2015:138) recounts that the socio-economic environment of the Nigerian youth is defined by the nature of his home environment, his gender, the poor socio-economic status of his parents, peer group influence and his residential location. These factors have affected the Nigerian youth more negatively leading them into socially delinquent behaviours such as criminality, prostitution, kidnapping, illegal migrations, trafficking in drugs and children and

corruption. Thus, the challenging factors surrounding the Nigerian youth has propelled him to take up the struggle for welfare and security into his hands.

Nigerian youths are surely inadequately empowered and their welfare and security taken for granted. Offiong (2015:140) stresses that crimes among the youth is evident in the existence of the Niger Delta militants who undertake to terrorize people within the South-South region of Nigeria. The militants, who are youths, kidnapped, maimed and killed people before they were granted amnesty by the former late President Musa Yar'Adua. The youths blew up oil wells and vandalized pipelines carrying oil between 2007 and 2011. They were granted amnesty but others still do dirty jobs for politicians during elections. In northern Nigeria, youths constitute the bulk of Boko Haram, religious sect that has terrorized Nigeria for more than a decade.

The contents of media coverage on illegal migrants who are predominantly youths in Nigeria are in line with the justifications of Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human behaviour (1979), as cited by Offiong (2015:124), which shows that the political systems at the macro level can affect the behaviour of the youths positively through lack of empowerment and welfare schemes. Also, Abraham Maslow's Pyramid of needs as cited by Larson (1992:160) corroborates that the provision of basic welfare needs including food, water shelter and security on the job and at home can satisfy the desires of intending migrants and discourage them from seeking greener pastures abroad through illegal means.

In sum, the media coverage on illegal migrations in Nigeria identifies the porosity of the Nigerian borders as another factor frustrating the efforts of the recommendations of guest writers to be implemented. The persistent editorial calls and the continuous laxity perpetrated by the respective ministries and law enforcement agents

including the Nigerian Police and the Nigerian immigration services frustrates the opinions that demand the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and the Federal Ministries of Internal and Foreign Affairs among others to live up to their responsibilities. Media coverage in forms of editorials and guest writers' opinions are therefore rendered inconsequential as long as these organizations and ministries continue to ignore the media's constructive arguments for the government ministries to live up to the very essence for which they were established; putting illegal migrations to check.

METHOD

The study employed a qualitative content analysis as its research design. A total of six (6) newspapers namely: *The Nigerian Standard*, *Vanguard*, *The Tide*, *This Day*, *The Nation* and *The Sun* were selected because of their consistent attention and interest in the issue of Libyan migrants' returnees in Nigeria. The units of analysis were editorial comments and guests' opinions on the issue of Libyan migrants' returnee to Nigeria. The simple random sampling technique was used to select a total of seven (7) editorials and guest writers' articles, which made up the total population of this study. The editorials were drawn from the *Nigerian Standard*, *Vanguard* and *The Tide* newspapers of 2017 and 2018 while guests' opinion articles were drawn from *This Day*, *The Nation*, *The sun*, and *Vanguard* newspapers also of 2017 and 2018.

The instruments (editorial contents and guest opinion articles) were deemed reliable by Dr Presely Obokoadata, Associate Professor of Mass communication in the Department of Mass Communication and Dr Charles Effiong, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Theatre and Media Studies, all of the University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. The data (editorial comments and guest writers' opinions) were subjected to a single unit of analysis to uncover

editorial and writers' opinions on preventing illegal migrations from Nigeria and controlling and resettling Libyan migrants' returnee in Nigeria. According to Salkind (2010), a unit of analysis is a major entity that is being analyzed in a study; the 'what' or 'who' that is being studied.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Research Question 1: *What are the dimensions of coverage of illegal migrations of Nigerians to Libya and beyond as reflected on the editorial comments and guest writers' opinions of selected newspapers?*

The Editorial of *Standard Newspaper* (2017) records thus:

Libyan human traffickers detain Africans, especially Nigerians, Ghanaians, Sudanese, Ivorians, Cameroonians and Kenyans, who in their desperate bid to seek 'greener pasture', albeit illegally, are beaten up, humiliated, tortured and in some cases forced to sell off their organs such as live and kidney for money.

The above extract confirms the earlier views and suggests that the desperation to search for greener pastures in Libya and Europe is not limited to Nigerian youths alone but also to youths from other African countries. The editorial further condemned the "lukewarm attitude of the United Nations – backed Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) towards the Libyan human traffickers."

Offering his opinion in *This Day Newspaper*, Abati (2017) corroborates the view that many Africans, particularly West Africans,

opt for “the cheaper albeit illegal option of sneaking into Europe through the desert and across the Mediterranean sea, with Libya and Algeria as the most popular exist point,” out of frustration by the harsh conditions in their own countries, in the form of “crippling poverty, misgovernance, unemployment and the difficulty of getting a visa or being able to buy a ticket to Europe.” He also opines that the ordeal of travelling through the tortuous journey is master-minded by “gangs at home and along the route, with Nigerians constituting the majority of these migrants.”

In his opinion to *The Nation* newspaper, Ali (2018) blames the Federal Government of Nigeria’s major challenges as been responsible for the “inability to check the exodus of Nigeria youths to Libya via Niger Republic”. In another opinion to *The Sun* newspaper, Oladeinde (2017) holds that there may be no solution in sight to ending the Nigerian youth’s desire to seek greener pastures in Europe as they “are still secretly nursing the hope of escaping from hardship at home”. The opinion writer attributes the unflinching desire of Nigerian youths to seek greener pasture abroad to “visionless leadership” in Nigeria and the increasing spate of “unemployment” mostly among graduates. He opines that the Nigerian migrants to Libya undertake the adventures for economic reasons and “to discourage economic migration relevant government agencies must work harder to re-orientate the citizens to believe in Nigeria”.

A guest writer to *The Sun* newspaper, Olakunle (2017) identifies security implications of Libyan returnees to include increased unemployment, increased “criminality, kidnapping, armed robbery, cultism and gangsterism in the country” if nothing is done to resettle them. He says the females among them may also take to voluntary prostitution since some of them were forced into sex slavery with some forms of dehumanization of the worst level. The Editorial of *The Tide* (2018) commends the role of Cable News Network (CNN) and other international media in drawing global attention to the

dehumanization of foreigners, particularly Sub-Saharan Africans in Libya and lauds the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the European Union for their efforts toward a more coordinated attempt at rescuing Nigerian migrants that are trapped in Libya.

Research Question 2: *What is the direction of the newspaper editorials and guest writers on possible solutions to illegal migrations of Nigerians to Libya and beyond?*

The Editorial of *Standard Newspaper* (2017) suggests that “the United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU) should hold the Libyan Government of National Accord accountable on the various attacks including the dehumanization of Nigerians and other Africans in Tripoli.” The editorial also suggests that a common front by United Nations and African Unions to condemn such inhuman and barbaric unedifying behaviour against human being will go a long way to stem the tide.

In *ThisDay Newspaper*, Abati (2017) advocates:

... a strong policy in place to check illegal migration, massive enlightenment campaigns should be organized to educate the populace about the associated dangers... our youths should be told that there is no safe route to Europe through the desert or a bat ride. The government civil society and all who have abdicated their responsibilities even at the level of the family unit should wake up and live up to their billings to reduce the trend.

The above perspective suggests that Nigeria does not have a strong policy to check illegal migration and the National Orientation Agency (NOA) has been relatively sleepy for some time. Suggestions for the way forward by Abati (2017) include identifications, tracking and sanctioning of the trafficking gangs in the country, creation of a conducive environment in the country for our youths, empowerment of Nigerians at home and the guarantee of their security and welfare by Nigeria, in addition to commitments of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Person (NAPTIP). Thus, if all agencies of government like the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the International Organization on Migration, including religious leaders among others, stand up to the responsibility of fighting illegal migration from Nigeria despite the harsh conditions, the evil of slavery in Libya will be drastically reduced.

In *The Nation* newspaper, Ali (2018) suggests the need for Nigeria to “cooperate with Niger Republic” to check illegal migration of Nigerians to Libya. Other opinions held by the writer include the fact that “the 5,037 Nigerians evacuated from Libya were mostly those trapped in Tripoli which is under UN-backed government”. He calls on the Federal Government of Nigeria to liberate the many Nigerians held hostage in rebel-held areas in Libya, engage the returnees in a short-term training including “basic sewing/dress making, baking and confectionery, bag making; bead and fabric stoning, soap making, deodorant; bleach and disinfectants, hair fixing and braiding and weaving...,” and long term skills to include welding, plumbing, aluminum fabrication, hair dressing/barbing etc. Ali also comments that if the Libya returnees are made to relay their experiences in Libya to prospective or intending illegal migrants to Europe, they could discourage the intending migrants from undertaking the perilous journey.

In his opinion to the *Vanguard* newspaper, Owegie (2017) suggests that “now that we have thousands of Nigerians returning from

their ill-fated journey in search of hope and greener pastures, it is incumbent on government and the non-state alike, public spirited individuals and private establishments should financing support them to have some skills and capacity to establish businesses for themselves. Banks should support them with soft loans, to establish businesses. Business counselors and experts need to move into provide some technical training and support for the returnees. The respective State Houses of Assembly should give bite to the campaign and set effective punitive measures against those fueling the illegal trade.

The *Vanguard* Editorial (2018) is of the opinion that the Federal Government should commence the payment of monthly stipends of N5000 to the poorest and most vulnerable Nigerians for which N500 billion was voted in the federal budget in 2017. The suggestion is that:

...the poorest Nigerians should also be given the opportunity to learn some trades and crafts which will enable them to earn a decent living and remain law abiding. The state Agencies for Reorientation should mount public education to prevent the possible stigmatization of the Libyan returnees. Security agencies should be alert and observe the returnees for a period in case some of them are tempted to drift into crimes such as robbery, kidnapping, cultism, militancy and terrorism.

In his opinion to *The Sun* newspaper, Olakunle (2017) suggests that NGOs and faith-based organizations such as churches and Mosques and philanthropists should collaborate with the Federal Government to provide relief measures for the returnees in order to rehabilitate and integrate them into the society at home. The Editorial of *The Tide* (2018) opines that the government at all tiers in Nigeria should plan to rehabilitate and reintegrate the returnees into society. The editorial calls on the Libyan returnees, especially those from Edo State who have been given N667, 000 and a hectare of land each to start a new life to invest wisely in the schemes in order to become successful agripreneurs. The editorial also holds that if other state governments emulate the Edo example by properly reintegrating the returnees into the society, they would be meaningfully engaged and dissuaded from crime, in addition, there will be “potential of mopping up of unemployment, reduction in crime and building of citizens’ confidence in their country.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based on the analyses in this study, findings reveal that the dimensions of the editorial comments and guest writers on illegal migrations of Nigerians to Libya and Europe tilt towards the description of the tortuous experience of Nigerian illegal migrants between 2017 and 2018 and the exposition of the Federal Government of Nigeria’s attitude of indifference that has allowed for continuous and easy illegal migrations of her citizens to other African countries and Europe. The editorial comments and guest writers’ opinions also lament the Federal Government’s compromising attitude and condemn the unwillingness of the law enforcement agents to tame the phenomenon especially at the porous borders. The editorials and guests opinions collectively warn that the Federal Government of Nigeria’s negligence to the human and infrastructural development needs of the citizens of the country would continue to pose a threat to

efforts aimed at arresting the trend of illegal migration in Nigeria and caution the government against abandoning the illegal migrant returnees to their fate in Nigeria as such attitude could pose internal security threat to the nation.

One of the suggestions of the editorials and opinions on possible solutions to illegal immigration points to the direction of a charge to international communities to adopt international measures. Specifically, the editorials and opinions instruct the United Nations and African Unions to interfere in the issue of illegal migrations of Africans within and outside the continent. The editorials and opinions also direct the Federal Government of Nigeria to collaborate with neighbouring countries to tame illegal migrations from Nigeria by arresting and dealing with perpetrators of human trafficking and illegal migrations as a deterrent to intending persons. The editorials and opinions enjoin the Federal Government to plan adequate rehabilitation measures for the illegal migrant returnees.

CONCLUSION

Summarily, the comments of the editorials and opinions of guest writers from selected Nigerian newspapers assumed the direction of description, exposition and lamentation. The editorials and opinions also assume the direction of warning and caution. The solutions of the write-ups on the other hand took the direction of directives, charges, instructions and demands to putting an end to illegal migrations of Nigerians to Libya and Europe. This paper concludes that the editorial comments and opinions on illegal migrations of Nigerians to Libya and Europe are part of the newspapers' avenue for setting the nation's agenda through descriptions of events and calls on the government to take necessary measures to tame the tide of illegal migrations. The efforts of editorials and guest writers as agents of media agenda setting will however be in vain if the government does not take relevant counsel from them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. The newspaper editors and guest writers should not relent nor be discouraged by the Federal Government's attitude of ignoring useful suggestions to solving migration issues in the country. They should continue to write, even on other more sensitive issues affecting the country as their write-ups would serve as reference materials or evidence for contributory efforts to the development of Nigeria in future.
- ii. The Federal Government of Nigeria should consider and adopt logically expressed opinions of editorials and opinion writers in her efforts to tackle the issues of illegal migrations in the country. This accords relevance to the Agenda Setting Theory of Mass Communication and provides a reference point for government authorities in the bid to garner ideas for implementation. Editorial opinions and letters to the editors from guest writers should be considered by the respective government authorities in times of decision making. This will make room for participatory democracy and adoption of some healthiest decisions to address some of the nation's teething problems.
- iii. The United Nations and African Union should form a common front to openly condemn the inhuman and barbaric behaviour human trafficking against human beings from other countries and refer to the opinions of Nigerian editors and writers as part of ways to taming illegal migrations in Nigeria and Africa.

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