SIBLING RIVALRY AND LABOUR MIGRATION IN RURAL TIV COMMUNITIES OF BENUE STATE-NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
This study was conducted to investigate the relationship between sibling rivalry and the decision to migrate in Tivland. The study adopted an exploratory design in which Focus Group Discussions and In-depth interviews were used to collect data. Data analysis involved summary of discussions of participants in FGDs while responses of interviewees were transcribed from a purposively selected sample. The study found that factors influencing sibling rivalry included struggle for resources such as land, inheritance, perceived favouritism in the distribution of inheritance by parents, imborivungu (witchcraft idol) and suspicion of witchcraft among siblings. The nature of this rivalry is fierce and is manifest in violent confrontation and strife, animosity, accusation and and threats of death. The destinations of siblings who migrated because of sibling rivalry are mostly rural areas within and outside the state. The study therefore recommends for intensified rural development, more research for in-depth understanding of migration patterns in the study area, and investigation into phenomenon of rural-rural migration in Tivland and the motivations for it.
Keywords: Sibling rivalry, Migration, rural communities, rural-urban migration, Tiv

INTRODUCTION

Migration is a social process that has occurred almost at every period of human existence. It is also a common phenomenon in both developed and developing countries, in rural and urban communities (Ekpenyong and Egerson, 2015). Natural history of migration must start with the process that causes migrants to move, and then continue to the expected ends or outcome (Light, 2004). Migration is one of the demographic processes that are very important in determining population dynamics as well as welfare of families and individuals especially in developing countries (Bratti, Fiore and Mendola, 2015). The decision to migrate may be motivated by the need to improve one's chances of a better life. It could also be due to other socio-cultural and demographic factors that are beyond the desire to improve one's economic circumstances. One of the most significant characteristics of migration is that it mainly involves young adults who are more likely to have a positive net expected return on migration due to their longer remaining life expectancy (Sjaastad 1962). These youth also appear to be either unemployed or have thin chances of becoming successful in their place of current residence. In developing countries such as Nigeria, the proportion of youth who migrate internally is much higher than in developed ones (UN 2013). Within the developing countries, one common migration pattern appears to indicate young adults moving from rural areas to other rural areas or to urban centers.

Although the determinants of migration have already been studied extensively, most research studies focus on push-pull explanations to the exclusion of other factors like sibling rivalry. This rivalry could represent jealousy, competition and fighting between brothers and sisters over resources or parental affection, and manifested as a verbal or physical attack, frustration, persistent demands for attention, or as regressive phenomena (Mace, 2013; Barrow, Heyman, Scott, and Krebs, 2014: Hashim and Ahmad, 2017). The decision to migrate is either rational or spontaneous (Jensen and Miller, 2011). Rationally, it could be a family strategy to diversify income sources, improve earning potentials and increase household security through remittances among others (Clemens and Tiongson 2012, Yang 2008, Antman 2012). Spontaneously, it could be motivated by sibling rivalry or competition which appears to be a subtle but significant determinant of migration (Oyeniyi, 2013). It is a fact that at times people consciously migrate to areas that are even worse than their place of origin (Ekpenyong and Egerson, 2015) and their reasons for the movement are not solely dependent on economic reasons but based on some hidden circumstances which may not be easily revealed or openly expressed by migrants. Thus, far less is known about the role of the sibling competitions on migration decisions especially in rural communities in Nigeria. Siblings in rural areas may be driven more by spontaneous reaction to circumstances beyond their control rather than conscious economic explanation. This is a surprising gap given the popular view that migrants come often from rural areas and they move to urban centers for better life opportunities.

Most of the empirical studies that have been conducted on sibling rivalry and migration have focused on economic determinism as a main factor for migration. For instance, an investigation by Bratti, Fiore and Mendolam (2015) look at demographic conditions of migrant's household such as sibship size, birth order and sibling composition and probability to migrate in Mexico. It also sees economic reasons as factors for the migration. The authors also focused on migration from Mexico to the United States, giving economic explanation as the main driver of migration while

ignoring rivalry among siblings. Stohr (2015) study on siblings' interaction in migration decisions studied migration from an economic angle by exploring how sibling decision to migrate affects elderly people in Moldova. These studies ignored the possibility that sibling competition could have immense relationship to migration in developing countries such as Nigeria.

Among the Tiv, migration is a historical phenomenon that predates their existence in Nigeria and appeared to be connected to economic explanation and agriculture (Wegh, 2018: Bohannan 1953). It is believed that the Tiv migrated from Central Africa to *Swem*, a location somewhere around Nigeria-Cameroun mountains axis (Wegh, 2018). Agriculture, which is the hub of rural economy, has been reported to have precipitated the migration of the Tiv to the Benue valley. The Tiv people being predominantly farmers found the vegetation in the present Lower Benue River suitable for agriculture and migrated to the place for farming reasons. In addition, rapid population growth affected their practice of the shifting cultivation type of agriculture and since they lived in sparse settlements, it motivated their migration to less populated destinations for agricultural practices (Bohannan 1953; Sambe, 2014, Wegh 2018). Among the Tiv, migrations during the pre-colonial times were largely carried out in groups and batches, since land was largely not scarce. In such cases, the various clans, or families in front spearheaded migration into virgin lands where resistance was weak (Dzeremo 2002, Wegh, 2018).

Despite the fact that migration among the Tiv as a group was driven mainly by agriculture in the past, it should be observed that there are some aspects of Tiv culture that are not economically rooted but are connected to migration. Polygamy and extended family practices are highly favoured by a traditional Tiv person (Bohannan 1953). Polygamy has the tendency to create rivalry between wives and their children while the extended family system also could create unhealthy competition between a man and his extended family members who own land and other resources on communal basis. This represents a precondition for sibling rivalry which could affect migration among the Tiv. Thus, some aspects of Tiv culture that relate to agriculture such as polygamous practices and extended family system which are common among the Tiv may create sibling rivalry which could be related to migration among the Tiv. However, whether sibling rivalry is related to migration among the rural people is largely ignored by studies as most of the studies on migration focus on the pull-push factors. This study is therefore intended fill this vacuum by exploring the relationship between sibling rivalry and migration in rural communities in Tivland.

The major objective of this study is therefore to investigate the relationship between sibling rivalry and the decision to migrate in Tivland. The specific objectives were to:

1. Examine the nature and determinants of sibling rivalry in Tivland;
2. Investigate the effects of sibling rivalry on decision to migrate among the Tiv;
3. Ascertain the receiving destinations of siblings who migrate due to sibling rivalry among the Tiv

Theoretical framework (Push-pull theory)

The push-pull factor theory, also called Lee's theory, was pioneered by Everett Spurgeon Lee (1966). The theory attempts to explain the factors that determine the volume of migration between areas of origin and destination. The factors are assumed to be principally economic in nature (Lee 1966).

Lee (1966) assumed that factors associated with the decision to migrate, and the process of migration fall into the following four categories: (1) Factors associated with the sending areas; (2) Factors associated with the receiving areas; (3) Intervening obstacles; and (4) Personal factors. He pointed out that, in each of the four categories, there are factors that drive people away from an area or attract them to it. In this respect, there are significant differences between the factors associated with the sending areas and those associated with the receiving areas. Migration may take place after both these are properly weighed. Usually, however, a person has a better and more realistic knowledge about the sending area, while his knowledge about the receiving area is rather shallow and inaccurate. Intervening obstacles also must be overcome before migration finally takes place. These include distance and transportation.

Push factors exist at the point of origin and act to motivate out migration (a lack of economic opportunities, education, and so on). On the other hand, pull factors are present at the receiving area, which attract migrants (work opportunities and availability of jobs, conducive educational facilities). Push and pull factors are paired, that is, migration can occur if the reason of emigrating (the push) has a solution in the pull by receiving area. In the context of labour migration, the push factors are often characterized by the lack of job opportunities in sending areas or countries; and the pull factors are the economic opportunities available in the receiving areas. Pull factors are exactly the opposite of push factors—they attract people to a certain location. Typical examples of pull factors of a place are more job opportunities and better living conditions; easy availability of land for settling and agriculture, political and/or religious freedom, superior education and welfare systems, better transportation and communication facilities, better

healthcare system and stress-free environment attractiveness, and security.

The emphasis of the theory on economic factors as the main drivers of labour migration seems to be the weakness of the theory. This is because it does not consider other factors that motivate people to migrate. These factors are subtle and may not be easily revealed by the migrants. It is based on this weakness that this study has been built. This study therefore proposes to explore hidden factors that precipitate migration which the push-pull theory has not addressed.

METHODOLOGY

Tivs are a group of people and are named after their ancestral father, Tiv. They inhabit the planes of Benue valley in North Central Nigeria and are found mostly in Benue State. However, considerable numbers are indigenes of Taraba and Nassarawa States. The Tiv people are divided into five lineages, Kwande, Jemgbagh, Jechira, Sankera and Minda. Within Benue State, the Tiv inhabit 14 local government areas of out the 23 Local Government Areas in Benue State. They include Kwande, Ushongo, Vandeikya, Konshisha, Ukum, Logo, Katsina-Ala, Gboko, Tarka, Buruku, Makurdi, Gwer-West, Gwer-East and Guma. The Tiv area in Benue State is bordered by Nasarawa State in the North, Taraba State in the North-East, and Cross River State in the south. The Tivs are bordered by Agatu, Apa, Otukpo, Obi and Oju Local Government Areas to the South. They are predominantly farmers who also have firm belief in witchcraft and powers associated with it.

The Tiv people are believed to have migrated from *Swem*, a location somewhere around Nigeria-Cameroun Mountain axis. Around 1456, they started to move towards the Benue valley and have now spread across the North Central region of Nigeria as stated in Makar (1975). Several reasons have been advanced for the migration of the Tiv to this area. One of the reasons has been that the Tiv people being predominantly farmers found the vegetation in the present Lower Benue River suitable for agriculture and migrated to it. The second reason put forward was that the populations of the Tiv grew very rapidly, and since they lived in sparse settlements and practiced the shifting cultivation type of agriculture, they found the area irresistible (Bohannan 1953). In addition, the increase in population might have increased their military capability to give them effective advantage over their neighbors. This view is particularly strong because all the small ethnic groups around Tiv that were reluctant to move remained within the Tiv territory up to date or were defeated and pushed further.

The last view being branded is that the migration into the Lower Benue River coincided with the military decline of the Kwararafa Confederacy in the nineteenth century. Thus, the Tiv did not find much resistance to their settlement in their present position (Dzeremo 2002). Migrations during the pre-colonial times were largely carried out in groups and batches, since land was largely not scarce. In such a case, the various clans, or families in front spearheaded migration into virgin lands where resistance was weak.

The paper adopted an exploratory study design. This is because the study appears to be a preliminary study on the problem under investigation. Therefore, the design will also help to gain insight on the problem of sibling rivalry and migration in rural communities in Tiv land for subsequent investigation.

The population of the study includes heads of households in rural communities in Tivland of Benue state. This is because the household heads will be more disposed to providing such information about the members of their families or kin.

Purposive sampling technique was used to select 26 informants. First stage involved a purposeful selection of Gboko Local Government Area (LGA), out of 14 local government areas in Tivland. In stage two, two villages were purposefully selected. These included Mbazembe village in Mbakper council ward and Akpehe village in Mbatser ward. In stage three, 10 participants who are household heads and 8 key informants who are heads of extended families were purposively selected for FGD and KII respectively in each of the villages.

The selection process involved rapport with members of the communities. Through this procedure, the researchers identified extended family heads and heads of the households. The households selected were independent in terms of not relating to each other through kinship. This was to avoid replication of information. They explained the purpose of the study to them and solicited for their cooperation to be part of the study. Afterwards, the researchers selected household heads for the FGD.

After the selection of samples, data collection began immediately. Data were collected through Focus Group Discussions and In-depth Interview. For Focus Group Discussion, two discussion sessions were held, one in each of the villages. It lasted for about 30 minutes to 1 hour. The venues for the discussion were in a market square. The discussions were recorded through use of phones and notebooks and pen. For In-depth Interview, the informants were contacted in their homes, farm, or market square for the interview. The interviews lasted from 20 to 30 minutes. Data gathering involved use of phones and writing materials.

For data analysis involving Focus Group Discussion (FGD), participants' discussions were reviewed and summarized to determine whether

there is agreement or consensus while the level of intensity of the arguments of the discussants was described. Data gathered through in-depth interviews were analyzed through transcription of responses of the key informants based on areas of consensus and disagreement regarding each question.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Nature and determinants of siblings' rivalry among the Tiv

Focus Group Discussion held in both Akpehe and Mbazembe villages pointed out clearly that struggle for land is a major factor responsible for sibling rivalry among the Tiv. The groups strongly argued that in most instances, struggle for land is caused by desires of older siblings to acquire more land than the others who actively demand for equal share of the land. This causes strife, confrontation, violent quarrels, or blood revenge. The group members from Mbazembe village also agreed that inheritance is another serious factor that causes sibling rivalry. This happens after the death of father or parents. The desire of elder siblings to take the larger proportion and the demand for equal share of the inheritance by other siblings could result to this rivalry. Furthermore, the allocation of a larger part of the possession of parents to a most favourite child after their death leads to jealousy, conspiracy. and rivalry against the most favoured child. This manifests in strife, violence, and violent quarrels.

One of the group members in Mbazembe argued:

> *"…What causes contention between siblings originates out of self-centeredness and jealousy…these manifests in struggle for land and other inheritance left by their departed parents…This rivalry is often deadly and visible through violence and strife…"*

Focus group members from Akpehe village also argued that siblings' rivalry is caused by the struggle to be in control of a mystical idol called *imborivungu,* which is an object made from human tibia or a carved image and it is owned by held by witches. This witchcraft idol could be owned a family or an individual and is required to be serviced or repaired periodically by human blood and competition for the control of the idol is one the basis for of witchcraft among the Tiv. It could also be made from bones of a departed family head. Siblings struggle for the control of this force after the death of parent(s). This is because it is presumed to serve as an assurance against failure or poverty. This rivalry is fierce and could manifest in violent confrontation and strife and can even lead to mysterious death among the siblings. This could lead to perceived fear of death, or potential harm among siblings. Furthermore, suspicion of witchcraft is another issue that causes siblings rivalry as revealed by the group members from Akpehe village. A sibling who is jealous of a prospering sibling may be suspected of witchcraft. This is because the Tiv believe that witchcraft originates out of jealousy. Many of the village's siblings in rivalry migrated because of fear of witchcraft as the siblings were afraid of being harmed by siblings who were perceived to be witches. The group members in Akpehe village agreed that suspicion of witchcraft could lead to animosity, strife accusation and even violence and threats of death.

Another group member in Akpehe also said:

> *"…fear of witchcraft is a major factor in siblings' rivalry in Tivland…issue of imborivungu is often connected to witchcraft which is one of the causes of sibling rivalry in rural Tivland…"*

In-depth Interview with 56-year-old male key informant revealed the following:

> *"…in Tivland generally, struggle for land is a major cause of contention between brothers and even communities…After death of parents, some of the brothers will sell all their pieces of land and will try to usurp the pieces that belong to their brothers. This result to strife and violence…also when an older brother tries to confiscate land for himself, ignoring his half brothers, rivalry could result…This manifest into violent fights, quarrels, and strife…"*

Another informant, who is an 83-year-old male, aptly said:

> *"…in this case, the siblings will hide this but people with experience can discern this reason…fight for control of imborivungu left by deceased parent(s) by siblings is the most dangerous form of rivalry because it is seen as a symbol of power and protection against poverty and failure…brothers and sisters do fight for it even when parents clearly identify the sibling who will control it…the struggle manifests in blood violence, threat of death, death and mysterious illness among siblings and their families…"*

Another informant who is a 90-year-old male also said:

> *"…witchcraft is connected to many siblings' rivalry among the Tiv… This rivalry was* expressed *in an open verbal attacks, strife, and threats of death…"*

Sibling rivalry pattern in rural Tiv communities

Sibling rivalry pattern	Most common	Less Common	Rare cases
Violent quarrels	X		
Verbal assault	X		
Threats with witchcraft	X		

The above findings are consistent with Fox *et al* (2016) which found that among Krummhörn and Quebec populations in Canada, competition for familial resources is a major source of sibling rivalry. Barrow *et al* (2014) also found that sibling rivalry is characterized by evidence of jealousy. Rivalry may be manifested as a verbal or physical attack, frustration, persistent demands for attention, or as regressive phenomena (Milevsky and Levitt; 2005).

Relationship between sibling rivalry and migration

Focus Group members from both Mbazembe and Akpehe village pointed out clearly that sibling rivalry is one of the major factors for migration among the Tiv. The group members from Akpehe village argued that fierce struggle for *imborivungu* could lead to fear of death or harm among some of the siblings, who may decide to migrate to their maternal home or other locations for coverage and protection. The group discussion from Mbazembe village pointed that struggle for inheritance often leaves other sibling especially the younger ones or half sibling empty handed. This results to the decision to migrate in order to survive. Furthermore, fear of death and harm resulting from rivalry over inheritance is another factor responsible for sibling migration. The struggle for land among sibling results to migration in two ways: One of the ways is other sibling who could not access land are forced to migrate to other areas to find land, farm and survive. The other way is the decision to migrate due to fear of harm by other siblings. Group members from Akpehe village also pointed that sibling rivalry is a factor for suspicion of witchcraft. Group members from both Akpehe and Mbazembe village reiterated that this rivalry also leads to animosity, strife accusation and even violence and threats of death. Thus, a sibling who suspects another of witchcraft due to rivalry is likely to migrate to escape witchcraft attack.

One of the group members in Akpehe reiterated:

> *"…fear of witchcraft is a major factor in siblings' rivalry and migration in Tivland…fears of being injured and killed by a sibling who is perceived to be jealous, vile witch drive other siblings to migrate for safety and protection of their lives and business…issue of imborivungu is often connected to witchcraft which is one of the causes of siblings' rivalry and migration in rural Tivland…"*

Another group member in Mbazembe reported:

"…struggle for land and familial resources between siblings is one of the main reasons why siblings migrate…siblings who are left empty handed migrate to other areas to survive…"

An interview, with a 63-year-old informant supported the above finding. He said:

"…the imborivungu is a dangerous thing. It occasionally requires the blood of a relative to sustain it…struggle for control of it by siblings often result to other sibling seeing themselves as target and fleeing permanently to other areas to escape it…"

Another informant who is a 57-years-old male also said:

"…in this village and everywhere else I know in Tivland, struggle for inheritance such as land, money, and assets are a major source of trouble among siblings, and they are also reasons why people choose to leave their place to other places…"

According to an informant who is 48 years old:

> *"…land is the most important asset in village…and a means of survival…siblings who are denied access to land are forced to locate to other villages where they can have access to land for farming…*

Another male informant who is 81 years old said:

> *"…the fear of being exposed to harm by the power of witchcraft is one of the major causes of migration among the Tiv…"*

The above findings agree with Bratti *et al* (2015) who found that sibling competition increases chances of migration, especially for the firstborns. The study also established a relationship between number of sisters and the likelihood to migrate, especially among girls. The findings by Bratti *et al* (2015) also appear to reveal that siblings that are of mixed sexes appeared to have less competition or rivalry. Such siblings are less likely to migrate since the type of rivalry occurring between siblings of the same sex is less visible. Another study by Morduch (2000) also indicates that in Africa, siblings who become rivals are more likely to migrate compared to siblings with no rivalry. Garg and Morduch (1998) also found a situation in Ghana in which children compete for household resources, with the aftermath leading to migration.

Receiving destinations of migrants of sibling rivalry among the Tiv

The group members from Mbazembe agreed that destinations of siblings who migrate because of sibling rivalry are based on the level of education and occupation of the migrant. The discussants from Akpehe pointed that most of the Siblings who are farmers and uneducated tend to migrate to other rural areas in Tivland where fertile land is available for farming. Others move to other states like Taraba where other indigenous Tiv people of Taraba live to acquire land for farming while others migrate to the western part of the country to work on cocoa farms for money. Furthermore, some migrate to other towns within Tivland to become commercial motorcycle riders.

According to a focus group member in Mbazembe:

> *"…many of the migrants who move as a result of contention with their siblings do migrate to other rural areas to acquire land for farming…others who migrate do so with their entire nuclear family to remote rural areas with an intention never to return…"*

A 62-year-old informant also reiterated

> *"…Most people who migrate as a result of sibling rivalry do go far from their home…these days, most of them go to Yoruba land to work on cocoa plantations…other run to interior parts of Tivland to hide there and also to farm…places like Taraba, Ukum, rural areas in Kwande, Gboko are primary destinations for the migrants…"*

The above findings seem to indicate that migration destinations of siblings who are in rivalry are primarily rural. This is because the demographic characteristics of the migrants such as educational qualification and occupation had profound influence on the destination of the migrants. The low educational level of the migrants and their occupation as farmers influences them to migrate to destination where they can easily adapt to life such as other rural areas. This finding does not agree with that of Bratti *et al* (2015) position that most of the siblings who migrated as a result of sibling rivalry in Mexico headed towards cities in the United States. The study seems to indicate that most of the migrants in rural and urban Mexico had the tendency to move to the United States.

Migration pattern in rural Tiv communities

Migration pattern	Most common	Less Common	Rare cases
Rural-rural	X		
Rural-Urban		X	
Rural-city			X

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that factors influencing sibling rivalry included struggle for resources such as land, inheritance and perceived favouritism in the distribution of inheritance by parents. Other factors are the struggle for control of a mystical force called *imborivungu* and suspicion of witchcraft among siblings. The rivalry is fierce and manifest in violent confrontation and strife, animosity, accusation and even violence and threats of death. The study also found that sibling rivalry is one of the major factors for migration in the study area and is predominantly rural-rural in nature. The destinations of the migrants are determined by their level of educational level and occupation as most of them are uneducated and farmers.

Hence, it is recommended that for a more elaborate understanding of migration in the study area, more research is needed around the relationship between sibling rivalry and migration among rural dwellers in Tivland. Researchers also need to investigate the phenomenon of rural-rural migration in Tivland and the motivations for it and there is the need for intensified rural development in Tivland since most migration most migrants move from rural to rural areas.

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