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ARTICLE

**'Moving, fishing and building': A building-back-home culture of Ijo
migrant fishermen in Nigeria**

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Warebi Gabriel Brisibe

Full Length Research Paper

'Moving, fishing and building': A building-back-home culture of Ijo migrant fishermen in Nigeria

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This study investigates the building culture of migrant fishermen of the Ijo ethnic origin in Nigeria, who undertake prolonged sojourns in other communities as part of their livelihood. The study focuses on migrant fishermen and their socio-economic role as migrant workers. The aim of this study is to investigate if Ijo migrant fishermen operate a similar migrant labour ideology based on remittance theories as other migrant workers who invest in building houses back in their sending communities. This study adopts a mixed methods approach of quantitative and qualitative techniques in data analysis. It uses bivariate analysis method via statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) to examine the relationships between variables such as length of stay in Diaspora, income, size of family, age and frequency of visit back home, on the building-back-home culture of these fishermen. In addition, content analysis was used to examine interview narratives to reveal other possible factors affecting their building-back-home culture. Results show that some relationships exist between two of the variables and the need to build back home. In addition, other socio-economic variables such as family demands, traditional credit systems and policy and tax issues that could affect the building-back-home culture of these fishermen were also observed.

Key words: Migrant labour, home, migrant fishermen, building culture, houses.

INTRODUCTION

The New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) interprets migration as a livelihood strategy that households from sending countries adopt in an attempt to spread income risks and overcome market constraints. The concept of labour migration often conjures up an image of people travelling across international borders to take up employment either as skilled or unskilled labour. However, this term is not limited to transnational migrant workers lured by the pull factor of employments from large scale construction projects and industries that hire

the bulk of the labour force, but also diversity of ecology, resource abundance and land tenure arrangements. For example, shifting cultivation for farmers and movement in search of arable land for grazing by pastoral nomads, all contribute to migration. Fulani herdsmen in the West African sub-region are some of the best known examples of internal migrants motivated by the need to gain access to natural resource abundance (Adepoju, 1991).

Nevertheless, there are also other less known migrants equally motivated by the abundance of natural resources

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and food stock; these are migrant or migrating fishermen. Tawari (2002) defines a migrant fisherman as “one who leaves his natural community and moves from one habitation to another in fulfilment of his occupation”. In effect, migrant fishermen are a select group of artisanal fishermen that embark on extended or prolonged foraging. Such extended foraging consequently requires a change of residence, due to the distance of the fishing grounds from their home base. Not all artisanal fishermen embark on such fishing expeditions and this suggests that, although all migrant fishermen may be ‘artisanal’, not all artisanal fishermen ‘migrate’. However, Ezewu and Tahir (1997) chose to define migrant fishing based on a combination of full-time fishing practice and residential mobility.

The connection between labour migration and fishermen was created by Diaw (1983) when he examined the social and production relationships amongst artisanal fishers of West Africa. He observed that the migration patterns practiced by these fishermen were related to two essential forms of movement in fisheries, which are, “Regulated Fishing Migrations” and “Labour Migrations”. Adepoju (1991) who has carried out extensive studies on labour migration in Africa, also observed that large scale internal migration were carried out by nomads, semi-nomads and fishermen, in the West African sub-region. Similarly, Jul-Larsen and Kassibo (2001) also investigated and confirmed the existence of work migration among fishermen from Niger’s Central Delta regions. These migrant fishermen also extensively practice internal and international migration as much as the conventional migrant workers. Studies conducted by Njock (2007), Samba and Faye (2006) and Randall (2005) amongst others further confirm these migration patterns.

Several studies on migrant labour have shown that this financial remittance back to the migrant’s community of origin is the primary purpose of the migrant labour practice. The three main reasons necessitating the remittance of money back to the original homes have been attributed to; the acquisition and development of physical assets in the home area; to cater for the needs of the family left behind; and investing in businesses or simply acquiring assets, in preparation for a final return to their communities of origin. Lucas and Stark (1985) summed up the motivations for financial remittance back home, and categorised them into two broad groups namely; altruism and pure self-interest. Altruism, focuses on catering for the needs of others (relatives and family) left behind, and has been identified as the main motivation for financial remittances for immigrants from the Sub-Saharan and Latin American regions (Stodolska and Santos, 2006; Tiemoko, 2004; Mooney, 2003). Listed under the motivation of ‘pure self-interest’, are the need to acquire or develop fixed assets such as landed property and housing; as well as other forms of business investments for themselves back home. Among migrants of black African origin, the practice of acquiring fixed

assets back home, especially the building of status enhancing houses, has been identified as the main motivating factor for remittances (Black et al., 2002; Owusu, 1998; Diko and Tipple, 1992; Klimt, 1989).

In the rural areas and smaller cities of Nigeria, the building process is often gradual. It may take from a few months to several years, depending on the availability of funds. Usually materials required for construction are gathered over time and the houses built in stages. However, every household head or intending household head makes it a priority to own a house back home, preferably built from scratch as this allows for it to be customised to personal needs and preferences. This enforces the issue of self-interest which is the focus of this study. This decision to build houses back home is regarded as being motivated more by cultural values placed on housing ownership, than by any other reason. This culturally influenced practice has been identified mainly amongst migrant workers of black African descent, living in the Diasporas.

Although, studies have revealed that some African migrants relocate permanently, choosing to acquire houses in the host society thus, not carrying on the building-back-home culture (Owusu, 1998; Klimt 1989). Other studies (Alba and Logan, 1992; Ray and Moore, 1991; Balakrishnan and Wu, 1992; Skarbuskis, 1996) concluded that an immigrant’s propensity for home ownership in the host society is influenced by certain factors such as; level of income, family status, family size and length of stay in the host society. Haas and Fokkema (2011) in their study of return migration of four African immigrant groups examined several variables that could affect return migration. The variables ranged from age, sex, level of education and financial status of the migrants to the strength of the social ties in the country of origin and level of socio-cultural integration in the destination country. Klimt (1989) has suggested that policies regarding residence permits for migrants and host population’s attitude toward migrants can also be a delimiting or enhancing factor. In essence, they suggest that the building-back-home culture of a migrant worker can be altered if some of these circumstances are changed.

In addition, Owusu (1998) has suggested that the possibility of not building back home, is more likely with increased length of stay in the host society. His argument was based on the fact that with increased length of stay in Diaspora, comes improved incomes and increased size of families. However, one of the few existing studies of retired migrant workers in France, indicate that only a very small proportion of migrants of West African heritage remain in their host communities on a permanent basis. Majority of them tend to spend more time in houses they built in their country of origins, having carried on the culture of building back home and undertake short annual visits to France (Hunter, 2010). Leis (1964) has identified a similar cultural practice of the long-term goal of

building-back-home, amongst the Ijo migrant fishing community. In the course of her study in Korokorosei, Bayelsa State, Nigeria she has observed that:

“The most popular locations (*for fishing*) for Korokorosei men are near Calabar and further east even to the Cameroons, some in the vicinity of Douala. These men, who usually take their families because they expect to spend several years away, hope to accumulate money for use when they return home permanently. At the time of our study, however, only one man appeared to have had an especially worthwhile stay – he was planning to build a fine house” (1964:40)

In Patani, Delta State of Nigeria, the situation was similar. There it was observed that most young men chose to travel far to work, with the aim of earning enough money to achieve the sole goal of building a fine house back home. Leis (1964) has stated that:

“Perhaps the most prevalent goal, however, is to build a fine house, and from the number that are in existence and in the process of being built, it appears many have achieved this end.” (1964:47)

In both cases, the reports show a display of the same migrant worker ideology exhibited among other transnational migrants of African origin. They all tend to build-back-home after several years of sojourn away from home.

Understanding ‘home’ from the migrant worker perspective

Understanding the concept of home is important as this plays a key role in migrant labour activities, as well as being the ultimate location of the building culture activity whether it is virtual and/or actual. Home is a multi-dimensional concept, with extensive multidisciplinary studies already conducted in that area (Mallett, 2004; Perkins et al., 2002; Somerville, 1997; Despres, 1991). Mallett (2004) critically examined dominant and recurring ideas about home in the different contexts in which they were used. The concept, which relates home to journeying, as well as that which relates home to one’s family of origin aptly describes the use of home, in the context of this study. Mallett (2004) stated that:

“These ideas resonate with some of the literature on migrants, refugees and people living in exile. Accordingly, the conditions under which people leave their homelands, their journeys beyond and away from home and their destinations are all said to impact on their identity and understanding of home” (2004: 78)

The reason is that this study focuses on the migrating fishermen who journey away from their birth places and families of origin, as an essential part of their livelihood

practice. Ijo migrant fishermen embark on two forms of migration and these are; an inter-regional or transnational form of migration on the macro-scale and an inter-site or internal form of migration on a micro-scale. The former is where the fishermen relocate and become settlers in other geographic regions and countries. While in the latter form, fishermen carry out various short migratory trips within the region they relocated to, during different fishing seasons in the year. They also return for short visits to their villages of origin as part of their migratory cycle every year. Villages of origin can be defined as home to these fishermen. A summary of the inter-site migratory cycle of Ijo fishermen is given in Figure 1.

METHODOLOGY

There are two locations for this study. The fishing communities within the brackish water and salt water zones of Bayelsa state in Nigeria, which is the sending community and the Bakassi peninsula and Littoral regions in Cameroon, which is the destination community. The data used for this study is obtained from one collected for a much wider study on the dwellings of these Ijo migrant fishermen. A total of 74 fishing camps were visited within the communities in Bayelsa State and the Bakassi Peninsula.

A one-on-one structured interview technique was adopted to obtain the in-depth information necessary for a study such as this. The interviewees all hail from different villages of origin, in the sending communities in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The survey targeted migrant fishermen with over 25 years of sojourn in the destination community, or those who were born there irrespective of the number of years they had spent. The time span of 25years will allow for the minimum tenure of a generation to elapse and has been used by some scholars as a marker to assess possible cultural change or continuity between generations (Eerkens and lipo, 2005; Leis and Hollos, 1995).

Two interview settings were arranged; firstly, the household heads were interviewed in their various fishing camps and then followed back to their villages of origin for further interviews, and to see the investments they had made in permanent buildings. The buildings were at different stages of completion during fieldwork in August 2009 and each with its own accompanying narrative.

The data collected includes information such as; the age of the respondents, place of birth, their length of stay in Diaspora, monthly income, size of their family and frequency of visits back home. This information will constitute variables that will be used to generate bar charts, which will be analysed using bivariate analysis method via SPSS to help ascertain why the interviewees build or do not build back home. Bivariate analysis will allow two variables to be simultaneously analysed so that relationships between the two variables can be examined. It does not necessarily infer causation rather how two variables are related or affect each other. Building back home will be the independent variable while dependent variables will be the various variables earlier stated.

The patterns observed from the charts in addition to other culturally related factors will be used to support the concluding analysis. The data has been viewed by some scholars as factors affecting how migrant workers remit monies back home for investment, in this case their building-back-home culture (Owusu, 1998; Alba and Logan, 1992; Ray and Moore, 1991; Skarbuskis, 1996).

Statistical data

The data obtained from the survey of 74 fishing camps in the

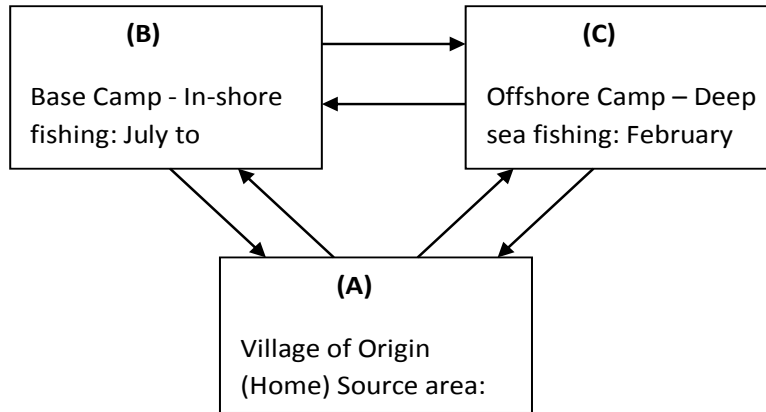


Figure 1. The summary of migratory cycle of Ijo fishermen adapted from (Ezewu and Tahir, 1997).

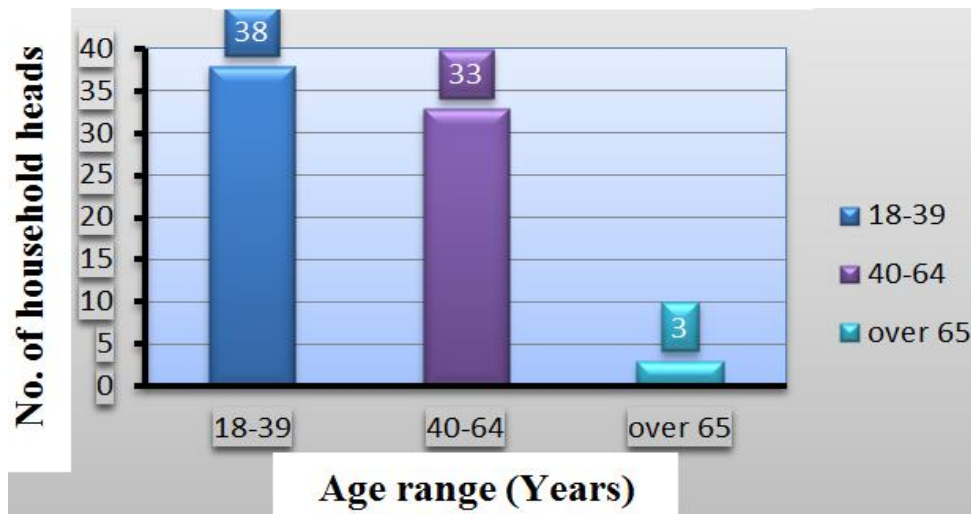


Figure 2. The age range of household heads interviewed.

Bakassi Peninsula, Cameroon include; the age of the respondents, place of birth, their length of stay in Diaspora, monthly income, size of their family and frequency of visits back home. These have each been listed and described with the aid of basic bar charts and briefly discussed accordingly.

Age of respondent and place of birth

Age is of particular interest as the concept of home or the level of place attachment may differ between migrant fishermen born at their place of origin and those born in Diaspora. The figures derived from fieldwork data, showed that 27% of the respondents interviewed, were born in Diaspora. The data also shows that the mode age of this category did not exceed 50 years (Figure 2).

Monthly income

Although the fishermen interviewed all practice a similar vocation,

their monthly incomes vary. This was dependent on various factors such as, the number of boats they owned which served to cover more fishing grounds; the level of fertility of the fishing grounds; and whether or not the fishermen went offshore to the coastal zones which yield bigger catches than fishing in the brackish or estuarine regions. All figures are given in Naira that is the official currency of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and converted to their equivalent in United State dollar (USD) where applicable (Figure 3).

The mode monthly income range was between N51, 000 to N100, 000 (\$250 to \$500 USD) at 37%, 18% earned less than N50, 000 (\$250 USD) monthly, and 12% bring in an income of over N201, 000 (\$1000 USD) monthly, while 5% refused to divulge any information regarding their finances. However, the only pattern identified from the survey data, was that seven of the nine fishermen who earned over N201, 000.00 spent more time fishing in the offshore coastal waters where larger species of adult finfish can be found.

Leis (1964) has stated in her thesis that those who tended to achieve their goal of building fine houses back home, were fishermen who had migrated to the offshore coastal waters to fish:

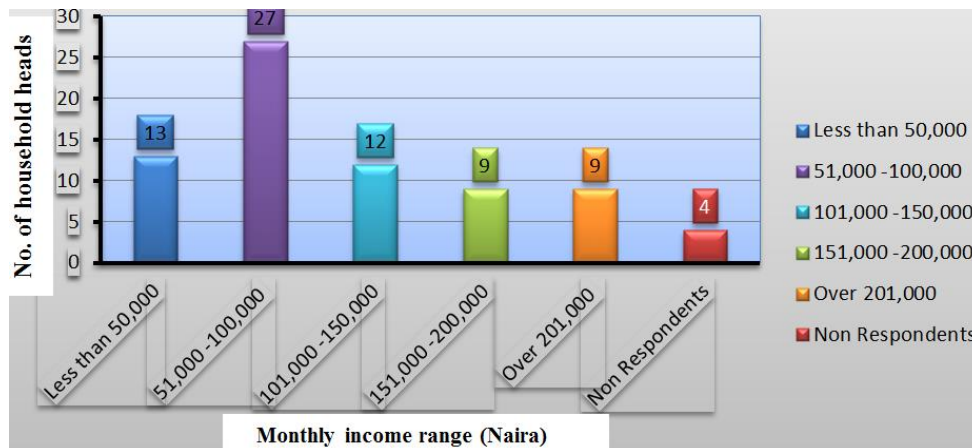


Figure 3. The monthly income range chart.

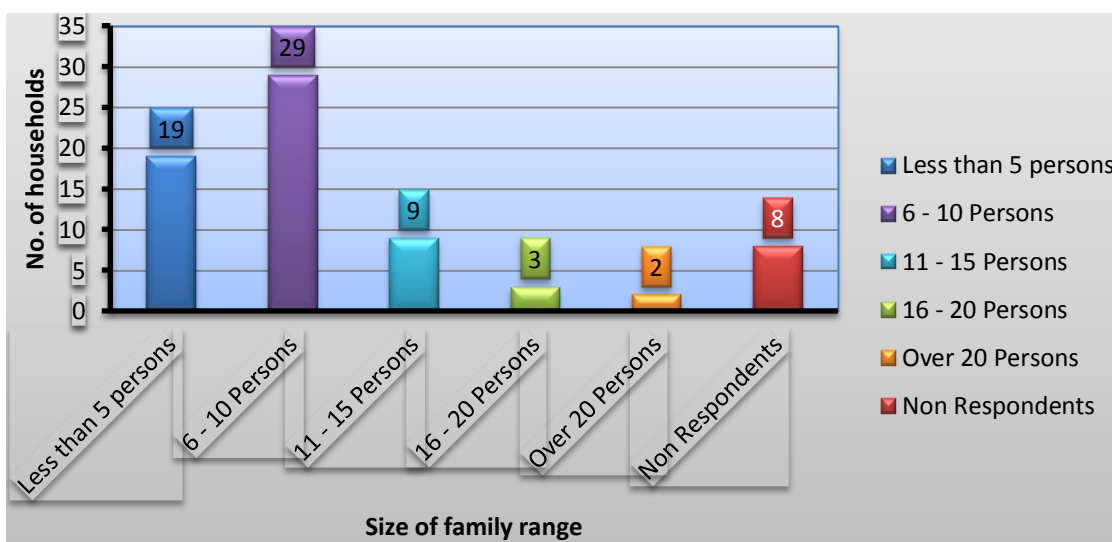


Figure 4. The different ranges of various sizes of family.

“Perhaps the most prevalent goal, however, is to build a fine house, and from the number that are in existence and in the process of being built, it appears many have achieved this end. To our knowledge, only men who have gone to the “coast” earn enough for this purpose” (1964:47).

Size of family

Another factor presumed to affect a migrant worker’s ability to build back home is the size of family. Where the family is large the tendency to save and remit money back home to invest in a house becomes less. In this study on migrant fishermen, family sizes encountered range from less than five persons per household unit to over 20 persons per household. The mode family size range as shown from the survey data is between 6-10 persons, with as much as 29 households within that range. Two household units consisted of over 20 persons, while eight household heads did not divulge information regarding their family size (Figure 4). About 30% of all household heads interviewed, practiced polygamy with each male

household head having an average of two wives.

Length of stay in diaspora

Length of stay in diaspora was also shown using a set of ranges, as some of the interviewees could only give an estimate of the number of years, spent living away from home. A majority of the household heads had lived in Diasporas between 21 to 30 years, while the data indicated the least figure for those who had lived away for over 50 years (Figure 5).

Two out of the three respondents that were over 65 years old, had spent over 50 years living in diaspora, while 70% of those in the age range of 40 to 64, have lived between 21 to 30 and 31 to 49 years in diaspora. The data showed that this category of people were either born in diaspora or moved there with their parents as children, and have remained there ever since. All those in this category, had carried on the traditional livelihood of migrant fishing and most of them had retained the same fishing grounds used by their parents as base camps. This statement from an interview



Figure 5. The length of stay in diaspora.

Table 1. The level of completion of houses.

Building back home	No.	Percentage (%)
Houses completed	8	11
Construction in progress	1	1.5
Plans made to start construction (building materials are being gathered)	33	45
Intention to build but no plans yet to start construction (building materials yet to be gathered)	30	41
No intention to build	1	1.5
-	74	100

extract reflects the typical reasons behind the length of stay of most of the current generation:

“My grandfather moved to Nguoso fishing camp in Cameroon. The camp was established around 1969 and my father joined them there. I was born in the camp. I even went to primary school around there. I grew up in that camp and when I got married I brought my wife to stay with me in the camp. I am now the chief (headman) of the camp” (Obiriki Godspower, April 2007).

Frequency of visits home

The survey further shows, that only a small percentage of these ones actually pay regular (yearly) visits back to their villages of origin. The chart below shows the percentage of those that travel regularly to their villages of origin, those who visit less frequently and only for specific reasons, and those who have never travelled back to their homes of origin in the course of their emigrational journeys. Travel is used here in the context of not just maintaining contact with relatives back home but being physically present there to participate in events involving family and/or community (for example, burials, weddings and festivities) (Figure 5).

RESULTS

The household heads were asked to reveal the stage

each had reached in fulfilling their long-term goal of building-back-home. The responses obtained were placed under five different categories. Of the 74 household heads that were interviewed, the results derived are shown in Table 1.

Based on these survey results, the migrant fishermen had either finished building their houses; were in the process of constructing the house; had put plans in motion for the commencement of the work; or were yet to start the work but with every intention of doing so. The only respondent, that indicated no interest in building-back-home, revealed that he was not born in his village of origin but was orphaned at an early age and to the best of his knowledge, had no surviving kin in his home of origin. As a result, he had not travelled back home throughout his adult life but continued in the fishing business handed down by his parents.

In Table 1, those who indicated that they had set plans in motion to commence construction, were referring to the fact that building materials required for the construction, were gradually being gathered and stored up. The format this process takes is that money is usually remitted home for the purchase of Portland cement with which concrete blocks are made, timber for the roof frame, roofing sheets

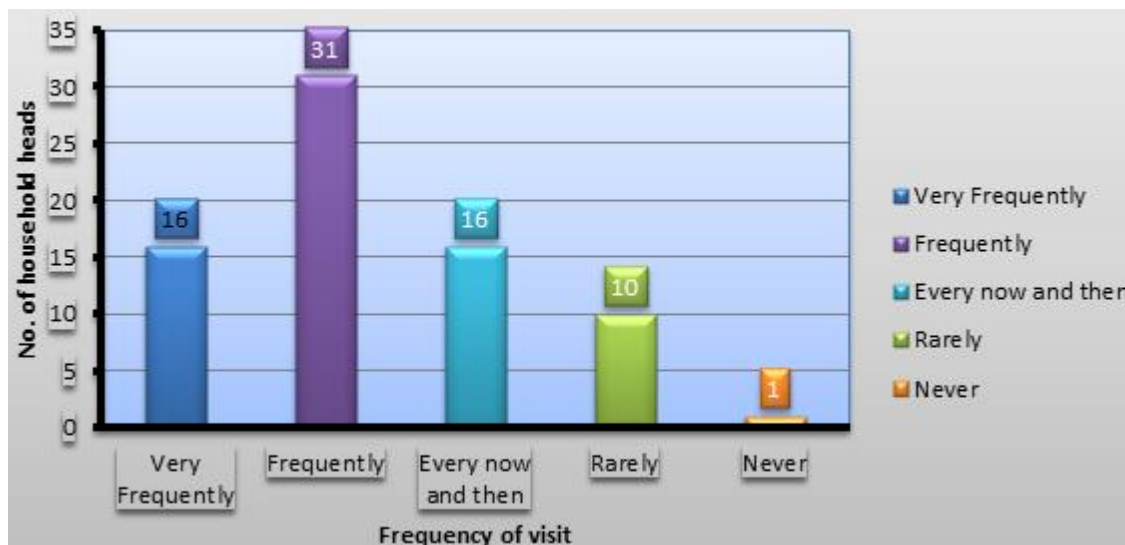


Figure 6. The travel – home chart.

etc. are purchased. This process can go on for years until the materials required for the project are obtained. The blocks are moulded by hand on the site where the proposed building is to be situated (Figure 6).

The data also reveals that those who intend to build but have yet to make any plans to start are made up of the number who rarely travel and those who occasionally travel to their places of origin.

Interpretation of bivariate analysis of data

The study focused on examining the various factors that are likely to affect building back home culture alongside real situations observed during fieldwork.

The analysis shows that firstly, age was not a factor in the intention to build or the successful completion of the house. No relationship was identified between those who had completed their housing projects and a specific age range. Similarly, no relationship was identified between those who had made plans to start building, or those who though intending to build were yet to start, and any of the various age ranges. Secondly, no relationship was identified between lengths of stay and the practice of building-back-home. In effect, the results show that intentions to build-back-home were not affected in anyway by length of stay in the host community. Thirdly, between place of birth and the desire to build-back-home, the data indicated that this variable does have a relationship with the building-back-home culture to some extent.

However, this was connected more to maintenance of kinship ties, and the data showed that a greater percentage of those who were born in diaspora either maintained weak links or no links at all to their kinsmen in their places of origin. The data revealed that this group

constituted a large percentage of those who intended to build-back-home but have made no plans whatsoever to do so. As well as the solitary case of the respondent who was born in Diaspora and indicated no desire to build-back-home.

Forthly, the data does not support the presumption that the size of the family negatively impacts on their ability to build-back-home. Most of the respondents practicing polygamy maintained that having a large family helps increase income in the fishing business as there are more hands to set traps and process the catch. For instance, one of the respondents Mr. Clement Ivory (56 years) who has been in the migrant fishing business since 1979 is married with 4 wives, and has 21 children but has managed to build a 7 bedroom bungalow in his hometown of Agrisaba almost to completion (Figures 7 and 8).

Lastly, the results show that Owusu's (1998) hypothesis, which suggests that level of income received into each household, could negatively affect the building-back-home culture was not reflected in the analysis. In this study, the context of home ownership and the host environment in which the home is to be owned differs considerably. Inversely, in this situation, increased level of income ought to facilitate the practice of building-back-home. However, the results of this survey show that this is not the case as none of those with the over N200, 000 monthly income had completed their housing projects. As such, the level of income of the migrant fishers did not necessarily influence their building-back-home culture.

However, the frequency of travel back home showed some relationship to the building-back-home practice but in a reverse way. Among those who rarely travelled home, were found a larger percentage of fishers who had completed their building projects. A follow up of this

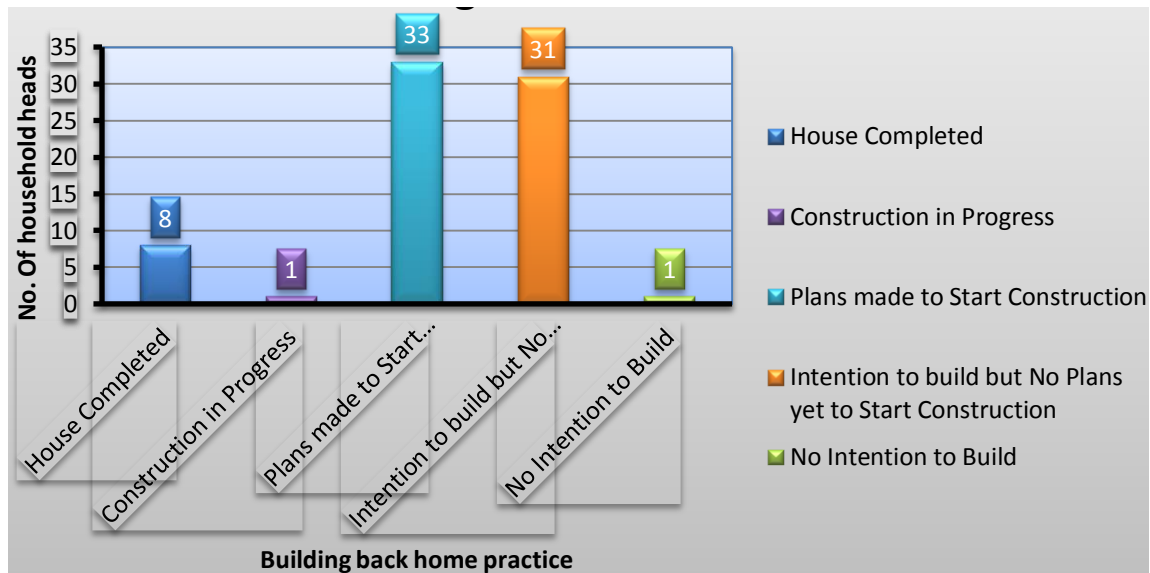


Figure 7. The building-back-home chart.



Figure 8. Mr Ivory's fishing camp at Nembe.

percentage was observed among those who travelled most frequently. A possible explanation for this is that, those who rarely travelled had enough time to accumulate or save up their earnings and the occasions when they eventually returned home was for the purpose of taking the savings to handle the project and staying long enough to ensure that the funds are judiciously utilised. For the most frequent travellers, the study revealed that most fishermen who frequently travelled were engaged in a second vocation of trading. Trading ensured a more regular flow of cash which although, was not necessarily large, was more regular and could be channelled towards the building project in quicker successions. Trading also afforded the migrant fishers more opportunities to travel and interact with kinsmen,

thereby strengthening kinship ties (Figure 9).

Evidently, kinship ties have been identified as the most significant variable affecting the practice of building-back-home amongst migrant fishermen in this study. This creates an opportunity for re-thinking the underlying factors that have sustained the practice of building-back-home, amidst the mitigating effects of generational change and financial inadequacy, experienced among migrant fishing communities.

Apparently, the pull factor of migrant fishers to their homes of origin is less of the issue of self-interest by building status-enhancing houses but more about maintaining and strengthening kinship ties at the place of origin. This is similar to Mooney's (2003) findings in his study of Mexican migrants in the US that show how social



Figure 9. Mr Ivory's house at Agrisaba showing two of his wives.

ties affect migrants' investment behaviour. Similarly, Tiemoko (2004) looked at the role of the family in returning migration and investment back home. In his analysis, he observed that returning home, sending remittances and investment back home were strongly linked to family reasons or kinship ties and the maintenance of these kinship ties by keeping in contact with family.

Other socio-economic factors

Based on the narratives obtained from the interviewees, it shows that besides factors such as age of respondents; length of stay in Diasporas; income; size of family, frequency of travel and place of birth, there are other socio-economic factors that could affect the building-back-home culture of migrant workers. Some of these factors may be more culture and place-specific while others are primarily social. They include issues such as; family demands and responsibilities; traditional credit systems as well as policies and tax issues.

Family demands and responsibilities

Based on the data obtained from the interviews, it was observed that remitting money to sponsor children in higher education or to meet the demands of kinsmen can encroach into finances reserved for the building project. And where remittances are constantly made for altruistic purposes such as this, plans for the construction of buildings back home are often delayed. On this issue one of the respondents stated that:

"After losing my husband, I was left to cater for our three children. I have been doing that with this fishing business for the past 18 years. I have been building my house for the past nine years; it is not completed because I am also

sponsoring two of my children through the university...but I am happy" (Interview extract with Mercy Kala, July 2009 – Obiota village, Agrisaba, Nembe LGA) (Figures 10 to 14).

Another narrative given by a respondent also shows how the building culture is carried on alongside family demands and responsibilities:

"I have been building this one storey house since 1982, I haven't finished it because at the same time I have trained four of my nine children through the university and they have graduated. I don't make much profit from my fishing but at least I can feed my two wives and the rest of my children" (Interview extract July 2009 – Chief Benjamin Dienagha, Okoroba village, Minikesi, Nembe LGA) (Figures 15 and 16).

Traditional credit systems

Another factor that has been identified as affecting the building-back-home culture of migrant fishermen is the issue of traditional credit systems. This is a system to which several migrant fishermen are known to be indebted as observed during the interviews. This supports Yami's (2000) findings on fishermen's credit schemes in the Niger Delta, operated through local thrift systems and money lenders. His study shows some of the reasons behind the decline in profitability in the fishing business and lists the traditional credit systems as one of the major reasons:

"Unfortunately, the fisherfolk pay a very high price for the money they borrow from fish dealers, money-lenders, and equipment and goods suppliers who are the core of this system. In many cases fishermen are obliged to sell their catches to their creditors at predetermined prices, which in most cases are lower than prevailing market

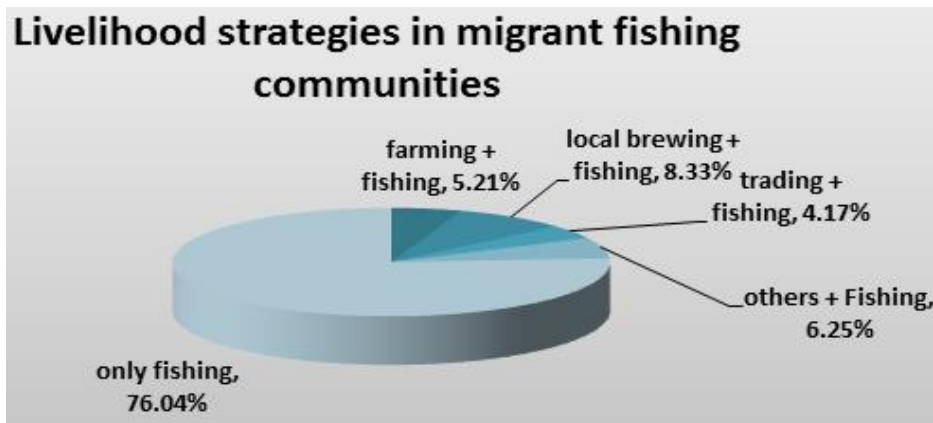


Figure 10. The livelihood strategies in Ijo migrant communities.



Figure 11. Madam Mercy Kala at her fishing camp.



Figure 12. 4-bedroom bungalow being built by Madam Mercy at Obiota village.

prices. Also, loans may be given in the form of supplies or equipment at prices higher than prevailing market prices. Hence, the traditional credit is usually expensive,

and tends to keep the borrowers in a constant dependence on the creditor” (2000:12) Information obtained from the respondents during interviews revealed



Figure 13. Chief Benjamin's fishing camp.



Figure 14. Chief Benjamin's one-story building at Okoroba village with a temporary roof covering over a part of it.

that every household head has at one time or the other obtained loans from money lenders or collected fishing equipment on credit from suppliers. Many fishermen see this as a way of life and are constantly indebted, only being able to service the interests on the said loans periodically. Some of the fishermen whose buildings were still uncompleted attributed the state of the projects to lack of remittable funds due to debts owed on credit schemes.

Policies and tax issues affecting migrant workers

Generally, non-indigenous settlers in the Bakassi Peninsula are expected to pay residence and work permits amongst other annual taxes. A resident permit is not a guarantee for a work permit at any level. The age of eligibility from when a resident permit is required as

reported by settlers is 15 years. Due to the active transnational migration activities experienced between the regions' borders, the peninsula is a big catchment area for arbitrary taxation on settlers.

Joseph Fawere, a former resident of *Ijomanbita* fishing port in Bakassi states in his narrative that all sorts of arbitrary permits besides the officially designated ones were been placed on them. They include:

1. Fishing permit – to fish in any of the inshore rivers and territorial waters
2. Boat parking permit – for parking one's boat or tying it to a stake even in front of one's residence
3. Trading permit – to sell one's catch or produce in any of the local markets

For all these permits there were no fixed rates. Each band of gendarmes placed various premiums on the



Figure 15. Chief Benjamin's fishing Camp.



Figure 16. Chief Bejamin's one-story Building at Okoroba village with a temporary roof covering over a part of it.

fishermen and their catch as they saw fit, sometimes collecting the catch or other property where cash is not available. Refusal to pay could result in fishing camps being burnt down or seizing of boats and fishing equipment. Some of the experiences of interviewees have been relayed below to give a firsthand account of their ordeals. Arthur Ewenimo, a fisherman who lived in Custom fishing port in Bakassi for 30 years states that:

“My houses and equipment were burnt three times over by the gendarmes. Each time they burnt it, I had to start afresh, taking loans to rebuild my life and business.... other times the gendarmes surround the house and shoot into the air scaring everyone off after which they collect all the properties left behind.....sometimes they burn down the house but other times they don't” (Interview

number 50 : July 2008).

Janet Okodi an artisanal fisher, a wife and mother of five who lived at Esenge fishing port, Bakassi gives her account;

“Sometimes the gendarmes take everything you have and leave you empty handed...one day I was returning from fishing with three of my children and they came, we all ran in different directions. My children ran into the mangrove bushes and I jumped from my canoe and ran in the opposite direction into the forest. I didn't know where my children where...I didn't see them that day.

Someone saw them crying when he was paddling in the swamp and brought them later. I had to borrow money to buy my nets and fishing materials again”

(Interview number 57: July 2008).

In the course of the interview, some of the respondents attributed their inability to complete their houses back home to the heavy taxes levied against them in their host communities. Others who have suffered similar ordeals like the two respondents listed earlier state that, repayment of the loans borrowed to revive their fishing businesses after successive losses to gendarmeries is the major reason they have not been able to build back home.

Conclusions

This study commences by discussing the issue of migrant fishing as a form of labour migration, thus creating opportunities for it to be analysed under the broader field of migration studies. This allows the migrant fishing theme to be assessed using similar variables, factors and forces that have been shown to affect the more common aspects of labour migrations. In addition, the paper investigates the concept of home from a journeyman or immigrant's perspective and by so doing, serves to strengthen the social nature of home in relation to family of origin and the psychological and sociological connotations journeying, returning and maintaining kinship ties through investments in housing.

Indeed, the result of this study based on bivariate analysis via SPSS indicates that certain variables such as income, age and length of stay in Diasporas did not directly affect the building-back-home culture of Ijo migrant fishermen. It also reveals that other variables such as frequency of travel and place of birth does have a relationship with the building-back-home tendency of migrant fishermen especially as it relates to kinship ties. What this study strongly emphasizes therefore, is the important link between maintaining existing family ties and building-back-home. In addition, the study also revealed that other variables such as the size of the family does not negatively affect the building-back-home culture of these migrant fishers.

Also, other issues observed through the results of this study is that although distinctive variables that could affect this building culture have been emphasized, yet some of the past hypotheses suggesting the correlation of these variables to the act of building-back-home are not generalizable. Rather, this study reveals the existence of other supporting factors such as policies and taxes, traditional credit systems, and family responsibilities that make demands on the fishermen's income and ultimately affects his ability to build-back-home.

It is my hope that this study serves as a continuation of the discussion of the effects of numerous variables on return migration and remittances that increasingly highlights the culture, environment and context-specific nature of labour migration and building culture.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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A young girl with dark hair tied back in a ponytail with a blue hair tie, wearing a pink long-sleeved shirt, is seen from behind. She is looking at a chalkboard that has several musical notes drawn on it in white chalk. The background is a dark green chalkboard with white musical notes scattered across it. The overall scene is set in a classroom or music room.

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