

# Exploring the interconnection of geographical mobility and skilled labor as a pathway to sustainable development: a case analysis of South Korea to derive lessons for Nigeria

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**Abstract.** *Objective: Poverty is a major issue in Nigeria, with rising rates despite a growing youth population. Organizations struggle to fill technical and highly skilled job vacancies due to a lack of highly skilled workers. In 1946, South Korea had the same challenge, but was able to make the transition from a developing country to a developed country in the shortest timeline amongst developed countries. Hence, this research aims to provide empirical evidence on South Korea's successful strategies, offering lessons for Nigeria. A comparative analysis of policies was carried out to highlight areas for improvement for Nigerian policies; Method: The methodology adopted in this study was mixed. It involved a qualitative analysis (comprehensive literature review), and quantitative analysis (Correlation analysis). Contributions were selected from databases like SCOPUS and Google Scholar, while secondary data was collected from international organizations- such as the World Bank and the United Nations. The data was analyzed using the statistical program - Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). This research examined three hypotheses based on studies published in conference proceedings, reports, dissertations, and manuscripts written in English; Results: The results of this study highlight the importance of geographical mobility in addressing labor shortages and promoting sustainable development. However, effective governmental intervention is crucial to harness these benefits. Policies should facilitate the repatriation of skilled natives and the integration of both high-skilled and low-skilled migrants. In addition, education and support mechanisms are essential for smooth assimilation into the workforce. This study also reveals that South Korea's visa framework is more robust than Nigeria's, focusing on attracting migrants through various channels, including research, study, and entrepreneurship. Additionally, South Korea has support programs for repatriated natives and migrants, which Nigeria does not have, leading to different outcomes in sustainable development; Originality: This pioneering study examines the complex relationships among repatriation, immigration, skilled labor, and sustainable development. By breaking new ground in socio-economic research, it uncovers nuanced dynamics and interdependencies, aiming to inform policy formulation and decision-making. This foundational work sets a precedent for future research and comprehensive global development analyses.*

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## 1. Introduction

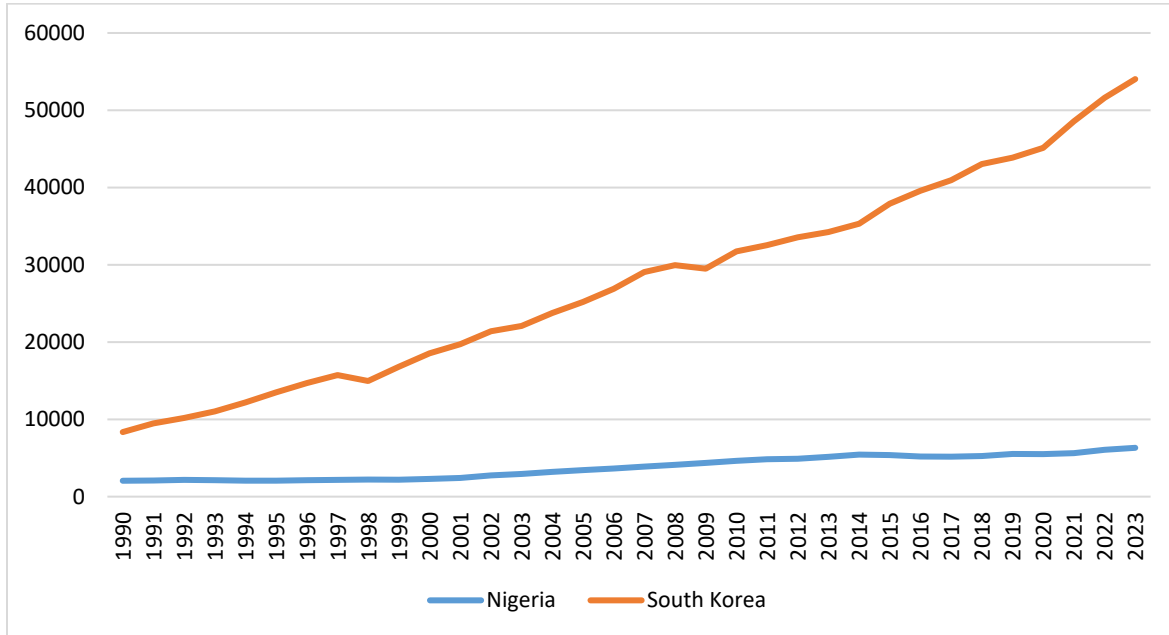
One of the benefits of globalization is the ease of mobility of workers. While shortages of workers can be addressed - through geographical migration, Sub-Saharan countries (most especially Nigeria) are not making good use of migration to improve their economy and quality of life. This gap necessitated the need for this study to examine a developed country (South Korea) to derive lessons for Nigeria. The study is one of the earliest studies to achieve this feat. The results that were obtained in this study would be useful for the Nigerian government, policy makers and civil society - to determine the best approach to tackle poverty and lead sustainable development by taking advantage of global mobility.

Labor mobility involves the ease with which workers move from one job or location to the other to secure a better offer / life. According to Lugosi & Ndiuini (2022), labor mobility is important in filling gaps within the health sector. While there are different types of labor mobility (local and international), this study focused on international mobility of labor. Similarly, under international mobility, this research concentrated on international geographical mobility of labor. Despite the fact that labor mobility has some disadvantages, its benefits supersede its drawbacks. Some of the dis-benefits of labor mobility include – a reduction in wages, excessive competitiveness and the loss of jobs (Tretyakova et al., 2016). On the other hand, labor mobility fosters regional development, improves the availability of skilled labor, and bridges labor gaps (Tretyakova et al., 2016).

Various factors are responsible for labor mobility. For instance, a study that considered the impact of personal traits and cognitive ability on geographical mobility concluded that there was a positive relationship (Bütikofer et al., 2021). This is because these factors are very important in helping an individual integrate into a work environment or society easily. Similarly, the labor market has an impact on labor mobility. In Europe, the labor market is a key factor that drives geographical migration (Dorn & Zweimüller, 2021). This is because the dynamics of the supply and demand of labor have an impact on the way potential employees move from one country to another. In another study, the importance of international wage on the mobility of labor was analyzed and the results showed that there was a positive relationship (Oladi & Beladi, 2007). This is because; workers are constantly looking to improve their earning and would relocate to places that offer them a better life.

While there have been many studies focused on geographical mobility and its effects in the global North, there is a paucity of research in the global South. However, this research examined the relationship between geographic mobility, and skilled labor, as a pathway to sustainable development. This was achieved by carrying out a case analysis of South Korea with the aim of deriving lessons for Nigeria. This is because South Korea is one of the developed countries that has been able to take advantage of geographical mobility to bridge its labor gaps and lead sustainable development. In-addition, the current economic situation in Nigeria is similar to that of South Korea in 1990. This is because the GDP per capita in Korea was similar to that of today's Nigeria (See Figure 1, for more details).

Furthermore, learning from experience is one of the key factors that developed countries, such as South Korea, have used to develop their economies and make the transition from developing to developed nations (Shenkoya, 2019). Hence, the results of this study will provide useful lessons for Nigeria and Sub-Saharan countries to use in enhancing their development approach to lead sustainable development and eradicate poverty.

**Figure 1. GDP per capita of Korea and Nigeria**

Source: World Bank Group (2024)

The results of the study would help countries in the global south determine the right approach to attain the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This study was structured in the following sections: introduction, literature review, methodology, research results and discussion, and conclusion.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Theoretical background

Within this section, the hypotheses that this study explored were considered. Geographical mobility exists in various forms; some of which includes – local (internal), international (external), immigration, emigration, and repatriation. Repatriation represents a major part of geographical migration. It involves people returning to their country of origin by themselves or through the help of their government or the government of the country they are living in (Ellis et al., 2020; Yun & Kim, 2021). Several studies exist on the relationship between repatriation and skilled labor. For instance, a study that analyzed the impact of Mexicans that were repatriated by the US government to Mexico, on the US economy, showed that it led to a reduction in the availability of labor in the US (Lee et al., 2022). However, this was more noticeable for low-skilled workers and workers in urban areas. Another study showed that in the 1920s, Mexican students in the US were critical to fill labor gaps in the country during the period of advance development (Roth, 2023).

In India, during the colonial era, the British employed Indians to work in their plantation to improve their staff strength to manage the plantations, however, only people that belonged to the high caste system repatriated themselves to their communities after their period of service (Hui & Kambhampati, 2022). Similarly, in 2014, the Israeli government implemented a program to repatriate its citizens with advanced skills to work with the government to develop the country (Cohen, 2020). This was done to reverse the brain drain that occurred at that time in Israel. However, the history of repatriation of Israelis by the Israeli government began in the 1950s. This policy has improved the

availability of skilled labor in Israel and contributed to the economic growth of the country (Cohen, 2020).

A study in South Africa examined the implications of internal migration from the rural to the urban area and concluded that it was having a negative effect on the availability of labor in the rural areas of the country (Selelo et al., 2023). This is because migration from the rural to the urban area was leading to a brain drain and hampered development. Another study in India showed that repatriated migrants have had a positive impact on the agricultural sector in the country by improving the supply chain (Sahoo & Swain, 2022). While significant studies on repatriation and its impact on development have been conducted, most studies focus on repatriation from an involuntary aspect and most focus on developed countries. The approach this study adopted was to consider repatriation from a voluntary aspect and from the assistance of the native country of the migrant. Hence, the correlation between repatriation, skilled labor and sustainable development was analyzed. Therefore, the first hypothesis of this study was:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Repatriation is positively related to the availability of skilled labor and sustainable development.*

One of the benefits of immigrants in the country is that they support the labor force within the economy. A study conducted on the impact of immigration on the US and Canadian labor market concluded that immigrants have the capacity to meet the labor needs within these economies - if immigration system is tailored to meet its market needs (Lu & Hou, 2020). While governments globally are aware of the importance of immigrants in enhancing their labor force, it is important that this should be need based else, the dis-benefits of immigration would start to show. If immigration is done properly, immigrants and their family members would contribute better to health, the economy, and the education of their host country (Feliciano, 2020).

Immigrants fall into two broad categories which are: documented (legal) and undocumented (illegal) immigrants. Documented immigrants follow due process in getting their immigration status while undocumented immigrants do not. Both types of immigrants have an effect on the availability of labor. While immigrants support the creation of new jobs, undocumented immigrants accept lower wages thereby reducing unemployment amongst natives, while documented immigrants lead to competition for jobs with natives (Albert, 2021). Another study showed that the contribution of immigrants to the economy is not limited to the availability of skilled labor, but it also involves the creation of new businesses that contribute to the economy (Azoulay et al., 2022). These businesses create job opportunities and provide essential services and products needed within the economy.

Immigration is one of the driving forces of the US economy. Most of the immigrants in the US are from Mexico. However, many of these immigrants are low-skilled. A study that considered the effect of these low-skilled Mexican immigrants on the US economy, concluded that they increase the availability of low-skilled workers, the earnings of American low-skilled workers decrease, and housing prices increase; in the short run (Monras & Monras, 2020). On the other hand, in the long run, low-skilled American workers suffer from low wages, and lower housing prices in areas where immigrants live (Monras & Monras, 2020). While the results from these studies showed that immigration had both positive and negative impacts from various countries – mainly in the West - in this study, the effects of immigration on the availability of skilled labor and development was studied from a case analysis of South Korea to derive lessons for Nigeria. Hence, the second hypothesis of this study was:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Immigration is positively related to the availability of skilled labor and sustainable development.*

Education is an important aspect of human capital development. On the other hand, human capital development is important to the quality of human resources available within an economy. Individuals cannot contribute their own quote to national development without the right skill or

knowledge which is provided by education. Vocational education is one of the ways of empowering workers. For instance, a study conducted in India on the importance of vocational education on human capital development concluded that it was important in training individuals to fill the gaps created by the shortage of skilled labor (Pilz & Regel, 2021). Another study conducted in Indonesia argued that vocational education institutions were important in developing skilled workers (Pambudi & Harjanto, 2020).

A study conducted in Vietnam on the role of education in providing computer skills to workers in the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution concluded that education provided employees with the right skills and knowledge to remain relevant in this era (Huy et al., 2020). The main characteristics that distinguish highly skilled workers from their counterparts is their high level of education. As such, highly skilled migrant workers contribute to economic growth and competitiveness of their host country (Huy et al., 2020). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the level of education of highly skilled workers has made it possible for them to use modern technologies of the era to improve their performance at work (Schwabe & Castellacci, 2020). Similarly, education contributes to economic growth through the enhancement of knowledge capital (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020). Based on the results of the examination of extant studies, education plays a major role in the availability of skilled labor and economic development. This study would provide empirical evidence through a case analysis of South Korea from the perspective of geographical migration. Hence, the third hypothesis of this study was:

*H<sub>3</sub>: Education of immigrants is positively related to the availability of skilled labor and sustainable development.*

### **3. Methodology**

The methodology used herein was mixed, involving both a qualitative and quantitative analysis. A review of extant literatures was utilized, and an analysis of secondary data was carried out using the statistical program SPSS. Because a case analysis of South Korea to derive lessons for Nigeria was carried out, a mixed methodology is the most suitable methodology for this study. According to Hemsley-Brown & Sharp (2003), the review of literature is suitable for studies that seek to provide suitable and comprehensive answers to various questions considered within a study. The literature search was conducted in databases such as SCOPUS, Web of Science, Google Scholar and the Korean Citation Index, while secondary data was collected from the World Bank and other sources. Materials including conference proceedings, white papers, brief reports, discussion papers, reports, specific guidelines, dissertations, and published manuscripts were considered herein. The main criteria for including a contribution in this research is that it contained the main keywords of the search. Also, the publications were written in English. Studies that did not meet these criteria were excluded from this research.

### **4. Research results and discussion**

In this section, using extant literatures, the hypotheses in this study were explored, using a case analysis of South Korea and a consideration of the current situation in Nigeria.

#### **4.1. A case analysis of the interconnection of repatriation, and skilled labor for sustainable development**

Analyzing the first hypothesis of this study that evaluated the impact of repatriation on the availability of skilled labor, the results of the case analysis of Korea were presented in this subsection.

After the Korean war in 1954, poverty was rampant in South Korea and there was barely any structure left intact (Shenkoya, 2019; Shenkoya & Kim, 2018). The Korean government was a recipient of aid from various developed countries (Shenkoya, 2019). However, the Korean government using its strategic development plan devised a way to strengthen its education system and the availability of skilled labor - through a partnership with several developed countries to send their students and workers to these countries to learn and gain practical skills and experience (Shenkoya & Kim, 2020). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many Koreans returned back to Korea after spending time learning and gaining experience in these countries. This helped Korea make the transition from a developing country to a developed country within the shortest time in comparison to other developed countries globally. According to Shenkoya (2019), Korea made this transition in 19 years which represents the shortest time a developed country used to achieve this feat.

Koreans transitioned from a technology importer to a developer of technology in phases (Shenkoya, 2019):

- Firstly, the government sent out experts to be trained by their counterparts in developed countries;
- Secondly, these experts returned to the country and started using the skills and knowledge they gained to develop components within systems of technological products - while the other parts were imported;
- Thirdly, they eventually learned how to develop whole systems without importing parts.

Hence, the Korean government was able to empower and develop a skilled labor force. On the other hand, individuals on their own took personal efforts to benefit from world-class education in developed countries during the period preceding the Korean war through migrant studies in countries across the world (mainly in the West). However, many of the Koreans that traveled abroad during this period returned after gaining significant skills, knowledge and experience; because of the incentives the Korean government offered returnees (Mohamed & Abdul-Talib, 2020). Likewise, the students that studied in developed countries returned to Korea to become lecturers (Khanal & Gaulee, 2019). This in turn helped to strengthen the educational system in the country and build a strong labor force. Based on the case analysis of Korea, the results from extant studies show that repatriation is directly related to the development of a skilled labor force.

On the other hand, a consideration of the impact of repatriation on the availability of skilled labor in Nigeria was examined. In Nigeria, during the era of slave trade, most people emigrated out of the country (not willingly, but forcefully as slaves). After the slave trade ended in the 1940s, many Nigerians returned to Nigeria because of the abolition of the slave trade (Ekanade, 2020). Despite the fact that many of those that voluntarily repatriated to Nigeria had developed skills, knowledge and experience during their sojourning abroad, they could not use their skills effectively because of the harsh nature of doing business in the economy and because legislations in African countries does not support them to integrate properly into the society (Ekanade, 2020). Furthermore, like the Korean government, the Nigerian government encouraged students, civil servants, researchers and individuals to study abroad and gain skills abroad (Campbell, Kelly-Weber, et al., 2021; Campbell, Lavalley, et al., 2021; Thurston, 2014). However, most Nigerians that travel abroad do not return to the country. This defeats the aim of the Nigerian government to strengthen its skilled workforce. For instance, an examination of the Nigerian - American scholarship program that supports Nigerian students to study in America showed that repatriated students were about 36% between 1959 to 1975 (Chideya, 1981). This presents a major issue. The issue of the availability of skilled labor is noticeable in the skill mismatch visible within the labor force in Nigeria (Aminu, 2019). The Nigerian government needs to put more effort in creating incentives and an enabling environment to stimulate the interest of Nigerians living abroad to return home just like the Korean government is doing.

#### **4.2. Evaluating the nexus of immigration, skilled workforce, and sustainable development**

While the impact of immigration on the availability of skilled workers on development has been studied extensively in South Korea, there is a paucity of such studies in Nigeria. However, previous studies about Korea focused on immigration from the perspective of natives with dual citizenship returning to their countries or non-native immigrants. This study presents itself as one of the earliest studies to consider immigration from both perspectives. Firstly, a case analysis of South Korea was considered.

In South Korea, immigration played a fundamental role in meeting the shortage of labor within the economy. According to Kong et al. (2010), the labor gap experienced in South Korea is making the immigration of native Koreans abroad and immigrants possible. This is because the Korean government has made it attractive for native Koreans living abroad to integrate properly into Korean society through the implementation of effective immigration policies and through offering various incentives. Likewise, the immigration policies in South Korea are effective in attracting immigrants from developing countries. The policies are particularly effective in driving immigration from international professionals, ethnic Koreans and marriage migrants (Torneo, 2016). In fact, the ready availability of migrants in South Korea has improved the labor market because there is no evidence that it has affected the earnings or employment of native Koreans (Kim, 2023). Due to the rapid economic growth in Korea and the low fertility rate, Korea has been experiencing a shortage of labor (Cho, 2021; Ducanes & Abella, 2008). The Korean government has been able to benefit from the wealth of experience of international professionals to drive its economy through immigration (Das et al., 2020). Overall, the impact of immigration to the Korean economy can be summarized in terms of bridging the labor gap, enhancing innovation and improving the availability of labor (skilled and unskilled).

The impact of immigration in South Korea is noticeable in the innovative capacity of the nation. According to Enkhtaivan et al. (2020), the top five innovative countries in the world are the US, Japan, South Korea, Canada, Australia, and migration improves brain gain in these countries. The study showed that brain drain in developing countries (countries of origin of most immigrants) is fueling a brain gain in their destination country (developed countries). This leads to innovation and drives sustainable development in developed countries. Similarly, a study that considered the effect of immigration on major innovative economies (US, Japan, South Korea, Canada, Australia) and the innovativeness of these countries, argued that there was a positive correlation (Drivas et al., 2020).

Conversely, the role of immigration in Nigeria was explored. It is important to emphasize that studies on immigrants in Nigeria are few, and this study contributes to the body of knowledge by carrying out a quality study on the subject matter. While most immigrants in Nigeria are refugees and asylum seekers from neighboring countries in crisis, such as Cameroon, Chad and Niger, many of them are unskilled, while the economy is in need of skilled labor (Adedokun & Karzanova, 2019). A country like Nigeria with a vibrant youthful population has an abundance of unskilled / low-skilled labor, but is lacking high-skilled labor. Similarly, emigration from Nigeria is severe, leading to a serious case of brain drain. Hence, the impact of immigration in Nigeria is inconclusive. This is based on the lack of extant studies related to the matter. However, with the dwindling economic situation in Nigeria, it is important that the Nigerian government adopt the development and implementation of an immigration policy that will attract skilled workers from other African countries to Nigeria. This policy should also contain important details that will encourage native Nigerians living abroad to return to the country. The first migration policy developed in Nigeria was in 2007, while several other policies have been developed in the following 10 years (Nneli et al., 2022). Key policies that have been developed during this period include those on diaspora and internally displaced people (IDPs), labor migration, general

migration policy and immigration legislation (Nneli et al., 2022). However, these policies have not been effective at delivering the results they have set out to achieve.

### **4.3. An Examination of the interrelationship between education, migration, skilled workforce, and sustainable development**

Education plays an important role in all facets of life including the availability of skilled workers and sustainable development. This is because skilled labor can be broadly divided into two parts; high and low-skilled labor. High-skilled workers represent a group of highly trained professionals while low-skilled workers have little or no educational training (Dolado et al., 2021; Wolcott, 2021). A research study that considered the implications of migration on technology and the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, posited that countries like South Korea, which had a large population of citizens living abroad, stood a good chance of benefiting from the emigration of these populations (Gelb & Krishnan, 2018). This is because native emigrants that return to their country enhance the development of new technologies, entrepreneurship, business networks and market knowledge (Gelb & Krishnan, 2018). It is important to note that migrants usually possess one form of skill or the other to make them eligible to work in another country. For instance, in China, migrants are sourced based on their skills and educational background (Kawashima, 2021).

In Korea, most of the migrant workers sourced from outside the country are through education migration (Baas, 2019). The relationship between education and migration is intertwined. Many countries are using education migration to attract skilled workers from other countries, one of such is South Korea (Baas, 2019). The aim is to have students come to the country to acquire education and then remain in the country to use the skill, knowledge and experience they gained. This is because, after completing their education, migrant students become essential for filling highly skilled jobs. On the other hand, the Korean government is actively seeking to attract low-skilled workers. While most of the jobs the Korean government is trying to get workers for are highly skilled jobs, they attract low-skilled workers from neighboring countries and train them using vocational education and training (VET). A study that considered the impact of VET on employment argued that the use of VET to trained low-skilled workers had a positive impact on the availability of skilled labor (Choi et al., 2019). The study further concluded that these trained labor forces are more likely to secure short-term employment opportunities.

Likewise, before a migrant is given the permission to work in Korea, the government ensures that potential foreign workers learn the Korean language (Sohn & Kang, 2021). This is because the national language in Korea is Korean and migrants cannot optimize their performance without a good command of the language. Similarly, the Korean government scheme is granting express visa access to Chinese workers with Korean heritage to fill the labor gap in the country via working in the low-skilled labor sector (Lee & Chien, 2017). This is important because according to Lee & Kim (2024), Korea has the lowest fertility rate in the world. This is one of the main reasons for the labor shortage besides the issue of aging. As such, education, skilled labor and sustainable development in Korea are positively related.

To further examine the impact of education, and migration on sustainable development, secondary data was collected. This data is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Foreign students, migrant workers and Gross Domestic Product of Korea**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of international students</b>	<b>Number of migrant workers in Korea</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Gross Domestic Product (Billion Dollars)</b>
2012	89100	698000	30,376,121	1278.05
2013	90123	668000	31,261,295	1370.63

Year	Number of international students	Number of migrant workers in Korea	Employment	Gross Domestic Product (Billion Dollars)
2014	91111	738000	32,003,241	1484.49
2015	91332	809000	32,381,445	1466.04
2016	93000	835000	32,633,150	1499.36
2017	123858	834000	33,070,472	1623.07
2018	13500	884000	33,228,247	1725.37
2019	160165	863000	33,517,077	1625.42
2020	162121	848000	33,232,446	1644.68
2021	163245	855000	33,689,590	1818.43
2022	16500	843000	34,664,777	1673.92
2023	17000	923000	35,006,024	1712.79

Source: ICEF Monitor (2015), Korea JoongAng Daily (2023), CEIC (2024), Statista (2024)

Key variables such as the number of foreign students in Korea, number of migrant workers, employment and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Korea was used in this evaluation. A correlation analysis (Pearson's correlation) was carried out with the results presented in Table 2. The results show there was a strong positive relationship between the number of migrant workers and the GDP of Korea. This supports the results of the literature review that asserts that the number of migrants contributes to sustainable development. Likewise, the relationship between the availability of skilled workers and GDP was significantly positive. It asserts that the availability of skilled labor is important to economic and sustainable development. Also, the results also showed that GDP has a positive relationship with the number of migrant workers and the availability of skilled workers – respectively. This supports the theory that a vibrant economy attracts migrants from other countries. However, the results of examining education migrants to the Korean economy were insignificant. An evaluation of the effect of Koreans that studied abroad and returned back to Korea could not be carried out because of the lack of a harmonized set of data.

A case analysis of the relationship between migration, education, skilled labor, and sustainable development in Nigeria, showed that there is a paucity of research in this field. Many studies available focus on the effect of emigration on brain drain and sustainable development in the country. For instance, a research study on the effect of migration on sustainable development - showed that while it is leading to brain drain of the country and affecting sustainable development negatively, it also has positive benefits (Ogbenika, 2019; Osayemwenre et al., 2023). Other studies focused on the importance of entrepreneurship education on human capital development. A research study that analyzed the effects of entrepreneurship education on sustainable development in Nigeria showed that it would enable students to be self-sufficient (Arogundade, 2011). The result of this study indicated that more research needs to be done in Nigeria based on case analyses in various countries. This will help the Nigerian government; policy makers and the civil society make better decisions and implement effective policies. This study contributed to this goal. The Nigerian government can implement similar policies to attract skilled workers from various parts of the world to help in the development plan of the government.

**Table 2. Correlation matrix of variables**

		International students in Korea	Number of Migrant Workers	Employment	Gross Domestic Product		
International_students_in_Korea	Pearson Correlation		1	-0.128	-0.225	-0.011	
	Sig. (2-tailed)			0.692	0.481	0.972	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products		33151725976.917	-5892387500.000	-178783397316.583	-1099974.996	
	Covariance		3013793270.629	-535671590.909	-16253036119.689	-99997.727	
	N		12	12	12	12	
	Bootstrap <sup>c</sup>	Bias		0	0.017	0.026	-0.003
		Std. Error		0	0.290	0.326	0.322
		95% Confidence Interval	Lower	1	-0.559	-0.655	-0.612
Upper			1	0.646	0.787	0.845	
Number_of_Migrant_Workers	Pearson Correlation		-0.128	1	0.885**	0.858**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.692		0.000	0.000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products		-5892387500.000	64199000000.000	977538796500.000	114259135.000	
	Covariance		-535671590.909	5836272727.273	88867163318.182	10387194.091	
	N		12	12	12	12	
	Bootstrap <sup>c</sup>	Bias		0.017	0	-0.002	-0.003
		Std. Error		0.290	0	0.074	0.082
		95% Confidence Interval	Lower	-0.559	1	0.671	0.657
Upper			0.646	1	0.971	0.956	
Employment	Pearson Correlation		-0.225	0.885**	1	0.878**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.481	0.000		0.000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products		-178783397316.583	977538796500.000	18995139736212.918	2010532298.569	
	Covariance		-16253036119.689	88867163318.182	1726830885110.265	182775663.506	
	N		12	12	12	12	
	Bootstrap <sup>c</sup>	Bias		0.026	-0.002	0	0.000
		Std. Error		0.326	0.074	0	0.079
		95% Confidence Interval	Lower	-0.655	0.671	1	0.680
Upper			0.787	0.971	1	0.977	
Gross_Domestic_Product	Pearson Correlation		-0.011	0.858**	0.878**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.972	0.000	0.000		
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products		-1099974.996	114259135.000	2010532298.569	276039.651	
	Covariance		-99997.727	10387194.091	182775663.506	25094.514	
	N		12	12	12	12	
	Bootstrap <sup>c</sup>	Bias		-0.003	-0.003	0.000	0
		Std. Error		0.322	0.082	0.079	0
		95% Confidence Interval	Lower	-0.612	0.657	0.680	1
Upper			0.845	0.956	0.977	1	

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

c. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples. Source: Author's

#### 4.4. A comparative analysis of the labor migration policies of the South Korean and Nigeria

In this subsection, an analysis of the labor migration laws of South Korea and Nigeria was explored to derive areas where the Nigerian government can learn to improve its labor laws to attract better skilled labor to meet the needs within its economy. This is because the Korean government has recorded successes in its use of systematic and planned migration into the country to drive its innovative capacity, fill labor gaps and improve skilled labor (high and low). The main tool that the government uses to attract migrants to Korea is its visa programs, framework which was introduced in 1993 and summarized in Table 3, in addition to the support the Korean government gives migrants. For instance, the Korean government supports migrants in integrating into the Korean society through offering language and cultural activities (Sohn & Kang, 2021). Furthermore, the Korean government is actively attracting Koreans in the diaspora through the implementation of its Overseas Koreans Act, which was introduced in 1999 (Lim & Seol, 2018).

*Table 3. Migrant work Visas of the Korean government*

Category	Description	Eligibility	
C4	Short-term Employee	An individual intending to engage in short-duration employment, such as advertising, temporary shows, modeling gigs, public speaking engagements, lecturing or research, technology consulting, and similar activities.	
E1	Employment of Exceptional Quality (Individuals can participate in activities that encompass job search efforts or on-the-job training, including short-term paid internships, within organizations or companies in the Republic of Korea (ROK))	Professor	
E2		Foreign Language Instructor	
E3		Research	
E4		Technical Instructor/Technician	
E5		Professional	
E6		Artist/Athlete (It is worth noting that activities falling under the Artist/Athlete (E-6) status specifically pertain to endeavors solely within the realms of art or sports and expressly exclude involvement in adult entertainment ventures)	
E7		Foreign National of Special Ability	
E-7-4		Visa holders under the skilled E-9 category based on a points system	
E9		Employment Outside Professional Roles	Temporary laborers within the EPS framework
E10			Ship crew / maritime workers
H2	Overseas Koreans "visiting employment"		
D1	Research and study	Art/culture	
D2		International Students	
D3		Training	
D4		Language and non-degree education	
D5		Journalist	
D6		Religious Worker	
D7		Intra-company transfers	
D-8-1		Skilled employees of a Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) company	
D-8-3		Required employment for an FDI company	
D-9		Trade Management	
D-10-1		Job-Search Permit	
D-10-2		Investors and entrepreneurs	Start-up entrepreneur
D-8-2			Tech venture investor
D-8-4			Tech investor/entrepreneur
D-9-4	Owner of foreign investment firm		

Category	Description	Eligibility
F-2-8		Real-estate investor
F-5-5		High-investment investor

Source: Ministry of Justice (2024)

The visa framework of the Korean government presented in Table 3 shows that the Korean government has at least 20 visa types related to labor migration, which can be broadly divided into short-term employees, high-skilled labor, low-skilled labor, research & study, and investor and entrepreneurship visas. This shows that the Korean government is aware of the impact of research, entrepreneurship and quality labor is important to innovation, and sustainable development.

On the other hand, the visa regime of the Nigerian government is presented in Table 4. The visa types for labor migrants are at least 22. They are broadly divided into three groups: short-term working visa, temporary residence, and business visa. Unlike the Korean government visa scheme, the labor migration visa of the Nigeria government places less emphasis on driving in labor through research and study. Furthermore, while the Korean government clearly differentiates between high-skill and low-skill workers, there is no clear differentiation in the Nigerian case. This is responsible for the variation in results observed in both countries.

**Table 4. Migrant work Visas of the Nigerian government**

Category	Description	Eligibility
F7M	Short-term working visa	Staff of non-governmental organizations
F7L		Staff of international non-governmental organizations
F7K		Emergency Relief Workers
F7J		Humanitarian worker
F7A		Journalist
F7C		Medical Tourist
F7D		Religious Tourist
F7E		Athlete
F7F		Artist(e)/Entertainer/Musician
F7G		Study Tourist
F7B		Cleric
F7H		Academic Exchange Program (AEP)
F8A		Temporary Work Permit (TWP)
R11	Temporary Residence	Temporary Work Permit (6 months) - (TWP)
R2A		Expatriate
R2B		Spouse Expatriate
R5A		International non-governmental organization expatriate
R3A		Expatriate - Free Zone
R6A		Cleric
F4C	Business	Executives who frequently travel with investments totaling USD 250,000
F4B		The issuance of a Multiple Entry Visa is contingent upon reciprocity
F4A		The Single-Entry Visa is intended for individuals seeking to visit Nigeria for purposes such as meetings, business, conferences, contract seminars, negotiations, sales, marketing, procurement of Nigerian goods/services, participation in trade fairs, and job interviews
N3A		Small Scale Enterprise (Investor Visa)
N3B		Medium Scale Enterprise (Investor Visa)
N3C		Large Scale Corporations (Investor Visa)
N3D		Ultra Large-Scale Corporations (Investor Visa)
N3E		Ultra Large-Scale Corporations - Oil/Gas/Power Sector (Investor Visa)

Source: Nigeria Immigration Service (2024)

While the Korean government has various policies to support and incentivize immigrants from other countries and native Koreans living abroad to return to Korea, there is no clear evidence that these types of support and policies exist in Nigeria. The results of the Korean government's strategy are evident in the high number of migrants contributing to its economy, in contrast to Nigeria, where most migrants are refugees. According to Woo-Hyun (2023), the number of migrant workers in Korea reached 1 million in 2023. These migrants have been able to fill an important need for workers in various sectors within the Korean economy. On the other hand, a comprehensive data on the number of labor migrants in Nigeria does not currently exist. However, a report by the African Union showed that migrants in Nigeria find it difficult to get a job (African Union, 2019). This is partly because of the harsh economic situation in the country, inflation, and struggling economy. Even though the Nigerian government has a visa regime for attracting migrants, the visa framework in the country is not as advanced as those of the Korean government. It is important that the Nigerian government update and revise its migration policies using a similar approach like the Korean government.

## 5. Conclusion

The importance of geographical mobility in the provision of skilled labor and the enhancement of sustainable development is well known. However, developing and least developed countries are yet to take good advantage of this opportunity. This may be due to the lack of empirical evidence on how countries have taken advantage of the benefit of geographical mobility. This study bridged this gap by providing evidence on the benefits of geographical mobility through a case analysis of South Korea to derive lessons for Nigeria. This study was important because of the high level of poverty in Nigeria and the global south. While Nigeria has a high level of geographical migrants from neighboring countries, most of these migrants are not adding value to the Nigerian economy, because they are largely refugees with little or no skill. These groups of people do not meet the need for high-skill labor that exists within the Nigerian economy. However, the main contribution of this study was to determine the best approach to reverse this tide by attracting highly skilled migrants and helping migrants develop transferable skills to contribute effectively to the economy.

The methodology adopted in this study was mixed, including a review of literature review and an analysis of secondary data. Extant studies were obtained from various databases (SCOPUS, Web of Science, KCI, Google Scholar) and other sources of information, while secondary data was collected from the World Bank and other sources. The data was analyzed using the statistical software SPSS and three unique hypotheses were developed and examined in the course of this research. The results of this study showed that repatriation of natives living in other countries had a positive impact on the availability of skilled labor and sustainable development. Also, the immigration of low-skilled and high-skilled workers from other countries is beneficial to their host countries. Finally, while the review of literature showed that the education of immigrants in their host countries and their native countries was essential to helping them contribute meaningfully to the economy of their host nation, empirical evidence to support this assertion was not provided in this study due to the lack of data.

Within this study, key strategies were identified on how the Nigerian government can take advantage of geographical mobility of labor to build its failing economy. In particular, the importance of the role of the government in encouraging the repatriation of its citizens abroad through implementing various strategies that support them to return to their country were demonstrated. Also, the government and its people must be open minded in accepting people from other countries with different languages, and cultures. This is because, when the conditions are suitable, immigrants from various countries will move to other countries. However, they need to get support in integrating properly.

This study has some limitations. One of such limitations is the use of a review of literature and the unavailability of robust data. More information would have been realized if more robust information that presented a comparative analysis of countries was used. However, because of the paucity of quality data in many countries in the global South and the data privacy policy in developed countries, this is not possible at this time. This does not invalidate the results obtained in this study. Future studies should consider carrying out a comparative study that includes a mixed methodology.

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