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**Remigration of Nigerian Professionals in Diaspora:
Benefits and Ethical Challenges**

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Remigration of Nigerian Professionals in Diaspora: Benefits and Ethical Challenges

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Abstract

Nigeria has been experiencing a remigration of its foreign professionals. The goal of this research is to give an overview of the challenges and benefits of remigration by Nigerian professionals in Europe and America, especially as it concerns those planning to return to Nigeria for good. Hypothesis: The longer the number of years spent outside the country the easier it is to adjust to the Nigerian culture. A structured questionnaire was distributed to five hundred Nigerians from Diaspora teaching in Nigerian Universities from 1999 to 2015. Series of information sought from respondents include, 1) length of time stayed outside of Nigeria, 2) birth-order, 3) challenges faced in Nigeria, 4) political party affiliation to mention a few. Results showed that the length of the time spent outside the country has significant impact on the level of adjustment. Results also, showed a gender ratio of 1:1. All the respondents had a long list of culture shocks; however, Isolation and ideas rejection being the most significant. 90% of those who spent 20-30 years prior to returning rated their cultural adjustment 8 on a 10-point scale where 1 signify poor cultural adjustment. It is recommended that the Federal government should create both jobs and enabling environment that will bring home more professionals.

Keywords: emigration, remigration, diasporans, brain gain, brain grain

Introduction

Migration, voluntary or involuntary has been in existence for a long time but has recently been on the rise across the continents, especially Africa, Europe and the Americas.

Nearly three decades ago, many researchers, focused on Educated Nigerian Settlers in foreign countries especially the United States (Offoha, 1989). In the research studies, Brain Drain of foreign professionals involved “fruits of capital investment on the highly skilled professionals that are reaped by the country to which they have migrated to” constituting a loss to the home country. (Boehler, 2015; Brettell, 2003).

The emigration out of Nigeria, whether in recent time or in the past, has been at a cost to Nigeria. This is because the best, brightest and most able leave the country, Nigeria, which is technologically less, developed, and take their skills to a country that is already technologically advanced such as Europe and America. This rapid migration of the country's professionals was termed "the brain drain." However, some of these professionals migrated with the help of family and government scholarships in order to acquire education and/or skills that would later be used in the home country but decided to reside permanently in the host country. In Offoha's dissertation (1989) she referenced Digest of Education Statistics (1987 as cited in Offoha 1989) as follows:

The bulk of Nigerians admitted into the United States, out of 40,690 Africans registered in institutions of higher learning in the United States in the school year 1983-1984, Nigerians constituted close to half of the number (20,080). In the following school year 1984-1985, 22,440 West Africans registered in institutions of higher learning in the United States and out of that number, 18,370 were Nigerians (p. 304).

A significant portion of these Nigerian emigrants who later on became well-educated and well-trained, acquiring professional jobs in the host country and later becoming United States' residents, served to strengthen the Nigerian Diaspora when compared to other immigrant groups when they finally returned. Just like the Diasporas from other countries of the world, most members of the Nigerian Diaspora maintain strong ties with their families; friends and relatives back in Nigeria, and influence the social, political and economic development of the country.

However, there has been limited research and formal studies done on the Nigerian Diaspora, especially when compared to studies done on other major Diaspora groups on their migration and remigration patterns. The goal of this research study is to give an overview of the challenges and benefits of remigration by Nigerian professionals in Europe and America, especially those that have already returned and finally settled in the home country referred to as “Diaspora Nigerians.” This study is focused on those Diaspora Nigerians in

institutions of higher learning that have settled finally in Nigeria. This study is guided by the following hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1: The longer the number of years spent outside the country (Europe and America) the easier it is to adjust to the Nigerian culture;
- Hypothesis 2: First-Born diasporans are likely to return to Nigeria than non first-born diasporans; and
- Hypothesis 3: Diasporans interested in political positions are likely to return to Nigeria than those not interested in political positions.

Review of Relevant Literature

Migration, emigration and remigration are occurrences that can be traced to the biblical era, and have continued till today. Brettell (2003) in *Anthropology and Migration*, distinguished between the old regime migrant referred to as “colonizador” who left his homeland and migrated “under state initiative”, and the new regime migrant referred to as “emigrant,” who left his homeland independent of the Government intervention or state sponsorship. Many researches have documented how millions of people became international migrants. Offoha (1989) referenced the definition of Brain Drain by Karadima (1982) as “the emigration of skilled or highly trained manpower from their native country (usually less technologically advanced) to another country (usually more technologically advanced).” Korzeniewicz and Albrecht (2016) gave a simple definition of migration as “individuals that are residing in a country other than their country”

According to Connor et al. (2016) “A rising share of international migrants now lives in today’s high-income countries.” Most of the migrants, especially international migrants are in Europe or America. The number has continued to increase. According to Connor et al. (2016) in the Pew Research analysis, in 1990, 23,250,000.00 migrants lived in United States and in 2015, the number sky-rocketed to 46,630,000.00.

West (2011) in his book entitled *Brain Gain: Rethinking U.S. Immigration Policy* outlined how “many of America’s greatest artists, chefs, investors, entrepreneurs, and leaders have come from abroad.” He stated that many talented immigrants have helped in the advancement of the critical technological aspects of American development. This he sees as “Brain Gain from in-migration.” While he is advising that America maintains its openness to new arrivals to stay competitive and gain access to the special talents of other lands,” the citizens do not perceive it in the same way (West, 2011). Instead, they are enraged by illegal immigrants, whom they see as a threat to the economy of America, because of the tendency they have in the drawing on government benefits unfairly (The Costs and Benefits of Immigration, 2011).

Popular theorists like Karl Marx explained migration using a historical-structural approach. Here he explained migration in the context of class structure and conflict. This means that to a Marxist, migration decisions are

based solely on class conflict, which is a product of exploitative historical social structures. Put differently, it is the alienation and the estrangement generated by the historical structural contradictions that cause individual-migration. This position is well articulated by writers like Samir Amin (1980), Manuel Castells (1979) and Neil Fligstein (1981).

Studies that analyzed migration using the Marxist/conflict perspective overlap with those discussed in the context of the Dependency/World System Theories. To some extent, Dependency/World System Theories overlap with Marxist/Conflict Theories in suggesting that the social and economic conditions of the peripheral countries result from economic processes imposed on them by the core countries. If at the same time the social and economic conditions of peripheral countries would cause their members to migrate, it then confirms the conflict perspective that sees emigration of peripheral laborers as maintaining the interest of the ruling class—the core. The core uses its power to strategically restrict others access to better social and economic positions so that emigration to a more affluent place becomes their only alternative or the “last straw” as Gulliver (1955) might call it. Continuing this discussion of the Marxist perspective, Portes and Walton (1981) saw emigration as fueled by the penetration of capitalist mode of production in, and the subsequent monetization of traditional agriculture. This development displaces agricultural labor directly through mechanization and less directly through the compelling forces located in the core nations.

In Nigeria, foreign control and foreign domination of the industrial sector under the import substitution phase resulted in the continued importation of capital and more developed consumer goods from advanced countries. This means that Nigerians lost their agricultural labour and gained an indefinite dependency on foreign countries (Onibode, 1982), showing that Nigeria has been “remolded to fit external demands,” a situation that promotes emigration.

Generally in economic and human capital group of theories, emphasis was laid on available economic opportunities and positive income returns as a basis for the movement of individuals. Functional and human capital group of theories are as individualistic as economic human capital group of theories in considering economic and environmental factors as an attraction for human movement. The remaining group of theories—Dependency/World System and Marxist/Conflict, all view emigration as a form of exploitation of the peripheral nations by the core. Such exploitation keeps the peripheral nations in a perpetual state of underdevelopment while over-developing the developed nations.

On *the Digest of Education Statistics* (1987) students going to Core countries for the enhancement of their academic levels, constitute bulk of emigrants from peripheral countries, especially Sub-Sahara Africa. Since, research has shown that the majority of migrants move from less developed countries to more developed countries, Africa has a large share of underdevelopment and Nigeria, an African sleeping giant, has been found to loose a lot of its skilled and/or pre-professionals to developed countries.

People differ in their perceptions of opportunity and in opportunity structures in their home society. Potent factors other than purely economic ones such as the family influence, individual decision, family obligation, peer pressure, demands and expectations all are assumed to have an impact on decision to migrate or not migrate. According to Brettell (2003) “for every migration stream there is a corresponding counter-stream flowing in the opposite direction.”

Quite a significant number of diasporans have returned to their home country, Nigeria. This is a Brain Gain for Nigeria. Brain Gain according to Dictionary.com (2016) is “an increase in the number of highly trained, foreign-born professionals entering a country to live and work where greater opportunities are offered.” The diasporan remigration may have become manifest as a result of the role of “International Organization for Migration” (IOM). IOM is a European funded non-profit organization that was introduced in 1951 to manage migration in many countries of the world, Nigeria being one of them. They help to mobilize diasporans seeking available jobs in Nigeria, encourage remigration of skilled Nigerians to Nigeria and enhance the capacity of the Nigerian Government in the area of migration management (IOM, July 1, 2016).

Methodology

The population included in this research study are, all diasporans teaching in Nigerian institutions of higher learning. Current data was collected in the Niger Delta region from diasporans who re-emigrated to Nigeria from 1999 to 2015. Reliance on available subjects and the Snowball Sampling Method was used in choosing the sample for this research. These two methods, did not give all diasporans the opportunity to be included in the sampling but the researcher found them the most convenient and most economical.

A structured questionnaire was distributed to one thousand Nigerians in the different universities in the Niger Delta region. The Questionnaires were mailed to the Deans of different faculties to be distributed to diasporans during their faculty board meetings. Stamped addressed envelop from Courier Service was included for easy return of the completed questionnaires. A series of information were sought from the respondents. Detailed demographic information was sought to help ascertain if a respondent has reached retirement age, or if a first-born is faced with extended family obligation, etc. Respondents were also asked about their political interest, when they returned to Nigeria and from which countries. Other questions were related to 1) reason for decision to return, 2) experience of culture shock, 3) experience with native professionals, and 5) the possibility of return to a foreign country.

Results

Out of 1000 questionnaires sent out, 756 were returned. Out of this number 7 did not qualify for analysis. The total number of responses that qualified for analysis was 749. Out of this number 550 were males and 199 were females. The age of respondents ranged from 31 years of age to 51 years and above. Results showed that all respondents had at least a Bachelor degree and were mostly Christians (95.8%). 450 (60.08%) respondents were employed by either government or institutions of higher learning. In terms of marital status, 420 (56.07%) were married, 220 (29.37%) separated, 53 (.07%) divorced, 46 (.06%) widowed and 10 (1.33%) never got married. 529 (71%) were first-borns, 160 (21%) were middle-children and 60 (8%) were last-borns. The majority of the respondents, 550 (73%) have lived at least 25 years in another country. Also, the majority, 630 (84%) is currently retired from another job and the rest 119 (16%) are either on sabbatical appointment or simply on other types of contract or job appointment. 680 (91%) were offered job prior to their return to Nigeria and 69 (9%) just returned without prior job offer.

Analysis

All the respondents had a long list of culture shocks. However, prevalent among them is driving manners. The challenges related to relocation, mainly the absence of basic infrastructure such as steady electricity, availability of treated water and well-equipped hospitals are but a few that the respondents were highly dissatisfied with. Respondents stated one form of discrimination or the other that they experienced from native professionals of which isolation and ideas rejection ranked the highest (see Tables 1 A, 1 B and 2 A, 2B).

Table 1A. Social Isolation from Them

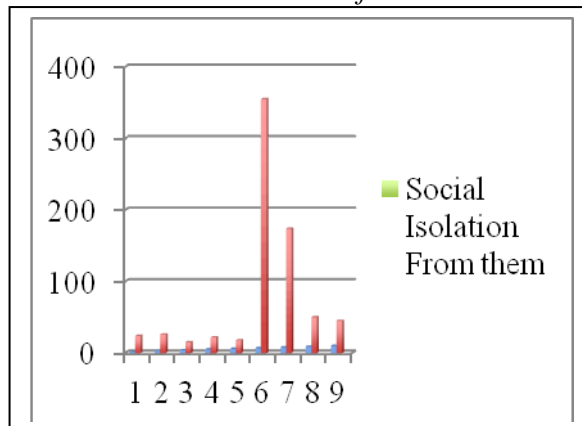


Table 1B. Social Isolation from You

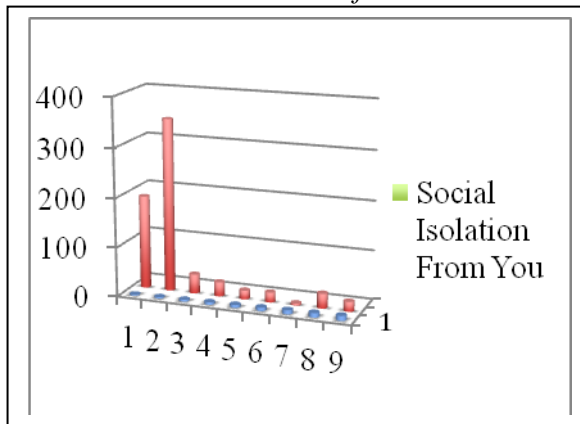


Table 2A. Rejection of their Ideas

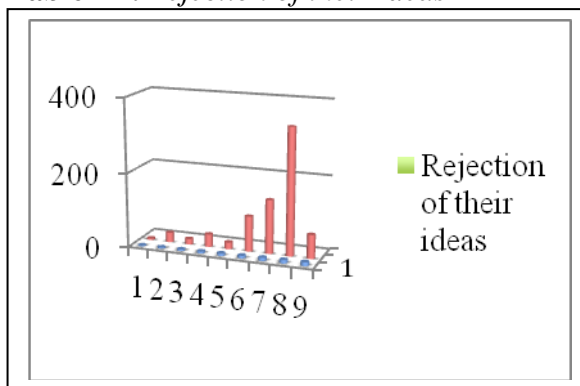
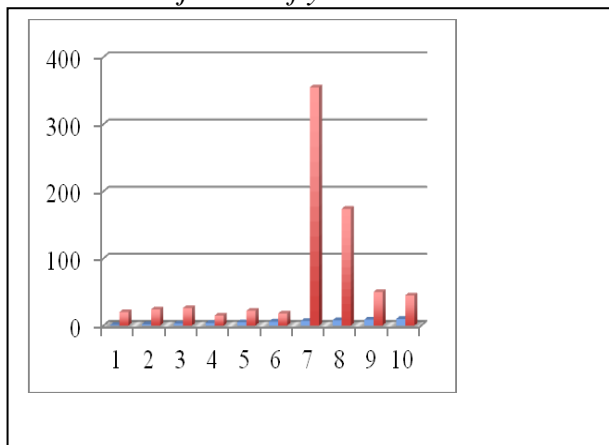


Table 2B. Rejection of your Ideas



Out of the 550 males in this research study, 74 (13%) have not adjusted to the Nigerian culture, 455 (83%) adjusted either fully or a little to the Nigerian culture, while only 21 (4%) do not know if they adjusted or not. (See Table 3) This shows that male diasporans tend to adjust quicker than female diasporans on return to Nigeria.

Table 3. *Level of Adjustment to Nigerian Culture by Gender*

Gender	Male	Female
Not Adjusted	74 (13%)	84 (42%)
Adjusted	455 (83%)	103 (52%)
Don't Know	21 (4%)	12 (6%)
Total	550 (100%)	199 (100%)

Out of the 350 persons in this research study, who lived outside of Nigeria for thirty-five years or more prior to resettling in Nigeria, 296 (85%) of them have some level of adjustment to the Nigerian culture as opposed to 44 (13%) that did not adjust to the Nigerian culture and 10 (3%) that have the “I don’t know” response. Members of this group are not sure if what they are experiencing is related to adjustment or non-adjustment to the Nigerian culture, and therefore not significant to this analysis.

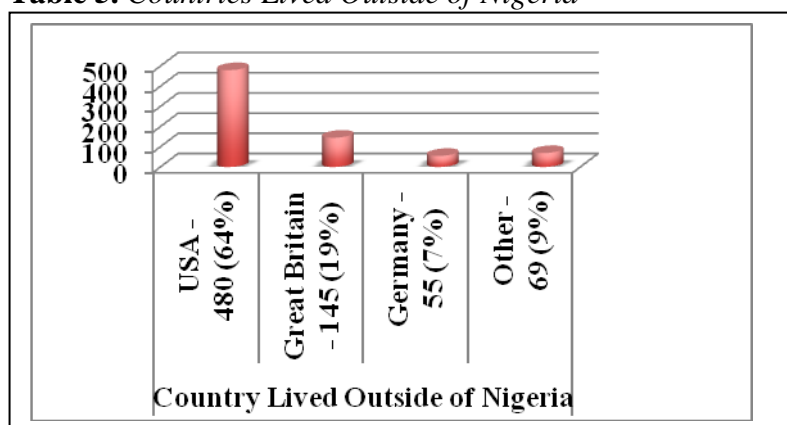
Table 4. *Length of Years Lived Outside Nigeria by Level of Adjustment upon Return to Nigeria*

Level of Adjustment Upon Return	Less than 1 Year	1-4 Years	5-14 Years	15-24 Years	25-34 Years	35 Years+
Not	5 (25%)	3 (12%)	43 (80%)	50 (50%)	13 (7%)	44 (12.57%)
Little/Fully	15 (75%)	20 (80%)	7 (13%)	42 (42%)	178 (89%)	296 (84.57%)
Don't Know	0 (0%)	2 (8%)	4 (7%)	8 (8%)	9 (4%)	10 (2.86%)
Total	20 (100%)	25 (100%)	54 (100%)	100 (100%)	200 (100%)	350 (100%)

Important also are the diasporans that lived outside of Nigeria for twenty-five to thirty four years (200 of them) prior to resettling in Nigeria. 178 (89%) of them have some level of adjustment, while 13 (7%) did not adjust and 9 (4%) did not know if they adjusted. Table 4 explains Hypothesis 1 below:

Hypothesis 1: “The longer the number of years spent outside the country (Europe and America) the easier it is to adjust to the Nigerian culture.” This hypothesis is significant in this research study. Table 5 shows the country most diasporans lived prior to their return to Nigeria. Most Nigerians who travel to another country for whatever reason they are likely to choose United States of America followed by Great Britain than any other country. In this research study, out of the 749 respondents, 480 (64%) lived in the United States, 145 (19%) lived in Great Britain, 55 (7%) lived in Germany and 69 (9%) lived in other countries, such as Italy, Greece and South Africa.

Table 5. Countries Lived Outside of Nigeria

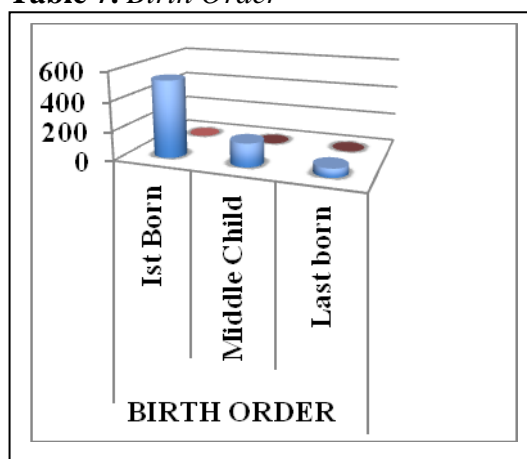


The rate of adjustment is higher among those returning from Great Britain than those returning from the USA and other European countries when comparing the different countries listed in the data as that Nigerians lived in while residing outside of Nigeria.

Table 6. Country Lived Outside of Nigeria By Level of Adjustment to Nigerian Culture

Level of Adjustment to Nigerian Culture	USA	Great Britain	Germany	Other
Not Adjusted	112 (23%)	9 (6%)	10 (18%)	20 (29%)
Adjusted	350 (73%)	132 (91%)	40 (73%)	40 (58%)
Don't Know	18 (4%)	4 (3%)	5 (9%)	9 (13%)
Total	480 (100%)	145 (100%)	55 (100%)	69 (100%)

Table 7. Birth Order



The probability that diasporans will reside in the USA and Great Britain for twenty-four or more years than they would in Germany or other countries is high (See Table 8).

Table 7 shows the plausibility of Hypothesis 2, which states that: “First-Born diasporans are likely to return to Nigeria than non first-born diasporans.” Out of 749 respondents, 529 (71%) were first-borns, 160 (21%) were middle children and 60 (8%) were last-borns. More first-born children (71%) returned to Nigeria than all the non first-born children put together (29%). In the Nigerian culture first-born children are expected to take care of their parents. This may be the explanation for the high percentage of first-born children returning to Nigeria more than middle or last-born children.

Table 8. *Country Lived Outside of Nigeria by Length of Years Lived Outside of Nigeria*

Length of Years Lived outside Nigeria	USA	Great Britain	Germany	Other
Less than 1 year	0 (0%)	4 (3%)	5 (9%)	2
1 to 4 years	5 (1%)	4 (3%)	23	2
5 to 14 years	10 (2%)	3 (2%)	22	21
15 to 24 years	34 (7%)	20 (14%)	15	24
25 to 34 years	173 (36%)	90 (62%)	8	10
35 years +	258 (54%)	24 (16%)	3	10
Total	480 (100%)	145 (100%)	55 (100%)	69 (100%)

Table 9. *Political Party of Interest*

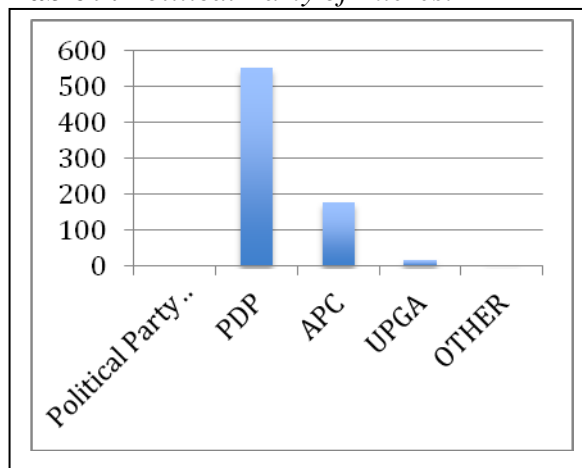
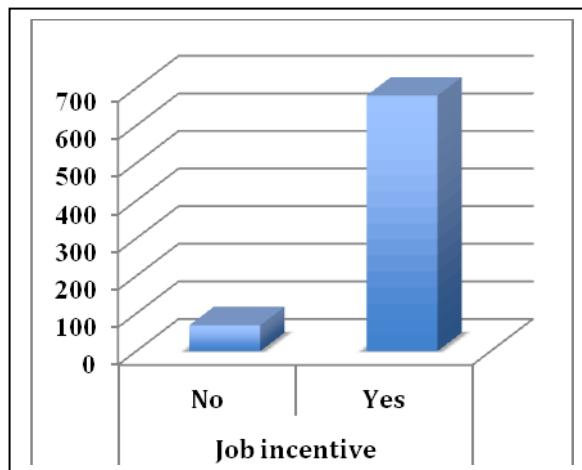


Table 10. Job Incentive Prior To Return



Another interesting variable was related to politics in Nigeria.

Hypothesis 3: Diasporans interested in political positions are more likely to return to Nigeria than those not interested in political positions. Data showed that the opposite was the case. The majority of diasporans in the research study were not interested in holding any political position. Instead, most of them were interested in the academia. Hence data showed that the majority of them were promised employment prior to their return (See Table 10).

Summary and Conclusions

Migration in recent times has been a result of political instability that created economic hardship, thus resulting in massive exodus of citizens from the affected nations (Keaton, 2015). While Europe is experiencing mass exodus, other countries of the world are experiencing their usual movement, in and out of countries. This research study focused on diasporan remigration to Nigeria. Brettell (2003), as was mentioned earlier, postulated, that “for every migration stream there is a corresponding counter-stream flowing in the opposite direction.” This is the case with Nigeria where significant number of diasporans re-migrated from United States and Great Britain (see Table 5). This is a brain gain for Nigeria. The incentive to return was guaranteed employment (see Table 10).

The hypothetical statement related to the number of years spent outside of Nigeria, and the ease of adjustment to Nigerian culture was found to be significant. The ease with which the diasporans adjusted may be related to the second hypothetical statement on birth-order, which was also found to be significant. Nigerians in general, practice their customs and traditions at all levels. The first-borns are expected to be the family estate managers and caretakers of aging parents. Having stayed long enough in Europe and America, and desiring to return to take care of cultural obligations, it became necessary to adjust quickly to the Nigerian culture.

The hypothetical statement related to interest in political position was not found to be significant. Though majority of the diasporans in this research study were interested in People's Democratic Party (PDP) (see Table 9), though they did not return to take political positions, because the government of President Ebele Jonathan, a PDP member, created jobs as an incentive to encourage diasporans as an incentive to return to Nigeria. Diasporan remigration has been beneficial in increasing the number of elite Nigerians thus giving the country the hope of a future middle class population that never existed in Nigeria. The Nigerian government needs to extend its employment opportunities to diasporans. There should also be a serious creation of enabling environment such as clean air, water, medical facility, uninterrupted electricity and safety assurances.

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