



## ENTREPRENEURIAL YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN CATFISH PRODUCTION: ANTIDOTE FOR STEMMING THE EXUBERANT RIFE FOR OVERSEAS EMIGRATION

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### **Abstract**

*The phenomenon of overseas emigration from developing countries has been a persistent concern, driven by the quest for better economic opportunities. Different vocations are associated with perculiar job harzards and fortunes. This paper explores the potential of catfish production as a veritable alternative to stem the rife of overseas emigration. Examining the economic, social, and environmental benefits of catfish production, this study explores how this aquaculture practice can provide a lucrative livelihood for individuals, contribute to local economic growth, and reduce the pressure to emigrate. It was concluded that private sector stakeholders must invest in catfish production, infrastructures, financing and market access should be available to unlock its full potential to stem the tide of overseas emigration and recommendations were made that there should be financial assistance to people, investment in infrastructures among others to reduce this pressure.*

**Key words:** steaming, emigrants, greener pasture, fish production

## Introduction

Overseas emigration has become a significant phenomenon in recent decades, with millions of individuals leaving their home countries in search of greener pastures. Developing countries, in particular, have been affected, with the loss of skilled and unskilled labour impacting local economies. The push factors driving this trend include poverty, unemployment, limited economic opportunities, conflict, and environmental degradation. The persistent trend of overseas emigration, driven by the pursuit of greener pastures, has emerged as a critical challenge for many developing countries, resulting in a substantial loss of human capital. This migration deprives nations of the very talent essential for driving economic growth, innovation, and social development. The sectors most affected such as healthcare, education, and technology are critical for national progress, and their depletion aggravate existing challenges, slowing efforts toward sustainable development (Adepoju, 2017; Docquier & Rapoport, 2018). Overseas emigration, particularly among skilled professionals and educated youth, has become a significant concern for many developing countries. This trend often referred to as "brain drain," which describes the large-scale departure of individuals seeking better opportunities, primarily in developed nations.

The forces behind the movement of people from their home countries to another include economic instability, political unrest, lack of job opportunities, and inadequate infrastructure in home countries. For many,

the allure of higher wages, better working conditions, and a more stable environment abroad outweighs the benefits of remaining in their countries of origin (Docquier & Rapoport, 2017). In developing nations, the lack of robust economic structures and limited opportunities for professional growth significantly contribute to high rates of emigration (Bhorat, Meyer, & Mlatsheni, 2017). One critical issue associated with brain drain is the loss of human capital, which refers to the skills, knowledge, and experience possessed by individuals. Human capital is a crucial driver of economic growth. When highly skilled individuals emigrate, their home countries lose the potential economic and social benefits that their expertise could provide. This loss is particularly damaging in vital sectors such as healthcare, education, engineering, and technology (World Bank, 2018).

Despite various efforts to address brain drain, such as increasing wages and improving working conditions, the appeal of more developed nations remains strong. This continuous outflow of talent highlights the limitations of traditional approaches in retaining skilled workers and underscores the need for innovative solutions that address the root causes of migration (Obasi, 2019).

Fish production plays a critical role in economic development. It create jobs, drive innovation, and contribute to the overall economic health of their countries which help individuals identify and exploit opportunities within their home countries, reducing the appeal of overseas emigration

(Ajayi & Ojo, 2017). This approach is particularly crucial in regions where traditional employment opportunities are limited as entrepreneurship education programs that emphasize practical skills such as financial literacy, management, and marketing can better prepare individuals for the demands of the job market, thus reducing the need for individuals to seek work abroad (Arogundade, 2020).

Similarly, in Nigeria, education programs targeting young entrepreneurs have helped to create new businesses and jobs, thereby reducing the emigration of skilled professionals according to Oluwatobi & Ogunrinola, (2020) which fish production also play a major role. The core issue, therefore, lies in the inability of many developing countries to retain their skilled workforce, leading to a continuous weakening of local economies.

Fish production is an important constituent of global food security and aquatic ecosystem management. Fish farming, on the other hand, is considered a key agricultural sector of food production all over the world. It is viewed as a crucial agricultural activity that can reduce nutritional deficiencies considerably on a global scale and therefore reduce poverty effectively (Kaleem and Sabi, 2021).

Fish cultivation offers a major source of animal protein and contributes heavily to household diets, livelihood, and economic development in many countries and regions of the world (FAO, 2020). Fish accounts for nearly 40% of Nigeria's protein intake, as fish consumption hovers between 11.2 and

13.3 kg/person/per year (Kingsley, Cyril & Patience,2020; Adeleke, Robertson-Andersson, Subasinghe *et al.*, 2021 Ajayi *et. al.*, 2022, Simus, et. al., 2022;). Fish is cheaper than other sources of animal protein (Babatunde, Deborah, Gan, & Simon, 2021). Annual fish production has reached 1 million metric tons.

There are 14 million hectares of reservoirs, lakes, ponds, and major rivers in Nigeria. About 75% of these are moderately suitable for aquaculture production, and 112,085 km<sup>2</sup> are considered as very suitable (Adewumi, and Fagbenro, O.A, 2010; TEKN. 2019)). Nigeria has been recognized as one of the most suitable regions for aquaculture in the world. This is because of the good climatic conditions, favorable land, and desirable aquatic resources. Currently, over 60,000 ha are existing ponds ( Onada, and Ogunola, 2016).

Catfish is hardy fish, it grows tremendously at warm temperatures and as a facultative air breather, it survives in low oxygen content and can be farmed at high densities of up to 400 kg/m<sup>3</sup> (Anetekha , 2010). It can be harvested within 6–9 months of age at a market size of between 1 and 3 kg (Anetekhai, 2010). The success of Nigerian aquaculture is based on the production of the African catfish (Oboh, 2022). Nigeria is currently the largest producer of African catfish in the world [Ajayi *et. al.*, 2022]. African catfish is one of the most commercially important freshwater fish species in Africa. In Nigeria, it is the most popular fish on the local market [Ajayi *et. al.*, 2022]. In the early 2000s, the explosion

of catfish production was a result of the technology transfer of catfish breeding, enabling the mass production of fingerlings (Ajayi *et. al.*, 2022). This paper focused on how fish production can be leveraged to provide viable alternatives to reducing emigration, to help developing countries, retain their human capital and promote sustainable economic development according to Nwagwu & Oni, (2016).

### **Roles of Catfish Production in Youth Empowerment**

Catfish production offers a promising solution to address the push factors driving overseas emigration. This aquaculture practice provides:

1. *Employment Opportunity*: Catfish farming generates employment opportunities for rural communities, reducing unemployment and poverty by creating job for people thereby reducing the rate of overseas emigration
2. *Economic Growth*: Catfish production contributes to local economic growth, generating income and stimulating economic activity.
3. *Food Security*: Catfish farming enhances food security by providing an affordable source of protein for local populations, help to reduce the problem of malnutrition in both young and the adult.
4. *Environmental Sustainability*: Catfish farming can be practiced using sustainable methods, reducing environmental degradation and promoting eco-friendly agriculture.

### **Job Creation Potentials through Catfish Production**

Catfish production can be a viable solution to reduce emigration rates by creating jobs, generating income, and promoting economic growth. The following strategies can be adopted by the governments, private sector investors, and also organizations can work together to establish a catfish farm that will benefits local communities.

- i. *Planning and Infrastructure Development* : this can be done by conducting feasibility studies to assess the suitability of catfish farming in the areas, considering factors like climate, water resources, and market demand and once this is done, infrastructure needed for the production or farming of the fish such as the construction of ponds, hatcheries, and processing facilities will be developed. Also, there can be establishment of training programs to provide the enough training and knowledge needed on catfish farming, management, and marketing for people especially the youth to reduce the problem of leaving the country for greener pasture.
- ii. *Job Creation and Skills Development*: by creating job, people around the locality that are not employed including those that are planning to leave the country for greener pasture can be hired as local staff or local residents as farm managers, technicians, and laborers so that they can get things doing.

Train youth and women or by focus on training vulnerable groups, such as youth and women, in catfish farming and entrepreneurship. Also develop supporting industries, such as feed production, equipment manufacturing, and transportation.

- iii. *Production and Marketing:* this can be achieved by setting realistic production goals and develop strategies to achieve them, Identify local and international markets, and create branding and marketing campaigns and connect catfish farmers to buyers, processors, and exporters.
- iv. *Value Chain Development:* Create processed catfish products, such as fillets, smoked fish, and fishmeal, Build facilities for processing, packaging, and storage and Encourage export-oriented catfish production to generate foreign exchange.
- v. *Monitoring and Evaluation:* Monitor job creation by tracking the number of jobs created and the impact on local employment, Assess the economic benefits of catfish production, including income generation and GDP growth and adjust strategies to optimize job creation and emigration reduction.

Following the above steps one will be able to either directly or indirectly create employment opportunities through catfish farming, processing, and marketing, increased income for farmers and workers,

provide alternative livelihood opportunities reduce the pressure to emigrate, contribution to GDP growth and economic development and Increased availability of affordable protein sources.

### **Socio-economic Benefits of Catfish Production.**

The Social benefits of catfish production on overseas emigrants are listed below:

1. Catfish production provides employment opportunities for skilled and educated individuals, thereby reducing the brain drain caused by emigration. Once people have job or business they are doing such as fish production. This will help to reduce the rate at which they are running out of the country to look for greener pasture which is readily available for them in their home country.
2. Catfish farming provides a sustainable source of income for rural communities, improving living standards and reducing poverty. Catfish production can help to boost or improved livelihoods of people by giving them good income that will take them from poverty and make people employer of labour rather than job seekers.
3. Catfish production increases access to affordable protein, improving nutrition and health outcomes for local populations. Thereby enhanced food security of the country.
4. It provides opportunities for women and youth to engage in

entrepreneurship, enhancing their economic and social status. Catfish farming play a major role in empowering the youth to reduce the problem of brain drain.

5. It helps to develop the community by stimulating the local economic growth, supporting community development projects and infrastructure improvements.
6. It helps to improve the quality of life or living standards of people and reducing the desire to emigrate for better living conditions.
7. Retention of skilled labour in rural area and also reducing the loss of human capital.
8. Successful catfish farming can encourage returned migrants to invest in their homeland.
9. Catfish production provides alternative livelihood opportunities, reducing the pressure to emigrate.

### **Challenges and Opportunities in Catfish Production**

While catfish production offers a promising solution, challenges remain. They are:

- i. *Infrastructure*: Inadequate infrastructure hinders catfish production and marketing.
- ii. *Financing*: Limited access to finance and credit facilities constrains catfish farmers' ability to expand.
- iii. *Market Access*: Ensuring market access and competitiveness is crucial for catfish producers.

### **Conclusion**

Catfish production has the potential to stem the tide of overseas emigration by providing a lucrative livelihood and contributing to local economic growth. Governments, international organizations, and private sector stakeholders must invest in catfish production infrastructure, financing, and market access to unlock its full potential.

Also the government and non-governmental agencies should assist to solve the challenges or problem faced by farmers such as provision of facilities and financial assistance to people to be able to invest in the business rather than moving out of the country for greener pasture.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the literature reviewed, the following recommendations were made:

1. There should be investment in infrastructure by the Government such as develop storage facilities, roads, and marketing infrastructure to assist people.
2. Government and financial institutions should provide financial assistance to people by establishing credit facilities and microfinance programs that will assist with capital or access to loan
3. Enhance market access by promoting international trade agreements and local market development by the Government.

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