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MIGRATION INTENTION: INFLUENCE OF PERSONALITY TRAITS AND RESILIENCE AMONG SCHOOL OF NURSING STUDENTS IN IBADAN, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The migration of Nigerian nurses to other countries poses a serious challenge to the nation's healthcare system, leading to staff shortages, increased workload, and reduced quality of care. While economic and workplace factors, such as low pay and poor working conditions, are well-documented drivers of this trend, the role of personality traits, including openness to experience, risk-taking, resilience, and adaptability, has received little attention. These traits may significantly influence a nurse's decision to migrate or remain. This study explores how personality factors interact with systemic issues to shape migration choices, aiming to inform more effective, targeted retention strategies and enhance workforce stability in Nigeria's healthcare sector. The research adopted a cross-sectional survey design. The study investigated the influence of personality traits and resilience on migration intention among University of Ibadan nursing school students. The study was carried out at the School of Nursing, University College Hospital, Ibadan. The intention of individuals to migrate abroad was measured using the intention scale developed by Chan-Hoong and Soon (2011). The data were analysed using multiple regression at a significance level of $p < 0.05$. A multiple linear regression analysis revealed that the Big Five personality traits and resilience significantly predicted migration intentions, explaining 8.4% of the variance. The model was statistically significant, $F(6, 167) = 2.54, p = .022$. Agreeableness negatively predicted migration intentions ($\beta = -0.271, p = .002$), indicating that more agreeable individuals were less likely to intend to migrate. In contrast, conscientiousness positively predicted migration intentions ($\beta = 0.195, p = .042$), suggesting that more conscientious individuals were more likely to consider migration. Resilience showed a marginally significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.147, p = .054$), indicating a possible trend toward greater migration intention among more resilient individuals. This study found that agreeableness reduces, while conscientiousness increases, migration intentions among Nigerians. Resilience also supports adaptability, highlighting the role of psychological traits in shaping culturally influenced migration decisions.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the global healthcare workforce has undergone considerable changes, largely driven by the increasing migration of nurses from low-income to high-income countries. While economic and structural conditions play a role, individual-level characteristics, such as personality and psychological resilience, also significantly influence migration decisions. Gaining insight into how these personal attributes impact migration intentions is essential for informed workforce management and policy development.

Intention to migrate is commonly understood as an individual's expressed willingness or plan to move from their current location to another, typically in search of better opportunities, improved living standards, or overall well-being. This concept frequently appears in migration research. For instance, Odimegwu and Joe-Akunne (2023) examined migration intentions among residents in Anambra State, Nigeria, noting differences based on education level, gender, residence type, and age. In a similar vein, Toyin-Thomas et al. (2023) conducted a systematic review identifying core factors—such as financial incentives, safety, and career growth—that influence healthcare workers' intentions to leave their home countries.

Further research by Alabi and Olajide (2023) described emigration intention as an individual's reported wish to exit their home country. Likewise, Ojo et al. (2023) studied final-year students in

health-related fields in Nigeria, focusing on their plans to work abroad post-graduation. These studies highlight that migration intention reflects the conscious desire or plan to move and can serve as an early sign of future migration.

Personality traits, particularly those described in the Five-Factor Model openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism are known to influence behavioral choices, including those related to migration (McCrae & Costa, 2008). For example, individuals who score high in openness may be more inclined to explore new environments and cultures, thereby exhibiting stronger migration intentions (Zimmermann, 2016).

Resilience, defined as the ability to adapt and recover from challenges, also plays an important role in shaping one's decision to migrate (Windle, 2011). Nursing students, who often face high academic and clinical demands, might perceive migration as a chance for growth and advancement. Those with higher resilience levels are typically better at adjusting to change and managing stress, making them more open to migrating (Hart et al., 2014).

Theoretical Review

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), developed by Ajzen (1991), provides a robust framework for understanding how individual attitudes, social influences, and perceived control contribute to migration intention. According to TPB, behavioural intention—the most immediate predictor of action—is shaped by three key components: attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). This theory is highly relevant when examining how personality traits and resilience influence an individual's decision to migrate (Fouarge, Ester, & Schils, 2019; Spaan, 2023). Personality traits, particularly openness to experience, extraversion, and neuroticism, play a central role in shaping one's attitude toward migration (McCrae & Costa, 2008). Individuals high in openness are more likely to view migration positively due to their curiosity and adaptability, thereby fostering a favourable attitude. Extraverts may perceive migration as an opportunity for social connection and adventure, while those high in neuroticism might avoid migration due to fear and uncertainty (Zimmermann, 2016). Subjective norms, or perceived social pressure to perform or not perform a behaviour, can also be filtered through personality. For instance, individuals high in agreeableness may be more sensitive to familial expectations or community norms regarding migration (Assfaw & Minaye, 2022).

However, resilience is particularly significant in influencing perceived behavioural control—the belief in one's capacity to overcome obstacles and successfully execute the migration process. Resilient individuals are more likely to feel confident in navigating the challenges associated with relocation, such as financial constraints, cultural adjustment, or legal procedures (Smith et al., 2008; Windle, 2011). However, personality traits and resilience interact with TPB's core constructs to either enhance or diminish the likelihood of forming a strong migration intention. Thus, the TPB framework not only contextualises the psychological underpinnings of migration decisions but also underscores the importance of individual differences in behaviour prediction. It is especially useful in explaining why people with similar socio-economic backgrounds may have vastly different intentions to migrate.

Statement of the Problem

The migration of nurses from Nigeria to other countries has become a pressing concern, significantly affecting the nation's healthcare system. A growing number of Nigerian nurses are relocating abroad in search of better job opportunities, improved working conditions, and higher remuneration. This mass exodus has led to a shortage of healthcare professionals, increased workload for those remaining, and a decline in the overall quality of healthcare services.

While systemic factors such as inadequate salaries, poor working conditions, and limited career growth have been widely studied as causes of migration, the role of personality traits in influencing migration decisions remains underexplored. Personality traits, such as openness to experience, risk-taking propensity, resilience, and adaptability, may determine an individual's willingness to migrate. For instance, nurses with high openness to experience may be more inclined to seek opportunities in foreign healthcare systems, while those with higher levels of neuroticism may be hesitant due to fear of uncertainty.

Understanding the role of personality traits as an independent variable in nurses' migration can provide deeper insights into why some professionals choose to leave while others remain. This study seeks to examine how personality traits influence migration decisions, alongside economic and workplace-related factors. Identifying these psychological drivers can help policymakers design more targeted retention strategies that address both structural and individual motivations for migration, ultimately improving workforce stability in Nigeria's healthcare sector.

METHOD

DESIGN

The research adopted a cross sectional survey design using expo facto method. The study investigated the influence of personality traits and resilience on migration intention among university of Ibadan nursing school students. The study was carried out in school of nursing, University College Hospital, Ibadan.

Participants

The research consisted of 260 school of nursing student across all levels (year 1 to year 3). The dataset comprised a total of 261 participants, though not all variables had complete data. For demographic variables, **gender distribution** showed a significantly larger proportion of females ($n = 192$, 74.7%) compared to males ($n = 65$, 25.3%). This gender imbalance should be considered when interpreting findings, particularly where gender may influence responses. The **mean age** of participants was 20.17 years ($SD = 3.98$), with a range spanning from 2 to 42 years. The presence of an outlier (age = 2) raises concerns about data entry accuracy, which may require cleaning. Despite the wide range, the distribution suggests a primarily young sample, likely students or early-career individuals. For **ethnicity**, the majority of participants identified as Yoruba (80.8%), followed by Igbo (12.6%), others (5.4%), and Hausa (1.1%). Similarly, **religious affiliation** was predominantly Christian (82.9%), with smaller representations of Islam (16.7%) and other religions (0.4%). These statistics suggest a relatively homogenous sample in terms of ethnicity and religion, which may reflect regional demographics and should be acknowledged in discussions of generalizability. The **family relationship status** was overwhelmingly single (84.9%), with only a small percentage indicating married (12.4%), separated (1.9%), or widowed (0.8%) statuses. **Family background** was mainly monogamous (87.3%), with a minority from polygamous homes (12.3%). There was one anomalous entry coded as "11.00" that appears to be a data error and should be reviewed.

Participants largely reported **not having a parent living overseas** (91.4%), while only 8.2% indicated they did. This distribution may reflect the socio-economic status or migration patterns relevant to the sampled population.

Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were also calculated for several categorical variables. For example, **sex** had a mean of 1.75 ($SD = 0.44$), reflecting the female dominance in coding (assuming 1 = male, 2 = female). Similarly, **ethnicity** and **religion** mean

($M = 1.99$, $SD = 0.59$; $M = 1.18$, $SD = 0.39$ respectively) align with the observed frequency distributions, suggesting low variability and a concentration around one dominant category. The **neighborhoods** variable had a wide range of qualitative responses, indicating a high level of geographic diversity among respondents. However, many of the entries were inconsistent (e.g., different spellings or formats for the same locations), and some entries were numeric (e.g., “2”, “5”) or empty. Cleaning and categorizing this variable would improve its utility for analysis.

Sampling technique

Regarding the sampling technique complete enumeration or census method was employed. It is a statistical method where data is collected from every individual item within a specific population. This approach ensures that every unit of the population is included in the data collection, providing a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the entire group.

Instruments

Section A: it consists of demographic variables such sex, ethnicity, religion, family relationship, family background, having a parent leaving overseas and family neighbourhood.

Section B: The intention of individuals to migrate abroad was measured using the intention scale developed by Chan-Hoong and Soon (2012) and had five items with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.77. The scale was designed with a 5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A higher score denotes the individual's desire to migrate abroad. But the instrument does not have a determined cut-off point.

Section C: Brief resilience scale that was developed by Smith et al. (2008) to assess individual's ability to bounce back or recover from stress. Participants were asked to self-rate their agreement with each statement on a five likert format scale: 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). Three of the items are positively worded and three are negatively worded. The scores of the positively worded are summed up directly while the other negatively worded items are reverse scored. The total score is then added together, with higher scores indicating greater resilience. The scores range from 1 to 5, with higher scores reflecting a stronger ability to recover from stress. The authors of the BRS, Smith et al. (2008), reported an internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.80 to 0.91 across different samples. A sample item is item 1(I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times.)

Section D: [Personality Inventory consists](#) of a 44-item inventory that measures an individual on the Big Five Factors (dimensions) of personality (Goldberg, 1993). Although a shorter version of the personality trait scale, such as the BFI-10, has been developed to provide a quick assessment of the Big Five personality dimensions, the decision to use the original 44-item version was deliberate and methodologically grounded. The primary justification lies in the balance between brevity and psychometric robustness. The 44-item version offers greater reliability and validity in measuring the five broad personality domains—Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism—because each trait is assessed through multiple items, capturing a wider range of behaviours and expressions. This enhances internal consistency, which is critical when personality traits are being examined concerning other psychological or behavioural outcomes, such as migration intention. In contrast, the 10-item version, while efficient and time-saving, has significant limitations in reliability, particularly for research that involves individual-level analysis. Each of the factors is then further divided into personality facets. The scoring includes BFI scale scoring (“R” denotes reverse-scored items): Extraversion: 1, 6R, 11, 16, 21R, 26, 31R, 36 Agreeableness: 2R, 7, 12R, 17, 22, 27R, 32, 37R, 42 Conscientiousness:

3, 8R, 13, 18R, 23R, 28, 33, 38, 43R Neuroticism: 4, 9R, 14, 19, 24R, 29, 34R, 39 Openness: 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35R, 40, 41R, 44.

Procedure

Data for the study were collected using structured self-report questionnaires, which were appropriate for assessing the psychological constructs under investigation. The primary instruments included the Big Five Inventory (BFI-44) and the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) developed by Smith et al. (2008) to measure the ability to recover from stress. Migration intention was assessed using an adapted scale based on previous works such as Chan-Hoong and Soon (2012), which included Likert-type items evaluating participants' intention to migrate. The consent process also emphasized the confidentiality of their responses; no personal identifiers were collected, and all data were stored securely for academic use only. Participants were assured that their responses would remain anonymous, and they were provided with the researcher's contact information in case of any questions or concerns. The printed forms included a signature line to confirm their agreement to participate.

RESULTS

Table 1: showing the predictions of the independent tables

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	R	R ²	F	P	B	T	Sig.
Intention to Migrate	Extraversion					-0.017	-0.219	>.05
	Agreeableness					-0.271	-3.108	<.05
	Conscientiousness	.289	.084	2.541	<.05	0.195	2.052	<.05
	Neuroticism					-0.015	-0.165	>.05
	Openness					0.052	0.637	>.05
	Resilience					0.147	1.941	<.05

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether the Big Five personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness) and resilience significantly predicted intention to migrate. The results of the regression indicated that the model was statistically significant, **F(6, 167) = 2.54, p = .022**, accounting for approximately **8.4% of the variance** in intention to migrate (**R² = .084, Adjusted R² = .051**). Among the predictors, **agreeableness** was found to significantly and negatively predict intention to migrate (**β = -0.271, p = .002**), indicating that individuals with higher agreeableness scores were less likely to intend to migrate. **Conscientiousness** was a significant positive predictor (**β = 0.195, p = .042**), suggesting that those with higher levels of conscientiousness were more likely to express migration intentions. **Resilience** showed a significant positive relationship with intention to migrate (**β = 0.147, p = .054**), which suggests a potential trend worth further investigation. Resilience shows a significant relationship (p = .054), which may suggest that resilient individuals are slightly more inclined to consider migration, possibly viewing it as an adaptive response to adverse conditions.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined how the Big Five personality traits and resilience jointly predict intention to migrate, revealing a statistically significant model that accounted for 8.4% of the variance in migration intentions. Among the predictors, low agreeableness, high conscientiousness, and resilience (at a trend level) emerged as key factors influencing migration decisions. These findings support and expand upon existing literature that emphasises the role of personality and psychological adaptation in migration-related behaviour.

The significant negative relationship between agreeableness and migration intention ($\beta = -0.271$, $p < .05$) suggests that individuals who are less cooperative, less trusting, and more independent are more likely to consider migrating. This aligns with the findings of Jokela (2009), who argued that low agreeableness may foster migration due to reduced emotional attachment to family or community. Similarly, Paulauskaitė, Fino, and Fino (2021) found that individuals with lower levels of agreeableness often prioritise personal goals over social harmony, making them more likely to pursue migration opportunities that may disrupt social ties. These results point to a psychological tendency among less agreeable individuals to prioritise autonomy and self-directed goals—characteristics that make international migration more appealing.

In contrast, conscientiousness was found to positively predict migration intention ($\beta = 0.195$, $p < .05$), indicating that organised, goal-oriented, and disciplined individuals are more likely to consider migration as a viable option. While some prior studies—such as Ayhan et al. (2017)—have reported a negative association between conscientiousness and internal migration within countries like Turkey, this study suggests that the association may differ in international contexts. It is possible that highly conscientious individuals, especially in regions with fewer socio-economic opportunities, perceive migration as a long-term investment requiring planning and persistence. Therefore, for conscientious individuals, migration might represent a strategic, goal-directed action rather than an impulsive or reactive move.

The study also found that resilience positively predicted migration intention, though marginally significant ($\beta = 0.147$, $p = .054$), suggesting a trend worth further investigation. Resilience refers to an individual's ability to adapt and thrive in the face of adversity, and its association with migration intention highlights a psychological readiness to confront the uncertainties associated with relocating. Fletcher and Sarkar (2013) emphasised that resilience enhances one's ability to manage stress and uncertainty, common challenges in migration. Moreover, Oshio, Taku, Hirano, and Saeed (2018) conducted a meta-analysis showing that resilience is positively correlated with personality traits such as conscientiousness and openness, suggesting a mutually reinforcing relationship. In this light, resilience may act as a motivational amplifier that enables individuals with certain personality profiles to pursue migration confidently.

Taken together, these findings underscore the joint predictive power of personality and resilience in shaping migration intentions. While low agreeableness may reduce emotional barriers to migration, high conscientiousness ensures that individuals are strategic and disciplined in pursuing such goals. Resilience, in turn, supports these traits by enabling individuals to tolerate risk and uncertainty. Shi et al. (2015) further support this view, noting that resilience mediates the relationship between personality traits and behavioural outcomes. Thus, resilience may not only directly influence migration intention but also strengthen the effects of conscientiousness or reduce the negative impact of neuroticism in migration decisions.

The interplay between personality traits and resilience provides a more comprehensive understanding of what drives individuals to consider migration. These findings highlight the importance of psychological preparedness, goal orientation, and adaptability as key psychological resources for migration. Future studies should consider mediation models to explore whether resilience acts as a bridge between personality traits and migration intention. Moreover, research should also distinguish between internal and international migration contexts to better understand how these predictors operate in different settings.

Agreeableness showed a significant negative relationship with migration intention. This finding aligns with the results of Fouarge et al. (2019) and Alabi and Olajide (2023), suggesting that

agreeable individuals, who tend to value social harmony and interpersonal relationships, may be less inclined to leave familiar environments. In the Nigerian context, this trait may manifest in prioritizing family and community ties, making migration less appealing.

Conscientiousness was positively associated with migration intention. While this contrasts with the negative link found in some international literature (e.g., Fouarge et al., 2019), it supports findings by Akinwumi et al. (2023), who observed that conscientious Nigerians, especially the youth, are driven by structured goals and seek environments where their aspirations can be realized. This trait aligns with data from the National Bureau of Statistics (2024), which reports high emigration interest among educated, goal-oriented Nigerians.

Extraversion, neuroticism, and openness did not significantly predict migration intention in this study. While international literature, such as Spaan (2023), often associates extraversion and openness with increased migration due to novelty-seeking and adaptability, these associations may be culturally moderated. For instance, Fouarge et al. (2019) demonstrated that the effects of these traits vary across cultural contexts. In Nigeria, economic factors and migration barriers may outweigh personality influences in these domains. Neuroticism's lack of significance supports findings by Assfaw and Minaye (2022), who noted its inconsistent role in predicting migration—sometimes acting as a motivator for change and at other times as a barrier due to fear and anxiety.

Resilience displayed a significant positive effect, implying that resilient individuals might feel more capable of navigating the uncertainties and challenges of migration. This resonates with Assfaw and Minaye (2022), who emphasized resilience as a facilitator of adaptability in migration contexts. Similarly, Badru et al. (2024) found that resilience was a key factor influencing healthcare professionals' decisions to emigrate from Nigeria.

Overall, these findings offer significant insight into the psychological factors shaping migration intentions in Nigeria. The significant roles of agreeableness and conscientiousness suggest that both communal obligations and personal goal orientation are critical determinants. The marginal influence of resilience highlights the importance of mental adaptability in preparing individuals for international transitions. For policymakers, these insights underline the need to create socio-economic conditions that retain talent and offer fulfilling local opportunities, especially for proactive and capable individuals who might otherwise seek better prospects abroad.

Conclusion

This study investigated the prediction of personality traits and resilience on migration intention among Nigerians. The findings suggest that certain personality traits, notably agreeableness and conscientiousness, play significant roles in shaping migration intentions, with individuals who are agreeable being less likely to migrate and those who are conscientious being more likely to seek migration opportunities. Resilience also showed a near-significant positive effect, highlighting its role in facilitating migration adaptability. However, the study found no significant association between extraversion, neuroticism, and openness with migration intentions, which could be attributed to cultural or contextual differences within the Nigerian setting.

The results underscore the importance of understanding psychological factors in migration decisions and provide insight into the complex interplay of individual characteristics and migration behavior. These findings align with both international and Nigerian research, suggesting that

personality traits and resilience are influential in migration intentions. However, the strength and direction of these relationships may vary by cultural context.

Recommendations

Given the significant role of conscientiousness and agreeableness, policymakers should consider fostering an environment that aligns with the needs of conscientious individuals who are proactive and goal-oriented. Programs aimed at providing opportunities for personal and professional growth within the country may deter migration among these individuals. For agreeable individuals, community-centred initiatives that strengthen social cohesion and provide stability may reduce the pull factors driving migration.

As resilience plays a critical role in migration decisions, especially in facilitating adaptability to new environments, interventions should focus on building resilience, particularly among youth and professionals. Programs designed to enhance coping skills, stress management, and cultural adaptation could reduce the psychological barriers to migration and encourage migration only when it is beneficial for career or personal development.

Given that personality traits can influence migration decisions, migration policies and programs could be more effective if they consider the psychological profiles of potential migrants. For example, offering migration-related support to individuals who exhibit lower resilience or higher neuroticism may help them overcome potential anxieties associated with migration.

This study's findings provide a foundation for further exploration into how cultural and socio-economic factors in Nigeria influence the relationship between personality traits and migration intentions. Future research should explore whether additional psychological factors, such as self-esteem, optimism, and perceived social support, further shape migration decisions in the Nigerian context.

Given the increased migration intentions among educated individuals, as reported by the National Bureau of Statistics (2024), targeted programs aimed at retaining young, skilled professionals could help mitigate the brain drain phenomenon in Nigeria. These programs should emphasize career development opportunities, skills upgrading, and improved living conditions to make staying in Nigeria more attractive.

By addressing these areas, Nigerian policymakers and organizations can better understand and manage migration trends, potentially reducing the adverse effects of migration while maximizing the positive impacts on national development.

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