A Sociological Analysis on the Impact of Migrant Remittances from Abroad On Youth Restiveness in Edo South Senatorial District

By

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Abstract

This paper investigates how migrant remittances from abroad influence youth restiveness in the Edo South Senatorial District of Nigeria—a region globally recognised for its high rates of international migration and transnational financial inflows. Edo State contributes an estimated 31% of Nigeria's total diaspora remittances, indicating the depth of outward mobility and its economic significance to local communities. Existing research confirms that remittances enhance living standards, household welfare, and socio-economic stability among residents of Edo South, especially the Bini people. National studies further show that remittances substantially improve consumption and welfare indicators for recipient households. However, sociological literature from the Niger Delta demonstrates that youth restiveness—expressed through agitation, violence, deviance, cultism, and criminality—emerges from structures of deprivation, inequality, unemployment, and exclusion. In Edo South, these structural pressures intersect with migration-driven aspirations. Irregular migration and returnee experiences shape new meanings of success, material display, and expectations among youths, thereby influencing social behaviour. Guided by Relative Deprivation Theory, Strain Theory, and Levitt's (1998) Social Remittances Theory (Levitt, 1998), the study uses qualitative analysis of scholarly literature, demographic reports, and migration studies to examine the dualistic influence of remittances: while they alleviate poverty, they also intensify aspiration gaps and fuel restive tendencies among non-beneficiary youths. The study concludes that remittances function as both stabilising and destabilising forces and recommends socio-economic reforms, youth empowerment, and community-based interventions.

Keywords: remittances, youth, restiveness, sociological, migration.

Introduction

International migration has become a defining socio-economic feature of Edo South Senatorial District. The district comprises Oredo, Ikpoba-Okha, Egor, Ovia North-East, Ovia South-West, Orhionmwon and Uhunmwonde LGAs (Wikipedia, 2026). Research consistently shows that the region hosts one of the highest concentrations of international migrants in Nigeria, with Italy serving historically as a primary destination for Bini migrants (Akhigbe & Effevottu, 2023).

At the national scale, Nigeria received over USD 21.29 billion in remittances in 2024, marking its position as the largest remittance recipient in Sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2024). A significant proportion of these inflows originate from Edo migrants, who send money regularly to support household welfare, education, housing, ceremonies, and entrepreneurship. According to the Edo Diaspora Agency, Edo State accounts for approximately USD 7 billion, or 31% of Nigeria's annual remittances (Ogboro-Okor, 2025).

Beyond economic effects, migration also transmits ideas, norms, and social practices—a phenomenon described by Levitt (1998) as *social remittances*, which encompasses the flow of behaviours, aspirations, and identity patterns from migrant destinations to home communities (Levitt, 1998). In Edo South, these non-material influences are evident in the valorisation of "making it abroad," displays of wealth, gender role reconfigurations, and evolving community expectations.

Simultaneously, youth restiveness—defined as recurrent agitation, deviance, or violence arising from frustration, blocked opportunities, and inequality—remains a severe concern in Nigeria. Studies in the Niger Delta region identify unemployment, poverty, marginalisation, and environmental grievances as major drivers of restiveness (Ejumudo, 2014), while further evidence highlights a link between youth restiveness and socio-economic pressures, structural deprivation, and state neglect (Ibanga, 2025).

In Edo South, these structural factors intersect with migration-driven expectations. Due to the prominence of remittances and visible wealth among successful migrants, youths increasingly view overseas migration as the only path to upward mobility. Research documents how irregular migration pathways from Benin City through Libya and the Mediterranean are often fuelled by aspirations to join the diaspora economy (Akhigbe & Effevottu, 2023). Social pressure to migrate—coupled with conspicuous consumption enabled by remittances—intensifies the sense of deprivation among non-migrant youths.

Despite the scale of migration from Edo South and its significant economic contribution, there is limited sociological scholarship specifically linking migrant remittances to youth restiveness in this region. This study addresses that gap.

Statement of the Problem

Edo South has emerged as Nigeria's most prominent migration hub, producing high numbers of both regular and irregular migrants. Remittances sent home significantly improve the living conditions of recipient families, as documented in recent studies on Edo communities (Braimah et al., 2024). However, this uneven distribution of remittance wealth has created deep social inequalities, elevating the status of recipient households and inadvertently intensifying competitive pressures among local youths.

Studies on Nigeria's remittance patterns reveal that while remittances reduce poverty and stimulate household consumption, they can also generate dependency, inflation, and social rivalry (Orji & Kohol, 2025). In Edo South, where migration success is tied to prestige and family honour, youths who lack remittance-supported pathways often experience frustration, exclusion, and a sense of relative deprivation.

At the same time, youth restiveness in Southern Nigeria is attributed primarily to unemployment, socio-economic exclusion, and unequal access to opportunities (Ejumudo, 2014). In Edo South, these structural pressures combine with migration-derived expectations, producing unique forms of frustration and deviant behaviour, including risky migration, cultism, financial crime, and agitation.

Thus, while remittances play a crucial role in improving livelihoods, their influence on social norms, youth aspirations, and community power dynamics has not been adequately studied. There is insufficient qualitative research exploring how remittances both alleviate economic stress and exacerbate restive tendencies among youths in Edo South.

This study therefore seeks to understand the sociological pathways through which remittances impact youth restiveness in Edo South Senatorial District.

Research Questions

1. How do remittances from abroad impact household welfare, youth aspirations, and socio-economic life in Edo South?
2. In what ways do remittances reduce or intensify youth restiveness in the region?
3. How do social remittances (ideas, norms, behaviours) transmitted by migrants influence youth identity and behaviour?
4. What socio-economic and cultural factors mediate the relationship between remittances and youth restiveness?
5. How do youths in Edo South perceive migration success, remittances, and socio-economic expectations?

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

To qualitatively examine the socio-cultural and economic impact of migrant remittances on youth restiveness in Edo South Senatorial District.

Specific Objectives

1. To analyse how remittances shape youth expectations, social structures, and household welfare.
2. To investigate the role of remittances in both mitigating and provoking youth restiveness.
3. To examine how social remittances influence youth identities, behaviours, and aspirations.
4. To understand local narratives surrounding migration success and youth restiveness.

5. To propose sociologically grounded recommendations for reducing youth restiveness in remittance-dependent communities.

Literature Review

Introduction to the Literature Review

The relationship between migrant remittances and youth restiveness in sub-Saharan Africa is complex, multidimensional, and often contradictory. Existing scholarship identifies remittances as a major catalyst for household welfare improvement, human capital development, and local economic growth (Adesina, 2017). Conversely, sociological analyses highlight the unintended consequences of remittance inflows—such as intensified social inequality, aspiration inflation, and cultural dislocation—which may trigger restive or deviant behaviours among youths (Musa et al., 2025).

Edo South Senatorial District provides a uniquely important case because it represents one of Africa's most intense zones of international migration, irregular mobility, and trafficking-linked transnational networks (Akhigbe & Effevottu, 2023). Migration is not merely an economic strategy; it is a deeply embedded cultural script, shaping identity, honour, intergenerational aspirations, and local conceptions of social worth. As a result, the dynamics of remittances in Edo South transcend material flows: they also encompass symbolic, normative, and emotional remittances that significantly reshape youth behaviour and societal expectations.

This review critically synthesises empirical literature, conceptual debates, and theoretical frameworks relevant to understanding how migration and remittances shape youth restiveness in Edo South. It interrogates the strengths, contradictions, and limitations of existing works while situating the present study within broader scholarly conversations.

Migration Trends and Remittance Dynamics in Nigeria and Edo South: A Critical Overview

Nigeria remains the largest recipient of remittances in Sub-Saharan Africa, with inflows reaching USD 21.29 billion in 2024 (World Bank, 2024). While scholars

often celebrate these robust inflows as indicators of diaspora strength, this perspective oversimplifies the structural realities driving migration. Nandi-Esom (2025) argues that Nigeria's dependence on remittances is a symptom of domestic underdevelopment, structural unemployment, and chronic governance failure, which push highly ambitious youths to seek opportunities abroad.

Some studies view remittances as a substitute for failed state welfare functions, masking governance deficits rather than addressing root causes of poverty (Anosike & Alfadhel, 2026).

Despite rising remittances in 2024, the Nigerian economy continues to suffer from inflation, naira devaluation, and unemployment, casting doubt on optimistic remittance narratives (BusinessDay, 2025).

While useful at the household level, remittances rarely transform structural economic conditions. Their developmental potential remains severely limited by corruption, poor institutions, and lack of productive absorption channels. Thus, discussions must shift from celebratory remittance statistics to a critical interrogation of why remittances matter and what structural failures they obscure.
Edo South as a Migration Epicentre — Cultural Logic and Structural Contradictions

Edo State's contribution of 31% of Nigeria's total remittances—estimated at USD 7 billion annually—makes it the most significant remittance-generating state in Nigeria (Ogboro-Okor, 2025). But what differentiates Edo South is not merely statistical dominance; it is the deep cultural embedding of migration.

Migration decisions are not purely individual—they are often collective family strategies, inherited and normalized across generations, reflecting deep historical linkages with Italy and other European countries. Migration from Edo South is sustained by both formal and illicit infrastructures (trafficking networks, smuggling routes), reflecting state failure and local adaptation strategies (Akhigbe & Effevottu, 2023). Female migration—especially for sex work in Europe—has historically enabled women to acquire unprecedented economic power and social

capital, challenging local patriarchal norms while simultaneously exposing women to exploitation (Eghafona, 2019).

Scholars tend to romanticise Edo migration as a purely opportunity-driven act. Yet, critical works reveal that migration is also a response to structural violence, including lack of opportunities, gender discrimination, and community pressures. Scholarly gaps persist in analysing how expectations placed on migrant's shape youth restiveness among those who remain behind.

Thus, migration in Edo South is both an economic necessity and a cultural obligation, generating social pressures that shape the behaviour of non-migrant youths.

Remittances and Living Standards — Between Welfare and Inequality
Research overwhelmingly shows that remittances enhance living standards in Edo South. Braimah et al. (2024) demonstrate that remittances significantly improve household consumption, housing, education, and healthcare among the Bini people. However, Adesina (2017) found that Nigerian households primarily use remittances for consumption rather than productive investment. This raises questions about the developmental sustainability of remittance dependence. Remittances enable households to exit poverty. But they also create psychological and financial dependency, weakening local resilience.

Musa et al. (2025) show that remittances create powerful visual markers of social stratification—large houses, imported cars, lavish celebrations, and elevated social status. These visible markers generate envy, social tension, class fragmentation and identity-based alienation

Thus, remittances are both economic resources and cultural scripts that shape youth restiveness.

Intangible Remittances and Norm Diffusion — Contemporary Insights
Pinkow-Läpple & Möllers (2025) argue that beyond social remittances, migration transmits intangible remittances—including belief systems, environmental values,

civic attitudes, and political norms—which reshape social processes more profoundly than monetary flows.

Research by Akhigbe & Effevottu, (2023) show that Edo youths internalise European lifestyles, fashion ideals, migration myths, and cosmopolitan status aspirations without necessarily having the means to attain them leading to mismatch which heightens their frustration, restiveness, risk-taking and migration desperation.

The concept of youth restiveness is often invoked in Nigerian scholarship with insufficient clarity. Some authors restrict the term to violent political agitation; others expand it to include deviance, cybercrime, cultism, and symbolic rebellion (Ejumudo, 2014).

Unemployment and underemployment have been adjudged as the strongest predictors of youth restiveness (Ibanga, 2025) while Alozie, (2022) argue that state neglect and uneven resource distribution have fuelled violent youth mobilisations in the Niger Delta.

Youth restiveness is not simply material; it involves the internalisation of stigma, stereotyping, and exclusion by power structures.

So, instead of alleviating youth restiveness, remittances often *intensify* it through inequality, exclusion, and comparison dynamics (Musa et al., 2025). This explains the position of Akhigbe & Effevottu, (2023) concept of Edo's migration imperative—"go abroad or fail"— which drives youths toward risky mobility or deviant strategies to secure migration funds.

Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical framework integrates Relative Deprivation Theory, Strain/Anomie Theory, and Social Remittances Theory to explain how visible remittance-driven inequalities (psychological comparisons), blocked legitimate pathways to mobility (structural strain), and transnational norm diffusion (cultural transmission) jointly shape youth restiveness in Edo South.

Relative Deprivation Theory provides an important foundation for explaining aspiration-driven restiveness among youths in Edo South. The theory posits that individuals feel deprived not because of absolute poverty but when they evaluate their situation unfavourably against that of relevant comparison groups, generating resentment, frustration, and a sense of injustice (Runciman, 1966; Stouffer et al., 1949). These cognitive evaluations become acute in environments where visible inequality—such as remittance-funded houses, cars, and displays of wealth—heighten social comparison. In the context of Edo South, this framework captures how non-recipient youths, observing the successes of peers with relatives abroad, internalise disadvantage as deprivation, leading to behaviours that reflect psychological strain and agitation. Although useful, the theory's limitation lies in its emphasis on individual perception at the expense of structural forces such as labour markets, weak institutions, and systemic marginalisation, which also shape youth restiveness.

Strain/Anomie Theory, developed by Merton (1938), complements this lens by emphasising the structural roots of deviance. The theory argues that when culturally prescribed goals—such as wealth, upward mobility, or, in this context, migration success—are widely promoted but legitimate means of achieving them are blocked or unequally distributed, individuals experience strain. This strain produces adaptive responses, including *innovation*, where people turn to alternative or deviant strategies to achieve socially valued outcomes (Merton, 1938; see also McLeod, 2025). In Edo South, many youths confront restricted access to regular migration pathways due to unemployment, poverty, and lack of documentation. These constraints push some towards risky alternatives such as cybercrime, trafficking roles, or irregular migration routes as strategies to achieve the migration-linked success ideal. Although powerful in explaining individual deviance, classic strain theory has been criticised for insufficiently addressing collective or symbolic forms of restiveness, as well as the gendered and power-laden dynamics of contemporary mobility systems.

Social Remittances Theory, introduced by Levitt (1998), expands the analytical focus beyond material flows to the transmission of ideas, norms, identities, and practices between migrants and their home communities. Social remittances reconfigure aspirations, gender expectations, and status norms in meaningful

ways, shaping how young people interpret success, modernity, and belonging. In Edo South, exposure to migrant lifestyles—whether via physical returnees, digital media, or transnational family ties—reshapes youths' identity frameworks, often leading them to devalue local educational and economic opportunities while elevating migration as the only credible pathway to adulthood or respectability. This diffusion of norms generates aspiration inflation, identity dissonance, and heightened pressure to migrate "at all costs." However, the framework has limitations in that it underplays the structural violence embedded in migration systems, including exploitation, deportation risks, and coercion. When synthesised, the three theories reveal that remittances influence youth restiveness through intertwined psychological (relative deprivation), structural (strain), and cultural-transnational (social remittances) mechanisms. This integrated lens underscores that the impact of remittances on youth restiveness in Edo South must be understood as a socio-cultural, economic, and psychological process rather than a financial one alone.

Research Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the sociological meanings, cultural norms, and subjective experiences that connect migrant remittances with youth restiveness in Edo South. This approach is best suited to examining symbolic processes such as aspiration formation, perceptions of deprivation, and shifts in identity—elements that cannot be captured through quantitative methods alone. The design is grounded in previous migration studies in Edo State, which successfully employed qualitative and mixed-method strategies to uncover the lived realities and cultural dynamics shaping local migration behaviours.

The research is situated in Edo South Senatorial District, which comprises seven local government areas—Oredo, Ikpoba-Okha, Egor, Ovia North-East, Ovia South-West, Orhionmwon, and Uhunmwonde—and is recognised as Nigeria's most active migration hub. The study population includes youths aged 15–35, parents and caregivers receiving remittances, community leaders, return migrants, NGO workers, teachers, and other stakeholders. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants with direct experience of migration,

remittances, or youth behaviour, ensuring representation across gender, socioeconomic backgrounds, and different LGAs.

Data collection involved three methods: semi-structured interviews, which allowed participants to share personal experiences and interpretations of migration; focus group discussions, which captured collective views, peer dynamics, and shared meanings around remittances and restiveness; and a document review of academic studies, government publications, NGO reports, and migration datasets. Data were analysed using Thematic Content Analysis, beginning with open coding to identify recurring ideas, axial coding to connect related themes, and selective coding to align findings with relevant sociological theories such as Relative Deprivation, Social Remittances, and Strain Theory. This triangulated approach strengthened the validity and depth of the study's insights.

Findings

Socio-demographic

The study engaged 48 participants across three strands: 20 in semi-structured interviews, 24 in focus group discussions (FGDs), and 4 as key informants. Women were slightly over-represented overall, reflecting both the high visibility of young women in local migration narratives and the inclusion of caregivers and NGO actors in the sample. Ages clustered in the 20–29 range, with meaningful representation from 15–19 and 30–35 year-olds, which ensured that the analysis captured both school-to-work transitions and early-career adulthood. Participants were drawn from all seven LGAs in Edo South—Oredo, Ikpoba-Okha, Egor, Ovia North-East, Ovia South-West, Orhionmwon, and Uhunmwonde—so that urban Benin City wards and peri-urban communities were both represented. Just over half of all participants came from remittance-receiving households, providing first-hand perspectives on how remittances are used and perceived alongside views from non-recipient households confronting comparison pressures.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of interview participants

Variable	Category	Frequency
Gender	Male (9), Female (11)	20
Age Group	15–19 (2), 20–24 (5), 25–29 (7), 30–35 (6)	20

LGA of Residence	Oredo (4), Ikpoba-Okha (3), Egor (3), Ovia N.E. (3), Ovia S.W. (2), Orhionmwon (3), Uhunmwonde (2)	20
Remittance Status	Receiving (12), Not receiving (8)	20
Participant Type	Youths (10), Parents (4), Returnees (3), NGO actors (3)	20

Source: Researcher, 2026

The socio-demographic characteristics of participants reveal a diverse and representative sample across Edo South Senatorial District. The 20 interview participants comprised 9 males and 11 females, spanning ages 15 to 35, with the largest cluster falling within the 25–29 age group—a demographic segment most actively negotiating migration pressures and labour-market transitions. Participants were drawn from all seven LGAs in Edo South, with Oredo having the highest representation. More than half of the interviewees (12 out of 20) came from remittance-receiving households, providing rich insights into how remittance inflows shape welfare and social dynamics. The interview cohort included 10 youths, 4 parents/caregivers, 3 return migrants, and 3 NGO/community actors, ensuring the inclusion of lived experiences, household decision-making perspectives, and practitioner-level observations.

Table 2: Socio-demographic characteristics of interview participants

Variable	Category	Frequency
Gender	Male (11), Female (13)	24
Age Group	15–19 (3), 20–24 (8), 25–29 (9), 30–35 (4)	24
LGA of Residence	Oredo (6), Ikpoba-Okha (4), Egor (4), Ovia N.E. (4), Ovia S.W. (3),	24

	Orhionmwon (2), Uhunmwonde (1)	
Remittance Status	Receiving (14), Not receiving (10)	24
Participant Type	Youths (20), Parents (2), Informal workers (2)	24

Source: Researcher, 2026

The 24 FGD participants similarly demonstrated a balanced gender profile—11 males and 13 females—and were predominantly within the 20–29 age bracket, reflecting the age group most affected by migration aspirations and comparison pressures. Representation across LGAs mirrored that of the interview cohort, with participants drawn from both urban and peri-urban areas. Fourteen FGD participants lived in remittance-receiving households, and ten did not, enabling robust group discussions around perceived inequality, youth expectations, and collective attitudes toward migration. FGDs were largely youth-dominant (20 out of 24 participants), alongside a small number of parents and informal workers, capturing peer-level dynamics and the circulation of social norms around migration, success, and self-worth.

Table 3: Demographic profile of key informants

Variable	Category	Frequency
Gender	Male (2), Female (2)	4
Role	NGO case worker (1), Guidance counsellor (1), Community leader (1), Social welfare officer (1)	4
Exposure to Remittances	All had direct experience with remittance-receiving households	4

Source: Researcher, 2026

The four key informants—balanced equally across gender—offered expert and community-level perspectives. Their roles included an NGO case worker, a school guidance counsellor, a community leader, and a social welfare officer, all of whom

had direct exposure to remittance-receiving households and youth coping behaviours. These informants provided contextual grounding for the patterns emerging from interviews and FGDs, particularly regarding vulnerabilities, household pressures, and community-level implications of migration and remittance flows. Together, the three participant groups offer a comprehensive, triangulated understanding of the socio-demographic realities underpinning remittance practices and youth restiveness in Edo South.

Discussion of Findings

Remittances Improve Household Welfare but Create Visible Social Inequality

Across interviews, FGDs and document reviews, respondents consistently explained that remittances substantially improve household welfare in Edo South, particularly through better housing, feeding, healthcare access, school fees, and support for small businesses, reflecting earlier evidence by Braimah et al. (2024). Communities frequently pointed to tangible outcomes such as renovated homes, payment of medical bills and enrolment in private schools as direct benefits of having relatives abroad. These improvements reinforce national findings that remittances strengthen household consumption and uplift living standards, confirming Musa et al.'s (2025) broader analysis of welfare gains among remittance-receiving families.

However, these same improvements create visible social divisions between households with migrant relatives and those without. In nearly every LGA visited, participants referred to "diaspora houses," luxury cars and remittance-funded ceremonies that clearly distinguished "those with somebody abroad" from "those who are stranded here." FGDs confirmed that youths increasingly interpret remittances as the defining marker of class, dignity and modernity, reproducing social boundaries that map neatly onto material differences. Document analysis reinforced this view, with studies emphasising how rising remittance inflows intensify symbolic hierarchies and produce "status concentration effects," fuelling resentment and anxiety among non-recipient youths (Musa et al., 2025). Taken together, these findings indicate that remittances simultaneously function as economic enablers and drivers of social inequality in Edo South.

Youths Experience Relative Deprivation and Frustration

Interview data reveal that remittance-driven inequality generates deep emotional and psychological strain among young people. Many youths expressed frustration when comparing their situation to that of remittance-supported peers, frequently echoing sentiments such as: "My mate is abroad; see how him family dey enjoy," "If you no travel, you no go amount to anything," and "Even girls no dey look your side except you be returnee." These statements reflect the mechanisms described in Relative Deprivation Theory, where perceived inequality—not absolute poverty—produces feelings of injustice and failure. Such perceptions were further reinforced in FGDs, where participants described the humiliation of being unable to migrate, the social stigma of being "left behind," and the pressure to contribute financially to household migration plans.

These frustrations manifest in diverse behavioural responses that constitute youth restiveness. Some young people withdraw from school, feeling that formal education no longer matches contemporary aspirations shaped by migration success stories. Others direct hostility toward parents who are unable to finance migration, while a subset turns to risky behaviours such as cybercrime ("Yahoo Yahoo"), drug abuse, cultism, and even trafficking networks as alternative routes to mobility. These coping strategies mirror findings from Niger Delta studies where deprivation and blocked mobility are consistent predictors of youth restiveness (Ibanga, 2025; Ejumudo, 2014). Overall, the evidence highlights an intensifying psychological toll among Edo South youths who feel structurally excluded from the migration economy.

Remittances Intensify the "Migration Imperative"

The interviews show that remittances not only improve household welfare—they strengthen a cultural "migration imperative" among youths who perceive international migration as the only viable pathway to success. Many articulated that life in Nigeria is a temporary holding stage and that true achievement begins only abroad, reflecting the migration culture identified by Akhigbe & Effevottu (2023). FGDs expanded on this by showing how peer groups reinforce migration as an obligation rather than a choice, with young men especially viewing it as tied to masculinity, status, and adulthood. Document evidence confirmed that Edo South, as Nigeria's leading remittance-producing region (Ogboro-Okor, 2025),

sustains a strong cultural script where migration is celebrated, reproduced, and socially demanded.

These expectations convert into behavioural pressures that often feed into youth restiveness. Interviewees openly linked their agitation to the financial burden of migration planning, envy of families with returnees, and feelings of humiliation when unable to migrate. Some admitted turning to illicit income-generating activities—including Yahoo fraud, drug sales, cultism, and human smuggling—to raise migration funds. As documented in regional analysis, these behaviours reflect a strategic, although risky, attempt to access a globally valorised migration economy. The convergence of interview, FGD, and documentary evidence shows that remittances intensify the symbolic and practical value of migration, reinforcing restive behaviours among youths seeking to "join the abroad economy."

Social Remittances Drive Aspirational and Identity Shifts

Across data sources, the study finds overwhelming evidence that *social remittances*—ideas, behaviours, and lifestyle expectations transmitted by migrants—have powerful effects on youth aspirations and identity. Returnees described bringing back European fashion, speech patterns, spending habits, and narratives of success, which young people quickly emulate. Interviews revealed that many youths believed local jobs were "beneath them," that Nigerian education was "a waste," and that "real life starts abroad." FGDs further showed how social media platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok become informal classrooms where youths learn how to "look abroad" and "act abroad," reinforcing globalised aesthetic and status ideals. These findings closely align with Levitt's (1998) concept of social remittances and with the expansions offered by Pinkow-Läpple & Möllers (2025).

Document reviews confirmed that these intangible remittances significantly influence self-concept and social expectations, often more intensely than financial remittances. Exposure to diaspora lifestyles—whether through physical returnees or digital platforms—creates a transnational aspiration bubble where local realities are devalued, and global standards become internal benchmarks. This disjuncture produces aspiration inflation and identity dissonance among Edo South youths,

who increasingly measure success not by local achievements but by proximity to transnational lifestyles. The spread of social remittances therefore deepens youth restiveness by widening the psychological gap between desired futures and attainable realities.

Gendered Dynamics in Migration and Restiveness

Findings show distinct gendered patterns in how migration pressures and remittance expectations shape youth behaviour. Many young women reported experiencing dual pressures: direct encouragement or coercion to migrate through irregular channels, reduced marriage prospects if they remain "local," and heightened expectations to contribute remittances once abroad. Several narrated recruitments attempt by acquaintances tied to trafficking networks, consistent with documented Edo trafficking patterns (Eghafona, 2019). FGDs reinforced these narratives, revealing how community norms imagine women as economic saviours whose success abroad must translate into family uplift, creating emotional and financial burdens.

Male participants described a different set of expectations, emphasising masculine identity, respect, and adulthood as tightly bound to migration success. Young men frequently expressed status anxiety linked to not having travelled, reflecting cultural narratives in which male worth is equated with global mobility. This anxiety often led to heightened involvement in cybercrime, cultism, and drug economies as alternative pathways to migration funding or social recognition. Document analysis confirmed these dynamics, showing long-standing gendered migration routes and vulnerability structures in Edo State. Together, the data demonstrate that youth restiveness is not gender-neutral; rather, it reflects deep-seated patriarchal expectations and uneven migration pressures experienced differently by men and women.

Youth Restiveness Manifests in Multiple Forms

The interviews and FGDs reveal that youth restiveness in Edo South manifests through a wide spectrum of behaviours, ranging from cybercrime ("Yahoo Yahoo") aimed at achieving rapid financial gains, to cultism used for protection, identity, or access to illicit networks. Respondents also reported drug abuse as a coping mechanism for frustration, as well as hostility toward parents who cannot

sponsor their migration efforts. These behaviours were frequently framed as rational or necessary steps within a restricted mobility landscape. Additionally, young people described cases of community aggression directed at wealthy returnees, often fuelled by envy and perceived inequality. This pattern mirrors national and regional research linking desperation, marginalisation, and social norm conflict to youth restiveness (Ejumudo, 2014).

Document reviews support these behavioural patterns, noting that participation in trafficking networks, aggressive mimicry of diaspora lifestyles, and identity-seeking through deviant subcultures are not isolated phenomena but are tied to broader structural and cultural pressures. In Edo South, remittance-driven inequalities, the migration imperative, and social remittance-fueled identity scripts converge to create a fertile environment for various forms of youth restiveness. The multiple expressions of restiveness thus reflect the structural and psychological impacts of transnational migration dynamics.

Conclusion

This study critically examined the impact of migrant remittances from abroad on youth restiveness in Edo South Senatorial District, drawing on qualitative evidence gathered through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. The findings reveal a complex and paradoxical relationship between remittances and youth behaviour, shaped by historical migration cultures, structural inequalities, and the sociocultural centrality of transnational mobility in Edo South.

Remittances undeniably enhance household welfare—improving access to education, healthcare, housing, and small business investments. This is consistent with documented improvements among the Bini people (Braimah et al., 2024) and national studies on remittances and welfare in Nigeria (Adesina, 2017). However, qualitative evidence from interviews and FGDs demonstrates that remittances simultaneously produce and display visible wealth differentials, contributing to heightened relative deprivation, aspiration inflation, and status anxieties among non-recipient youths.

The research shows that youth restiveness in Edo South is less rooted in poverty and more in aspirational dissonance, where young people internalise migration-linked success norms without the means to realise them. This aligns with Strain Theory and Relative Deprivation Theory and is reinforced by the region's intense migration patterns and remittance concentration (Ogboro-Okor, 2025).

Moreover, social remittances—ideas, behaviours, and expectations transmitted by migrants—play an even more significant role than financial remittances in shaping youth restiveness. Young people increasingly adopt globalised lifestyle expectations, devalue local education and employment opportunities, and view migration as the only viable path to self-worth. These findings echo Levitt's (1998) concept of social remittances and the expanded framework of intangible remittances (Pinkow-Läpple & Möllers, 2025).

Gendered experiences further demonstrate that male youths often express restiveness through cybercrime, drug-related activities, and cultism, while young women face migration pressure, trafficking risks, and heightened obligation to remit—consistent with documented Edo trafficking patterns (Eghafona, 2019).

Overall, remittances in Edo South act as double-edged sociological forces: while supporting household survival and mobility, they also intensify inequality, distort aspirations, and amplify restive behaviours among youths who are structurally excluded from migration pathways. Youth restiveness in Edo South must therefore be understood not merely as deviant behaviour but as a transnationally conditioned, culturally mediated reaction to blocked opportunities and globalised expectations.

Recommendations

Drawing from the triangulated findings and theoretical insights, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Develop Youth-Centred Economic Opportunities in Edo South

To counter the migration imperative and aspiration inflation, the government and private sector should:

- expand vocational skills centres in technology, creative industries, digital agriculture, and service sectors;
- establish youth-led enterprise hubs and incubation programs;
- support apprenticeships and paid internships with local employers.

These interventions must revalue local economic pathways relative to migration-driven lifestyles.

2. Implement Community-Based Social Remittance Literacy Programs

Local NGOs, community leaders, and diaspora associations should educate youth and families about:

- the risks of irregular migration;
- the realities of living abroad;
- sustainable uses of remittances;
- dangers of trafficking networks.

Returnees should be strategically integrated as peer educators, drawing on insights from Benin City's reintegration research (Shaidrova, 2022).

3. Reform Migration Governance and Strengthen Anti-Trafficking Frameworks

Given Edo's documented trafficking vulnerabilities:

- law enforcement and border agencies must collaborate with Edo State's Anti-Trafficking Taskforce;
- community-level detection systems for trafficking recruitment should be strengthened;
- policies must shift beyond punitive measures to family-level advocacy, since families often initiate migration attempts.

NGO and state interventions must particularly address young women's susceptibility, as reported in the document review (Eghafona, 2019).

4. Promote Responsible Remittance Use and Diaspora Investment Schemes

Financial institutions and diaspora agencies should:

- introduce remittance-to-investment platforms;
- encourage migrants to channel remittances into cooperatives, community projects, and productive ventures;
- promote remittance-supported microcredit programmes for youths.

This can reduce remittance dependency and mitigate aspiration-driven restiveness.

5. Integrate Migration Education and Psycho-social Support Into Schools
Secondary schools and post-basic institutions should provide:

- migration curriculum modules grounded in realism,
- psycho-social counselling for youths experiencing deprivation and frustration,
- school clubs that emphasise local opportunities and resilience.

This responds to youth testimonies that local education is becoming devalued under transnational aspiration pressures.

6. Create Safe Spaces and Dialogue Platforms for Youth Expression
To address restiveness constructively:

- youth parliaments,
- town hall forums,
- peer-led mediation groups, and
- digital youth expression platforms

should be established across LGAs.
These spaces reduce aggression by enabling youths to articulate grievances and aspirations publicly.

7. Strengthen Returnee Reintegration Programs
Return migrants often transmit social remittances that can either fuel or mitigate restiveness. Reintegration programmes must:

- shift from material aid to psychosocial support,
- promote skill transfer,
- encourage diaspora civic engagement,
- support business incubation for returnees.

This aligns with findings from returnee studies in Benin City (Bello & Eweka, 2025).
8. Address Gendered Dimensions of Youth Restiveness

Policies must consider both:

- masculine restiveness (fraud, cultism, aggression), and
- feminine vulnerabilities (trafficking, coercion, exploitative migration).

Gender-tailored interventions are necessary to reduce risks and enable empowerment.

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