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Representation of Migration Experiences in Nollywood Films: A Content Analysis of *Oloture* and *Blood Vessel*

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Abstract

*A nation's character is etched into its art; in Nigeria, Nollywood has become the unwitting chronicler of a generation in flight. Migration across the Global South is rarely a choice born of ambition – it is a survival calculus forced by collapsing states, crushing poverty, and a systemic failure of governance. Yet mainstream discourse often sanitizes the migrant's ordeal, reducing it to statistical abstractions or policy talking points. This study confronts that erasure by interrogating the raw, unflinching depictions of migration in two landmark Nollywood films – *Oloture* (2019) and *Blood Vessel* (2023) – to expose the lived horrors that conventional narratives obscure. Anchored in Everett Lee's push-pull theory of migration, the analysis maps how structural violence (insecurity, institutional decay, familial coercion) operates as the engine of displacement, while the illusory promise of safety and opportunity abroad functions as a predatory pull. Through a comparative content analysis of narrative structure, character trajectories, and visual semiotics, the paper dissects how both films render visible the subterranean economies of human trafficking, the commodification of migrant bodies, and the systematic infliction of physical and psychological violence along transit routes. The findings are stark: migration is framed not as a journey toward dignity but as a carceral passage – one defined by confinement, death, and irreparable loss. Neither hope nor aspiration survives the crossing. This paper argues that *Oloture* and *Blood Vessel* function as cinematic testimonies, forcing audiences to bear witness to the catastrophic human cost of a world order that has abandoned entire populations to the mercies of traffickers, borders, and the sea. In doing so, they challenge the academy and the public alike to reckon with migration not as a problem to be managed, but as a wound to be understood.*

Keywords: Nollywood, Migration, Push-pull theory, Migrant exploitation, African cinema, Human trafficking

Introduction

In Nigeria, migration has become a relentless and escalating phenomenon, driven by a devastating web of factors – crushing economic disparity, violent conflict, environmental collapse, and the desperate pursuit of educational opportunity, among many others. The vicious interplay of these forces has created a deeply fractured migration landscape that poses grave and mounting challenges to Nigerian society. According to Ebele Udeoji, Sale Dauda, and Olabamiji Oyeboode, migration is the movement of people from one place to another with the intention of settling, whether temporarily or permanently, in a new location (18). It is a powerful instrument of globalisation that forces interaction amongst people of vastly different cultural, socio-political, and economic backgrounds; radically reshapes individuals and their way of life; and profoundly impacts the development of entire societies. The movement is typically characterized by long distances across national borders, defined as international migration, but it must be stressed that migration also occurs within the same country or geographical region without crossing international boundaries – this is internal migration, and it is no less significant.

To be clear: internal migration unfolds within a nation's geographical scope or borders, while international migration crosses those borders. Those who flee a location are emigrants; those who enter a new one are immigrants. Migration can be voluntary or forced, long-term or short-term. Voluntary migration is driven by the pursuit of work, business, leisure, education, and the aching search for greener pastures. Involuntary migration, by contrast, is brutally compelled by natural disasters and environmental devastation – famine, desertification, floods, earthquakes, social conflict, war, and human trafficking. This study confronts both categories head-on. Everett Lee states with stark clarity: "no matter how short or how long, how easy or how difficult, every act of migration involves an origin, a destination, and an intervening set of obstacles. Among the set of intervening obstacles, including the distance of the move as one that is always present" (49). Migrants, then, must fight through crushing intervening obstacles in their desperate quest to reach a new destination, with distance looming as an ever-present barrier. Moreover, not all who attempt the journey ever make it. Most migrants from third-world countries set out for a new geographic region with the burning hope of securing a better life – often with little understanding of the brutal challenges that await them.

The International Organisation for Migration Report 2017 declares that "the intention of migrants to further migrate to another location may be associated with dissatisfaction with the present location of residence or perceived better opportunity existing elsewhere" (17). This deep dissatisfaction in their place of origin may stem from a host of devastating factors: intolerable living conditions, a crushing lack of job opportunities, severely limited access to essential services, painful social and cultural mismatches, and the relentless pull of perceived better opportunities elsewhere. On this matter, Aderanti Adepoju argues forcefully:

Trends and patterns in international migration in sub-Saharan Africa are shaped by many factors: rapid population and labour force growth, unstable politics, escalating ethnic conflict, breakdown of government rooted in precarious democratisation processes, persistent economic decline, retrenchment of public sector workers in response to structural adjustment measures, poverty and – not least – environmental deterioration (13).

Thus, the decision to migrate becomes a desperate quest for an improved quality of life, for better employment prospects, for a community that offers genuine support rather than constant struggle. Olajide Akanji, in the same vein, rightly blames bad leadership and poverty as root causes of migration, asserting:

The problems of bad leadership and poverty have combined to further accelerate the rate at which Africans migrate in droves to different parts of the continent and to other parts of the world, while at the same time increasing the frequency and potency of political, ethnic and religious conflicts on the continent (2).

Bad leadership and poverty are powerful, toxic drivers that force migrants to abandon their current residence in pursuit of greater economic stability, educational opportunities, and a conducive environment for personal and professional growth – basic dignities they are denied at home. Uche Isiugo-Abanihe, regarding migration for educational purposes, states that "education is an important element of human development, and investment in education is regarded as the best form of human capital development" (4). Yet the

government's repeated, shameful failure to revitalize public tertiary institutions to meet even average global standards is a key driver of student migration. The academic bodies are constantly, frustratingly shut down by strikes resulting from relentless conflicts with the government, inflicting severe delays on the academic calendar. Samuel Okunade and Oladotun Awosusi emphasize that, although the average Nigerian youth is naturally career-driven with a burning desire for formal education, the educational system in Nigeria is currently failing catastrophically due to non-payment of lecturers' salaries and arrears, and deplorable educational facilities, among other failures (71). In a society wracked by endless conflicts and crises within and amongst communities, members of those communities are brutally forced to flee to new destinations where they can find even a semblance of peace. Yet others emigrate to elevate their social standing. Joseph Teye, Director of the Centre for Migration Studies (CMS), University of Ghana, asserts:

While poverty is blamed for massive outmigration from certain West African countries, recent data shows that social transformation and facilitative drivers (e.g. social media and social networks) are the key drivers of migration. Many West Africans also migrate because of the cultural values attached to emigration. Indeed, international migration is seen as a 'status symbol'. Current and return migrants are highly respected in many West African societies (9-10).

The devastating role of bad governance in pushing people out of their place of origin cannot be overstated. It destroys both financial and mental stability, breeding deep hopelessness and crushing any faith in the possibility of improvement for individuals and society. Furthermore, there is a pervasive belief that families with relatives abroad gain social recognition, earning elevated respect within their communities. Thus, many people are driven to migrate specifically to improve their social status. In Nigeria, a certain level of reverence is accorded to individuals who live abroad or have returned from abroad. Families place immense, often stifling expectations on members residing abroad, anticipating regular remittances and financial support for relatives back home. Living abroad is therefore strongly associated with economic stability and a vastly better standard of living. Akanji further adds that migration can be triggered by natural occurrences like famine and drought, which can cause mass displacement of people (2). It is crucial to recognize that while personal choices and other reasons drive migration, natural forces can also act as brutal, inexorable triggers.

Nollywood has powerfully and unflinchingly portrayed the harrowing challenges of migration through its films, shedding harsh light on the painful complexities and brutal experiences of migrants. Kenneth Gyang's *Oloture* and Moses Inwang's *Blood Vessel* stand as stark cinematic representations of these challenges – raw, unflinching portrayals of the immense difficulties migrants face in their desperate, often tragic, bid to secure better opportunities.

Theoretical Framework: A Justification

A theory is a group of ideas or principles that an argument, debate or discussion is built on for boundaries. An essential component of research that shapes the quality and scope of investigations. It provides a conceptual structure that guides the interpretation and analysis of data. It helps establish the scope and limitations of research, identifies the key variables to be examined and offers a lens through which data can be examined. This

study is anchored on Everett Lee's push-pull theory of 1966. Lee's push-pull theory of migration submits that the reason people migrate is determined either by a push or a pull factor—that is, a retracting or attracting force. This theory of migration examines the factors that drive people away from their places of origin (push factors) and those that attract them to new locations (pull factors). This theory is most suitable for analysing the migration experiences of migrants portrayed in Kenneth Gyang's *Oloture* and Moses Inwang's *Blood Vessel*. This theory is applied to understand the motivations behind the characters' movements and the broader themes of migration in these films.

Synopsis of *Oloture*

Oloture tells the story of an investigative journalist Oloture who goes undercover to expose the dangerous world of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. She disguises herself as a prostitute named Ehi and lives amongst sex workers, secretly gathering information for her investigation. She regularly updates her colleague Emeka with the details of her findings. During her time undercover, Oloture befriends a sex worker named Linda, who tells her about a trafficker called Alero. Alero is known for taking girls to Europe in exchange for money. Linda plans to go on this journey with her younger sister Beauty, who lives in the village using Alero's contact. For the sake of the investigation, Oloture begs Alero to take her on her next trip. She refuses at first but eventually agrees to let Oloture join her next trip to Europe. Before the trip, Alero invites Linda, Oloture and some other girls for a party. At the party, Alero introduces Oloture to Sir Phillip, a politician who drugs and rapes Oloture. Finally, the day of their journey to Europe arrives, but before departure, Oloture gives her notebook that contains all her findings to Emeka, knowing the dangers ahead. The group of girls board a bus, and when they arrive at a certain location, their phones are confiscated by some male traffickers to prevent any outside contact. However, Oloture manages to sneak in a small phone, which she uses to keep Emeka informed about their situation. The girls are taken to a native doctor for the oath of secrecy and agreement ritual. They are also made to sign certain contract documents of which they barely know the content, and are given fake passports with new identities. Linda, desperate to speak with her family, asks Oloture for the hidden phone. Though hesitant, Oloture gives it to her, but Linda is caught while calling her mother and is killed by one of the traffickers, who accuses her of being an informant. After Linda's death, the traffickers begin the movement with the remaining girls to avoid any exposure. Emeka contacts the police, but on arrival, the traffickers have left with the girls, leaving Linda's body behind. As the group nears the border, Oloture and Beauty try to escape. Beauty manages to run away, but Oloture is caught by the traffickers and is forced to continue the journey. At the end, most of the girls are killed by gunmen who attacked them in the process. Oloture and one of the girls, Peju, survived but are yet to reunite with their families.

Synopsis of *Blood Vessel*

Blood Vessel is a film set in Southern Nigeria that focuses on the Niger Delta youths, each fleeing their village for different reasons. Abbey and Oyin, the ill-fated lovers, defy Oyin's father's orders to abort her pregnancy and stay away permanently from her lover, but plan to elope together. Boma and Degbe, two young men who accidentally kill a soldier while setting the military camp ablaze, are forced into hiding as the military hunts for them. Tekena and Olotu, two brothers from a nearby village, pass through Nembe on their way to pursue their "American Dream". They all cross paths and decide to escape together,

hiding in a concealed part of a ship sailing to Brazil through Pere's guidance. The ship sails after its owner, Igor, boards with several companions. Days pass without food or water. Degbe ignores Pere's warning to stay hidden and leaves their hiding place in search of sustenance. Abbey also leaves to find medication for Oyin, who has fallen ill due to her condition. Degbe locates food but is caught by Igor and his men. Igor calls Pere (the sailor), who denies putting them on the ship. Arguments erupt amongst them, and in a fit of rage, Igor kills Degbe. He then orders the rest of the group to be bound and locked up. The ship is stopped by a naval commander, who notices the captives, but despite his suspicions, Igor successfully bribes his way out. Desperate to escape, Boma kills Igor's sister, and Igor takes revenge by torturing and slicing off parts of his skin, leaving him gravely weakened until he eventually dies. He forces Tekena and Olotu to fight, promising freedom to the survivor, but Olotu kills himself and asks Igor to spare Tekena. After Olotu's death, Igor shoots Tekena in the knee and throws him out of the ship. Igor threatens to kill Oyin unless Abbey surrenders. Abbey gives himself up, but Igor kills Oyin regardless. Abbey is taken to the slaughter room, where he and Igor engage in a final battle, which ends with Abbey killing Igor. At the end, Abbey returns to Nembe, sharing the money he recovered from the ship with the families of the departed youths. Tekena survives but loses a leg. However, Abbey visits Ebiye to inform him of Oyin's death and seek forgiveness, but Ebiye, consumed by anger, refuses. Determined to take revenge, Ebiye hires a gun to kill Abbey, but Abbey vanishes before any harm can be done to him.

Shades of Migration Experiences in *Oloture* and *Blood Vessel*

The narrative of *Oloture* highlights the complex and tragic nature of forced migration, especially for sexual exploitation. Migration in this context is not voluntary but rather coerced, driven by deception and manipulation. The traffickers deceived young women into leaving their homes for Europe with promises of a better life abroad. Linda, for example, is drawn to the trafficker Alero because she believes that by going to Europe, she can improve her life and that of her family. In this film, migration is primarily driven by poverty and lack of opportunities in the migrants' home country. These young women are made to feel that migration is their only way out of poverty. This is evident in Nigeria today due to the high level of hunger and insecurity ravaging the country. Linda explains to *Oloture* her reason for choosing to migrate to Europe in their conversation:

Linda: There is a woman who takes girls to Europe. That is why I came to Lagos. My friend in Benin told me about her. So, every month I have to pay her. Once I pay up fully, my sister and I are going to Europe to make a better living for our family.

Oloture: How much does it cost to go to Europe?

Linda: Like \$2,200.

Oloture: (*shocked*) Eh?! Linda, it's too expensive. (*Pleading*) Please can you talk to the lady for me? I'd like to go as well.

Linda: I could, but the woman is very secretive about it all.

Oloture: Please, just try. It will be a dream come true for me. Hmm? Please...(*smiling*) (12:29 - 13:18)

Linda and other young girls saved a lot from their daily income in order to achieve their aim of migrating with the belief that once they went abroad, they would remit money

home to support their families. These girls, lured by false promises, are taken on a journey of uncertainty to Europe. The traffickers assure the girls of an easier way of making money. They paint a utopian picture of a well-planned lifestyle for them, which serves as the 'pull' factor of migration, something obviously better than their current lifestyle. Alero describes the type of job that Oloture would do if she pays up to join her next trip in the following conversation:

Alero: Do you still want to go to Europe? I might have a space for you on my next trip. When we get there, you'll be in a group we call *forze speciali*.

Oloture: (*confused*) What's that?

Alero: It means you will not be standing on the street like all these common *puttane* (prostitutes). You will be escorting important people. That is what I did. But if you want to go, you have to pay me. It's \$1,200. Yes.

Oloture: Okay.

Alero: I'll call you. (43: 12 - 43: 57)

In the above conversation, Alero assures Oloture that there is a better job already prepared for her upon arrival. Alero says this to convince Oloture to hasten with her payments in order to secure a space in the next trip. These traffickers make a series of promises about better opportunities abroad to these girls that serve as the 'pull' factor. The journey to Europe, which is presented as a way out of economic hardship, becomes a life-threatening ordeal. Migrants often find themselves in situations where their safety, dignity and humanity are disregarded. The consequences of illegal migration in third-world countries are enormous. Though Emeka tries to involve the police, the traffickers are quick to evade law enforcement, moving their victims before they can be rescued. This highlights the ineffectiveness of legal and institutional agencies in combating trafficking and protecting vulnerable migrants. The narrative exposes the gaps in law enforcement and the speed at which traffickers operate, rendering rescue efforts almost futile. This is one of the 'push' factors that force people out of their origin to different destinations. The violence and control experienced by these victims increase as they get closer to crossing the border, making it clear that their journey to Europe will only lead to further abuse.

In *Blood Vessel*, migration is a central theme that reflects various forces compelling individuals to leave their homes, such as environmental disasters, political instability, personal conflicts, and economic aspirations. The characters in this film journey aboard a ship destined for Brazil. Although they are on the same ship, they are from different parts of a region represented, and have various reasons for migrating, which can be categorised as forced migration or economic migration, but the risks of migration and the emotional toll it takes are the same for all involved.

The major reason for migration in this film is environmental pollution caused by the Axis Oil Company. The activities of this company devastate the Nembe Community, leading to displacement, loss of livelihoods, and death. The peaceful Nembe community becomes a hazardous place to live; the land and water that once sustained them are now poisoned. Just like the Niger Delta Region in Nigeria, environmental pollution and degradation, and corporate negligence often force people to abandon their homes and move to different destinations. In this film, migration is a response to a man-made disaster, highlighting the urgent need for survival in the face of environmental collapse. The peaceful protest against

the oil company turns chaotic, resulting in military intervention. The military's violent response to the peaceful protesters caused the killing of a soldier by Boma and Degbe when retaliating against the military, forcing them to flee to avoid capture and execution. Degbe and Boma, confused and unsure of what action to take, considered migration as the only option, as evident in the following conversation:

Degbe: Boma, we have to leave.

Boma: (*eating*) My man, we have to keep a low profile for now. Do you understand? We have to go to either Lagos or Ghana.

Degbe: How will we find our way to Ghana? How will we do it? (27:33 - 27:55)

In the foregoing conversation, Boma and Degbe established that their best option is to escape from their hometown to a new destination where it would be safer for both of them so that they do not have to worry about being penalised for their action. Safety is the main reason for considering migration. This portrays how political oppression and conflict often drive people out of their place of origin to a different destination. Abbey, on the other hand, is pursued by Ebiye, his girlfriend's father, on account of his daughter. Meanwhile, the soldiers are arresting young men in the community in relation to the killing of a soldier. So, Abbey's mother, trying to protect her child from Ebiye and the soldiers, sends money and a message to Abbey through Bibi, his sister, to find his way out of the community:

Bibi: Mom. Mom. (*Looking out the window*) The military men are still there. What is really happening? What are we going to do?

Abbey's mother: (*giving a bag to Bibi*) Take this to Abbey and give him a message for me. (*Handing her some money*) There is a trap set for him. If Abbey doesn't leave, he'll fall in it. Give him this money, tell him to leave this town. Go to the boatyard, you'll see him. Pass through the back.

Bibi: I'll take the things to them. (*Carries the bag and runs out through the back door*) (24:56 - 25:37)

From the above, it is evident that conflict in a community can trigger migration out of one's origin. When family members notice that there is an impending danger for their loved ones, they are advised to migrate to a safer location to avoid the problems in their hometown. Family members immediately raise funds to hasten the migration process, which is often through illegal means due to urgency.

However, while environmental and political crises force some of the characters in the film to migrate, others, like Tekena and Olotu, are migrating in pursuit of economic opportunities. Their desire to reach the United States, chasing the "American Dream", represents economic migration, a common motivator for people who seek a better life abroad. Tekena and Olotu are from a nearby community, and though not directly affected by the oil spillage, they pass through the Nembe community on their way to escape poverty and find prosperity overseas. Olotu, knowing the risk involved in illegal migration, explains the danger ahead to his brother Tekena as follows:

Olotu: My brother... This journey, do you really want to embark on it?

Tekena: (*Determined*) Yes, I want to embark on it.

Olotu: On this journey, things might go bad! (*Lifting his bag*) The ocean will be rough!

Tekena: (*In frustration*) Yes, I have decided! I will go.

Olotu: (*carrying his bag properly*) Taking care of this family is my responsibility, that's why I'm asking. (06:44 - 07:18)

Tekena and Olotu's situation, however, highlights the role of economic instabilities and limited opportunities at home that can push individuals to migrate. For both of them, migration is driven by ambition and determination, not forced for survival. They are desperate to improve their standard of living, which is due to the level of poverty they have faced over the years. However, their journey on the ship becomes uneasy. The group hides in a concealed part of the ship, hoping to reach safety, but the encounter with Igor, the ship's owner, and his men changed their dreams and beautiful imaginations. Illegal migrants that resort to unauthorised and dangerous means of movement, hiding in unsafe conditions, and placing their fate in the hands of smugglers or corrupt officials. In this film, the naval authorities who stop the ship and accept bribes from Igor reflect the corruption and exploitation that many migrants face on their journeys. Instead of being protected by the law, the characters are at the mercy of those in power, who are easily bribed to overlook illegal activities that may be threats to citizens.

At the end, Abbey returns to the Nembe community. This portrays another aspect of migration from one's origin to another destination. It projects the fact that not everyone who migrates finds safety or success in the destination. Some return to the same troubles and decadent conditions they initially tried to run away from. Abbey's return to Nembe Community is bittersweet. Though he brings back money to share with the families of the others, the tragedy of losing his companions, especially Oyin, lingers. However, his decision and attempt to reconcile with Oyin's father, Ebiye, are met with anger and rejection, showing that the emotional wounds of the past are still fresh. The cycle of violence and vengeance continues when Ebiye hires a gunman to kill Abbey, suggesting that migration has not brought resolution or peace, as evident in the film. Abbey's final disappearance suggests that even after surviving the dangerous journey, there is no clear path forward. Migration, in this case, offers no guarantee of safety but uncertainty. This mirrors real-world especially the Nigerian situations where, even after migrants return to their homeland, the original issues that caused their departure may persist. Although in some cases, the immediate family problems may be solved to a reasonable extent, the societal general problems such as hunger, insecurity and political instability may have worsened.

Comparative Analysis of Migration Experiences in both Films

In *Oloture* and *Blood Vessel*, it is evident that illegal migration comes with so many restrictions and harsh travelling conditions, which range from restrictions in movement, lack of communication with external contact, poor feeding, poor medical facilities and other manners of infringement of fundamental human rights. In both films, the migrants are deliberately isolated to prevent them from contacting families or friends, ensuring that their situation remains hidden to reduce the risk of exposure to the "appropriate authorities". In *Oloture*, to avoid this external communication, the phones of the girls are confiscated:

Victor: (*Shouting*) Everybody, bring down your bags! Take your bags down there to be searched. Line up your bags! Line up, line up, line up! (*The girls line up and open their bags*).

Sheriff: Move! Fast! Open up. Open up. (*Searching their bags and collecting their phones*) All phones here. Put your phones here.

Victor: From now till you get to Europe, no more communication with anybody outside. (1:03:46 - 1:04:13)

Similarly, in *Blood Vessel*, Pere strictly schools them on the regulations they must obey if they want to achieve their aim of migrating in the vessel and warns them to desist from trying to leave the hidden space, no matter the condition. He says:

Pere: Now, listen. The last warning, this is a warning for you all! You all must never come upstairs out of this place. Do you all understand?

All: Yeah, yeah.

Olotu: We will manage this place.

Pere: Because I won't be lenient with anybody. I make money from this. Thank you (*he locks them in the hidden space*). (32:19 - 32:42)

The films portray how illegal migrants are controlled and taken to hidden locations by their agents (traffickers in the guise of travelling agencies) for fear of being exposed by the migrants or the authorities. In *Oloture*, their phones are collected from them, and they are taken to an area unknown to them; by so doing, the traffickers minimise the risk of being exposed. Similarly, in *Blood Vessel*, the migrants are forced to stay hidden on the ship. The journey itself in both films becomes a nightmare filled with danger, exploitation, and betrayal. In *Oloture*, the women endure dehumanising rituals, abuse, and manipulation. Linda, in a bid to communicate with her family, is killed in the presence of her younger sister; this is one of the major consequences of falling into the hands of traffickers in an attempt to migrate. In *Blood Vessel*, the characters face life-threatening situations that lead to the death of almost all the migrants on the ship. Hunger and starvation cause the characters to leave their hiding place in search of food, which leads to being captured and exposed without even seeing the promised land. The deaths of these characters emphasise that sometimes, migrants do not reach their destination but end up dying on the way.

Also, both films highlight how migrants are mistreated. Igor, the ship owner in *Blood Vessel*, represents the harsh situation they are running away from at home, treating them as though they have outstanding issues. One will wonder if he has an agreement with the soldiers or a connection with the oil company that pollutes the community to kill them. Tekena and Olotu, who embark on the journey for economic opportunities, are ultimately forced into life-or-death situations, with Olotu sacrificing his life to save his brother at the instruction of Igor. Igor also kills Degbe and tortures Boma by slicing off several parts of his body. The girls in *Oloture* also face similar problems as they are taken to a traditional priest who cuts hair from their pubic regions. The priest also puts cuts on their bodies and made lie in coffins. Linda is killed in the presence of her sister, just like Olotu and Tekena in *Blood Vessel*. Alero also tortures Beauty and Oloture by flogging them to confess to the phone.

The levels and different shades of corruption depicted in *Blood Vessel* parallels that of *Oloture*. Both films illustrate how corrupt authorities, institutions and individuals take advantage of migrants. In *Oloture*, the police officers turn a blind eye and are unresponsive to human trafficking. When Emeka contacted the police, they were hesitant and delayed in responding to him and the girls were unfortunately moved out quickly before their arrival. The officers at the border collect bribes from the traffickers to grant them quick access to the girls. For both the officers and the traffickers, it is business as usual; so far, it is not their family member, it is not a problem. In *Blood Vessel*, the naval officers accept a bribe from Igor and allow his ship to pass without properly searching or carrying out their duties. The migrants in both films are at the mercy of people in power, who are more interested in personal gain than in protecting human rights.

The outcome of migration in both films is tragic, as it claims the lives of the migrants and leads to further devastation. In *Oloture*, the migrants are attacked by gunmen on their way to Europe, which leads to the loss of lives of the migrants, with Oloture and Peju being the only survivors as they struggle to find their way back home. Beauty, having escaped from the hands of traffickers at the border, also returns home to hear the sad news of the death of their mother, who couldn't bear the grief of losing her daughter Linda in the hands of the traffickers. Frustrated and hopeless, Beauty becomes a prostitute to make ends meet. Also, *Blood Vessel* highlights the idea that migration does not always offer an escape; sometimes it leads one back to the original problems or worse problems. For instance, after Abbey returns to the Nembe community, the issues that forced him to flee remain unresolved, and the loss of his companions weighs him down even more. Therefore, both films emphasise that migration often does not put an end to a given problem; issues may remain unresolved when migrants return home. In the films, only four characters (migrants), two from each, survived the challenges faced in the process of migrating, but not without an indelible mental or physical mark.

Conclusion

Migration in Nigeria is not a passing trend—it is a deeply entrenched and intensifying crisis, forged by the relentless convergence of economic deprivation, political failure, environmental degradation, and the universal human yearning for dignity and opportunity. As this study has demonstrated, the decision to migrate is rarely simple or singular; it emerges from a tangled web of push and pull factors that leave millions of Nigerians caught between the suffocating realities of their homeland and the perilous, uncertain promise of a life abroad.

The evidence drawn from scholars such as Adepoju, Akanji, and Teye paints a sobering picture. Bad leadership and systemic poverty remain foundational drivers, rotting the fabric of Nigerian society and forcing its citizens to seek solace elsewhere. The educational system, once a beacon of hope, has become a site of frustration and failure—crippled by incessant strikes, unpaid salaries, and dilapidated facilities—pushing students to abandon their own institutions in search of knowledge abroad. Social status, too, plays its part: the cultural glorification of emigration, reinforced by social media and the visible success of return migrants, has made migration not merely a survival strategy but a coveted marker of prestige.

Yet the journey is fraught with danger. Intervening obstacles—distance, financial hardship, exploitation, and the ever-present threat of death—stand between every migrant and their

destination. For every success story, there are countless others who never arrive, or who arrive only to face new forms of suffering. It is here that Nollywood steps into a critical role. As films that enjoyed huge audience patronage, *Oloture* and *Blood Vessel* possess immense power to shape perceptions, influence societal attitudes, and set the government agenda on the causes and consequences of migration. In Nigeria, Nollywood has emerged as a powerful instrument of cultural communication with wide recognition, particularly among the majority of the African population. It holds the potential to serve as a formidable tool for mass education and orientation, playing a significant role in shaping public attitudes toward sensitive issues that negatively affect individuals in the pre-, during, and post-migration processes. Through their unflinching and unbiased portrayal of illegal migration and its devastating consequences, *Oloture* and *Blood Vessel* succeed in raising awareness about the harsh realities of the push and pull factors – reorienting the perspectives of individuals who intend to migrate through illegal procedures and compelling them to desist from taking such perilous action.

Addressing migration issues in Nollywood films requires an approach that tackles both root causes and consequences, as exemplified by the two films studied. Since migration in Nigeria is often driven by economic, social, political, and environmental factors, there is an urgent need to educate the public – especially youths – on the devastating consequences that may arise from following the illegal route. In an attempt to reduce the level of migration in Nigeria, the government and agencies, both public and private, must focus on creating sustainable job opportunities, ensuring security, and fostering development across the nation. Many people leave their communities in search of better livelihoods because decent livelihoods are not available to them at home. By providing jobs, vocational training, and financial support for small and medium businesses, the government and non-government organisations can reduce the crushing pressure to migrate. Education and awareness campaigns can help people understand the grave risks and challenges of illegal migration. The government should therefore commission film projects aimed at addressing the ills of illegal migration and the dangers therein, harnessing the reach and influence of Nollywood to drive the message home.

In the end, migration in Nigeria is both a symptom and a consequence – a mirror reflecting the failures of governance, the fragility of institutions, and the profound inequalities that continue to shape the lives of ordinary citizens. Until these root causes are confronted with genuine political will and structural reform, the tide of migration will not slow. Nigerians will continue to move, driven by hope, desperation, and the unyielding belief that somewhere beyond the horizon, a better life awaits. The challenge for Nigerian society is not merely to manage this movement or to dramatize its perils on screen, but to ask the harder question: why must so many leave in the first place?

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