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The Impact of Facebook Content on the Migration of Nigerians to Europe

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Resumo

O estudo de investigação investiga o impacto do Facebook na divulgação de informações relativas à migração e a sua influência no processo de tomada de decisão dos nigerianos que migram para a Europa. O estudo examinou a forma como o conteúdo do Facebook influenciou a percepção, as expectativas e as realidades dos nigerianos que residem na Europa na sua decisão de migração. Utilizando um método de investigação qualitativa e recorrendo a uma série de fontes académicas e não académicas (casos da vida real), este estudo investigou a forma como as narrativas digitais partilhadas no Facebook influenciaram as decisões dos nigerianos de migrar para a Europa. Além disso, foi utilizado o método de investigação qualitativa para obter as informações necessárias através de entrevistas.

Este estudo também investigou a credibilidade das informações obtidas no Facebook e os riscos potenciais de depender do conteúdo das redes sociais para a migração. Os resultados desta investigação mostram que o conteúdo do Facebook influenciou as percepções, expectativas e processos de tomada de decisão dos migrantes nigerianos relativamente à sua migração para a Europa. No entanto, a maior parte da informação que os migrantes obtiveram nas suas redes do Facebook veio com uma imagem exagerada e irrealista do que a Europa oferecia. Esta situação criou em muitos migrantes expectativas irrealistas, desilusão e desinformação. Esta investigação elucidou a complexa interação entre as redes sociais e a migração, destacando os seus efeitos nos indivíduos e melhorando a nossa compreensão das narrativas migratórias contemporâneas e a influência da tecnologia nas tendências migratórias no atual mundo globalizado.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: MIGRAÇÃO, CONTEÚDO DO FACEBOOK, NIGERIANOS, INFORMAÇÃO, TOMADA DE DECISÕES E FIABILIDADE.

Abstract

The research study investigates the impact of Facebook on the dissemination of information concerning migration and its influence on the decision-making process of Nigerians migrating to Europe. The study examined how Facebook content influenced the perception, expectations, and realities of Nigerians residing in Europe on their migration-decision. Using a qualitative research method whilst drawing on a range of academic and non-academic sources (real-life cases), this research investigated how digital narratives shared on Facebook influenced Nigerians decisions to migrate to Europe. Furthermore, the qualitative research method used to get the necessary information was achieved using interviews.

This study also investigated the credibility of information obtained from Facebook and the potential risks of depending on social media content for migration. The findings of this research shows that Facebook content influenced Nigerian migrants' perceptions, expectations and decisions making process on their migration to Europe. However, most of the information migrants got from their Facebook Networks, came with an exaggerated and an unrealistic picture of what Europe offered, thereby setting up many migrants for unrealistic expectations, disappointment and misinformation. This research elucidated the complex interplay between social media and migration, highlighting its effects on individuals and enhancing our comprehension of contemporary migration narratives and the influence of technology on migration trends in the current globalized world.

KEYWORDS: MIGRATION, FACEBOOK CONTENT, NIGERIANS, INFORMATION, DECISION-MAKING, AND TRUSTWORTHINESS.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the background of the study, problem statement, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, and the scope of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

In an era governed by digital connectivity, the impact of social media as a potential force shaping global migration, particularly the migration of Nigerians, cannot be over-emphasised. The advancement in information communication technology has enabled many migrants the opportunities to connect with potential destination countries and make migration decisions based on information shared via social networking platforms like Facebook. Social media facilitates interactions and builds migration networks based on family, location or friendship. It enables people to have some form of relationship and link with their target countries before moving from their native place. This inter-connectedness influences how immigrants come to make their migration decisions.

Migration is a widespread and growing phenomenon which has always been part of human history. It includes a broad spectrum of human mobility across social, political, economic, and geographic borders. According to the International Organization for Migration, migration may be described as ‘movement of an individual or a group of individuals within a state or across international boundaries as a result of any reason including but not limited to, social reasons, environmental changes or economic factors’ ([IOM, 2022](#)). One typical example would be people from developing nations such as Nigeria migrating to Western countries, especially Europe, owing to several socio-economic challenges in their home countries. Such factors include the high unemployment rate, poor infrastructure, and lack of access to good education, which causes many Nigerians to look for greener pastures outside their country to displace these economic constraints ([Bala & Inuwa 2023](#); [Alaye, 2024](#)).

This migration trend is significantly shaped by the country's prevailing socio-economic conditions. Nigeria, being the most populous African nation, has to contend with severe economic challenges, many of which are attributed to the overdependence on oil, one sector which has exhibited volatility. Such instability, especially with high rates of unemployment and underemployment, mainly among the youth, has propelled many people to search for

alternatives outside the country ([Alaye, 2024](#)). In 2020, the unemployment rate rose to 33.3% in Nigeria, with youth unemployment surpassing 50% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021; [Punch Newspaper, 2021](#)). Furthermore, political instability, insecurity caused by insurgency, and corruption have deteriorated the living conditions in Nigeria, creating a profound need among Nigerians to relocate to countries offering better economic prospects ([Afolayan et al., 2008](#)).

Besides the challenges associated with the country's socio-economic status, globalisation also significantly impacts the out-migration of Nigerians. Globalisation is a process that promotes cultural, economic and social links between different parts of the world and influences the migration of people between many countries. This coincides with [Giddens'](#) position that globalisation enhances international social relations by connecting distant localities in ways that influence events far from their origin ([2003](#)). This interdependence means that changes in one region's economy, politics or social situation may significantly impact international migrations. This global nexus further enables the migration of people across jurisdictions in reaction to job opportunities, social networks or business prospects.

Moreover, the development of new technology, specifically communication technologies, such as social media platforms, has fuelled migration by providing easy and quick access to information about other countries. Social media, specifically Facebook, expands migrants' networks and brings them in contact with people in the target country, helping them gain information on migration routes and economic conditions in the host country and obtain information on the opportunities available in these countries. [Dekker and Engbersen](#) state that social media helps migrants access diverse information, influencing their migration decisions ([2014](#)). Despite the increasing impact of social media on migration, very few studies have sought to understand the role of Facebook content in the migration of Nigerians out of the country, with many other studies focusing on more traditional factors such as socio-political and economic reasons

Facebook has become an essential medium for disseminating helpful migration information and even as a source of motivation for aspiring migrants in Nigeria. Through Facebook, many Nigerians seek migration-related information from their network. They are exposed to Facebook content posted by peer networks depicting success stories or better living conditions, which often portray international migration as a way of enhancing one's living standards. However, this depiction can sometimes be misleading when migrants do not get adequate information about the risks or potential challenges they might face when they arrive in their country of destination ([Dekker & Engbersen, 2014](#)). In this regard, it is crucial to investigate how Facebook content

impacts the migration decisions of Nigerian migrants in Europe to understand digital information role in shaping these decisions.

While economic, political, or social factors drive migration, the role of social media information, specifically Facebook content, in shaping Nigerians' migratory decisions still needs to be explored. Previous research mainly highlights the social, political, and economic drivers that encourage Nigerians to migrate while overlooking the role Facebook content plays in their migration decisions. Therefore, this study will examine how Facebook content impacted Nigerians' decision to migrate to Europe. Through a detailed literature review, gaps in current research will be identified, followed by an examination of a research method designed to understand the profound influence of social media on migration patterns. By investigating the role Facebook content played in Nigerians' decision to migrate to Europe, the research will also evaluate the reliability of the information received, expectations, and actual experiences upon Nigerians' arrival in Europe.

1.2 Problem Statement

The research problem of this study is, therefore, to explore a gap in existing literature. Currently, no study has been conducted to investigate the direct correlation between information obtained from social media platforms such as Facebook and the migration choices of Nigerians who have moved to Europe. The gap in the literature highlights the necessity for a prompt enquiry into the connections between the information obtained on Facebook and the migration choices of Nigerians in Europe.

1.3 Objectives of the study

General Objective: The study is to investigate the impact of Facebook content on the migration of Nigerians to Europe

- **Specific objective:**
 - To Explore the Motivations for Migration
 - To understand how Facebook influenced the migration decisions of Nigerian migrants settled in Europe
 - To Understand the Influence of Social Networks on Nigerians' migration decisions

- To analyze the perceived accuracy and reliability of Facebook information in the migration of Nigerians to Europe

1.4 Research question

- What role did the information obtained from Facebook play in Nigerians' migration decisions in Europe?
- How did Nigerian migrants perceive the information gotten from Facebook in terms of its usefulness or misleading nature during their migration decision-making and settlement in Europe?

Time scope

The research will be conducted in a period of four months from June 2024 to July 2024. The research will be conducted in Nigeria, Ikorodu local government, Lagos state.

1.5 Limitations of the study

While the qualitative approach to investigating the role Facebook content played in Nigerians' migration decisions in Europe is effective, it also has some limitations. These limitations include the sample size of the interviewee, time constraints, reliance solely on Facebook data, selection bias, and limited geographical scope.

In terms of limited sample size: Interviewing only about 15 participants limits the generalizability of the findings as a small sample while providing useful data may not fully represent the broader population of Nigerians impacted by Facebook content regarding migration. However, given the depth of responses typical in qualitative research, this number was sufficient to examine the participants' experiences and views in detail. The decision to limit the sample size was influenced by constraints such as time, accessibility to participants, and the in-depth nature of the interviews, which were so detailed that more time was needed per person. While qualitative data from interviews can provide deep insights, a lack of quantitative data (e.g., surveys of a larger population or more extensive Facebook analytics) may make it difficult to quantify the scale or statistical significance of the impact of Facebook content on migration decisions. This limitation

was quite unavoidable due to yet another limitation: the time constraints of the research. The project has lasted for a brief period and has not allowed for extensive research and data collection. Moreover, migration information on social media platforms can evolve rapidly. The study likely provides a snapshot of a specific period, which might not reflect long-term trends. New information campaigns or changes in Facebook's policies (such as content moderation efforts) could alter the impact of Facebook content over time.

Also, relying solely on Facebook data poses another limitation because while Facebook is a major platform for information exchange, migration information also spreads through other social media, messaging apps (e.g., WhatsApp), other social media platforms (e.g. tictok and twitter - now called X) and offline sources (e.g. word of mouth). Focusing solely on Facebook could overlook the broader ecosystem of migration information, particularly in regions where other platforms may have a stronger presence. Also, there is the limitation of selection bias, which is partly impacted by time constraints. Self-reported data is often biased as participants might present idealized versions of their experiences influenced by social desirability or selective memory. The individuals interviewed may have specific characteristics that differentiate them from the general migrant population. For example, they may be more aware of their exposure to misinformation or more willing to share their stories, which could skew the results. Additionally, those with successful or failed migration experiences may have different viewpoints on the role of Facebook content. Another limitation is the limited geographical scope that has been covered. Since the participants interviewed come from specific regions or communities within Nigeria, the findings might not capture the diverse migration trends or information dynamics in other parts of the huge and diverse country. Migration drivers can differ significantly based on local economic, political, and social factors. More so, the impact of other migration factors could not be robustly considered as it was beyond the scope of this study.

A wide range of social, political, and economic factors influence migration. While Facebook information might play a role, isolating it in the discourse of migration decisions is challenging. For instance, economic hardship, violence, or familial ties in Europe may play a more significant role than information from online networking platforms alone.

Notwithstanding these limitations due to time constraints and the specific scope of this study's discourse, it offers valuable insight into an often-ignored area in Nigerians' migration to Europe.

1.5 Significance of study

Understanding the role Facebook content plays in migrants' decisions could help migration agencies, policymakers, and digital platforms develop a more robust and efficient strategy for managing migration information dissemination and prevent migrants from making ill-informed migration decisions. By examining how Facebook content influences migrants' perceptions of life in Europe and the realities of migration, this research adds to a more panoramic understanding of how social media influences human mobility. It enhances sociological literature more by highlighting the power of online narratives, networks, and information in causing migration trends. In addition, it portrays the link between social media and migration, offering more insights into how digital platforms could shape aspirations, risks and migration patterns in Nigeria and beyond.

1.6 Scope of Study

This study focuses on the role Facebook content plays in shaping Nigerians' migration decisions. An interview was conducted with fifteen Nigerian individuals between the ages of 25 and 40 who migrated and are currently living in Europe.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Over the years, several researchers have carried out studies on migration and the role of social media in migration studies and have concluded that social media plays a crucial role in influencing global migration trends. In this chapter of literature reviews, the historical pattern of Nigerian migration and recent trends will be discussed; in addition, the theoretical framework of network theory that underpins migration study will be examined. Also, studies that offer a comparative perspective of social media and migration will be explored. This study will examine the research findings on how social media information influences people's perceptions of migration opportunities, the decision-making process, and the types of Facebook content that influence migration.

The subsequent section of this literature review will examine the scholarly works demonstrating misinformation on social media and unrealistic Expectations of Migration; it will also highlight many forms of misinformation widespread on social media platforms. It will examine research that has explored the real-world impact of misinformation on migrants in actual circumstances and the spread and believability of misinformation within social networks. The literature will also examine the role of governments, NGOs, and social media platforms in promoting accurate information on migration. Finally, the literature review will explore key findings and themes that emerged, identify the gaps in existing research and explain how this study intends to address these gaps. The subsequent discussion will focus on the historical trend of migration in Nigeria.

2.2 Historical patterns of Nigerian migration and recent trends

Over several decades, Nigerian migration to Europe has been strongly linked to several social, political, economic, and historical factors. Since the British colonized Nigeria in the 19th century, several factors, including social aspirations, economic opportunities, political instability, and colonial links, have influenced Nigerian migration to Europe ([Obi-Ani et al., 2020](#)). Throughout the colonial era, Nigeria, a former British territory, saw substantial waves of migration to Europe, primarily for administrative and educational purposes ([Anene et al., 2019](#)). The pattern of travelling to the western part of the world continued even after Nigeria gain independence in 1960 mainly for the acquisition of important skills acquisition required for the development of its country ([Akinrinade & Ogen, 2011](#)). In contrast to earlier migration, recently, there has been notable migratory surges of Nigerians resulting from the dynamic changes in the global economy and social and political factors ([Sasu, 2023](#)). The motives and patterns of the current migration are influenced by the changing dynamics of the global environment, such as economic globalization

and advancement in technology, to which Nigerian migration responded and adapted ([Adepoju, 2006](#)). In line with this pattern of migration, the number of Nigerian migrants overseas has increased from roughly 450,000 in 1990 to 1.4 million in 2019 ([Adhikari et al 2021](#)). Similarly, in 2023, a report from research shows that more Nigerians are currently leaving the country, with the number of these migrants standing at -0.29 per 1000 population ([Sasu, 2023](#)). Nigerians continue to migrate to more advanced countries for socio-economic reasons. This recent surge in migration can be explained through network theory, which focuses on social connections. Such connections, through technological advancement and globalization, facilitate and enhance migration through information transfer, support, and resources from already-resident migrants to potential ones.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPIN MIGRATION STUDY.

Many migrants embark on migration for different reasons. The reasons behind these moves have also always differed in the context of migration, depending on the locality and the person. To advance our understanding of migration processes and the migration of Nigerians specifically, it is crucial to examine the theoretical framework that underpins migration. What academic scholars refer to as the "Network theory of migration" effectively captures these kinds of migration reasons ([Massey et al., 1993](#); [Dekker & Engbersen, 2014](#)).

2.4 NETWORK THEORY

In migration discourse, 'Migrant networks are sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin' ([Massey et al., 1993](#)). Furthermore, 'network connections', according to Massey et al., 'constitute a form of social capital that people can draw upon to gain access to foreign employment'. This increases the likelihood of international movement by lowering the costs and risks of movement and increasing the expected net returns to migration ([Massey, 1990](#)). In line with this, researchers added that providing migrants with social support, resources, and information from established networks, over time, spreads migratory behavior outward to encompass broader segments of the sending society ([Massey & Garcia Espana, 1987](#); [Gurak & Caces, 1992](#)). According to [McLean](#), other theories, such as [Lee's](#) push and pull theory of migration ([1966](#)), may explain the interconnections between push and pull factors and their influence on migration decisions; they do not adequately address the persistence of migration even after these factors have waned ([2020](#)).

[Dekker & Engbersen](#) emphasized how social media platforms and other modern Information and communication tools have revolutionized the availability and distribution of information about migration ([2014](#)). These tools enable migrants to stay connected to their social networks and, more efficiently than ever, obtain information on legal processes, settlement possibilities, and prospects for migration. Social networks overseas according to [Haug](#), are the primary motivators of international migration intention ([2018](#)). Similarly, some academic scholars posit that social media networking has shaped migration trajectories, improved the process of migration and fostering further integration by creating connections that open new channels for information sharing with a vast global audience ([Dekker & Engbersen, 2014](#); [Dekker et al., 2018](#)). When analyzing how social media affects migration, one could argue that the remarkable rise in migration is directly tied to the significant improvements in connectivity, information accessibility, and virtual networking opportunities that social media platforms provide ([Kotyrlo, 2020](#)). Therefore, network theory is very useful in analyzing migration as it enables us to understand how migrants are integrated into migration processes and how ties are maintained over time.

While network theory effectively explains migration processes and integration, it has been criticized for oversimplifying the intricate causes of underlying migration decisions. It primarily focuses on how networks facilitate migration by providing access to jobs, housing, and resources but neglects structural economic saturation in destination regions ([Gurak & Caces, 1992](#); [Bakewell, 2010](#)). Economic saturation occurs when localities and regions lack job opportunities or housing vacancies for immigrants, which renders even the most efficient networks ineffective in facilitating migration when opportunities are absent ([Light et al., 2017](#)). Critics argue that the theory, particularly Massey's framework, fails to account for how networks adapt when regions can no longer absorb migrants or how they identify new destinations after saturation occurs, as initial movements often precede established networks (Gregory, 1989). Consequently, the theory's effectiveness in facilitating continuous migration is constrained by the limited resources of receiving localities. (Haug, 2008; [Faist, 2000](#)).

2.5 COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND MIGRATION

Migration and social media are increasingly interconnected, influencing plans and decisions to move (Thulin & Vilelmson 2014). Social media platforms function as vital instruments for migrants to sustain transnational connections, acquire information, and cultivate social capital. Migrants utilize platforms such as Facebook to maintain communication with family, exchange information, and address legal or social difficulties in host nations (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014). Additionally, migrants use these platforms to maintain transnational ties with their friends and families, easing the emotional strain of separation ([Komito, 2011](#)).

Furthermore, social media significantly influences migration choices. Prospective migrants utilize online networks to obtain information regarding employment prospects, visa procedures, and living circumstances in host countries ([Gillespie et al., 2016](#)). For example, Ethiopians aspiring to migrate to Europe used Facebook groups to obtain guidance on visa processes, employment prospects, and safety recommendations ([Van der Heijden 2018](#)). Similarly, Somali refugees in France utilized social media to maintain connections, acquire information regarding migratory routes, exchange experiences, and establish support networks ([Charmarkeh, 2012](#)). In Bangladesh, where political instability and economic hardship drive migration, migrants utilize social media platforms to disseminate real-time updates regarding their journeys, solicit guidance, and provide support to others ([Boas, 2020](#)). [Mpofu](#) in their study, explore how Zimbabwean diaspora communities use Facebook groups to form transnational online communities and connect with their homeland to exchange information and share migration experiences and advice ([Mpofu et al., 2022](#)). Similarly, [Borkert et al.](#), the study of the immigration of refugees from Arab countries (Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq) migrating into European territory, find that social media platforms serve as an information-sharing platform for refugee migrant to share their migration process and success ([2018](#)). This information shared on social media exerts influence over both perceptions and the decision-making process itself. In a study of refugee migration from Syria, Eritrea and Afghanistan to Europe finds that migration has been made more information-driven due to the influence of their social networks via social media platforms, particularly Facebook communities, which has become a significant information source that migrants rely on for their migration decisions ([Alencar, 2018](#)). Through personal stories, targeted ads, and migration groups, migrants are often exposed to idealised representations of life abroad. Success stories of migrants abroad reinforce the desire to migrate.

2.6 Types of Facebook Content Influencing Migration.

According to Aghaee, Several types of Facebook Content Influencing Migration (2024).

- i) **Migrants Success Stories:** Posts highlighting migrants achieving success in Europe.
- ii) **Advertisements:** Promotions from migration agencies offering visas, employment opportunities, and legal routes.
- iii) **Peer Influence:** Social relationships and interaction with friends or relatives residing overseas.

According to [Okunade & Bakare \(2021\)](#), Migrants who post positive experiences on social media and exposure to migration success stories influence migration aspirations, facilitate the decision to migrate and destination selection, and influence the perception of migrants. However, social

media is a double-edged sword, as it can promote misinformation, foster unrealistic expectations, or intensify social isolation when digital interactions fail to translate into real-world connections (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014). Consequently, whereas social media enables migrants in numerous ways, it also poses misinformation that necessitates critical engagement.

2.7 Misinformation on Social Media and Unrealistic Expectations of Migration

Misinformation is widespread, and it is difficult to determine which information is credible ([Gillespie et al., 2016](#)). Misinformation regarding migration routes, legal processes, and living conditions abroad is rampant on social media. Research shows that widespread misinformation on social media platforms (Facebook) relating to migration often includes misleading narratives about the easy migration process, false information on migration routes, exaggerated promise of job opportunities and living conditions abroad, easy access to obtain legal status and so on ([Adegoke, 2023](#); Okunade & Bakare, 2021; Dekker et al., 2018). This is affirmed by Davis (2017), who asserts that migrants use Facebook groups to seek information about job opportunities but also highlights the risks of misinformation leading to unrealistic expectations and disappointment.

In research conducted, it was proven that social media has the potential to facilitate interaction and serve as a massive platform for sharing information about migration ([Adegoke, 2023](#)). However, [Trauner et al. \(2023\)](#) emphasize the danger of selectively distributing content. His study reveals that users frequently share positive experiences only, which may minimise the challenges and intricacies of migration for individuals contemplating similar travels. To buttress this point, in a historical study of Nigerian migration to Europe, [Obi-Ani et al.](#) discuss how information and social media posts from peers often exaggerate the living conditions and opportunities in destination countries by displaying ostentatious lifestyles that do not reflect the challenges migrants may face (2020). The exposure to migration success stories on social media platforms, according to [Grubanov-Boskovic et al.](#), influences migration aspirations, facilitates the decision to migrate and destination selection, and influences the perception of migrants about the destination country (2021). However, Bhardwaj asserts that information shared by settled migrants through social media, which primarily affects the perception of prospective migrants, can be far from reality and facts ([2017](#)).

Furthermore, research shows that such information must be expected to show a different picture than the real and fair picture of the destination country (Bogdan, 2023; Sanchez et al., 2018; [Obi-Ani et al., 2020](#)). In a similar vein, Davis highlights that potential migrants may benefit significantly

from having access to social media information. However, it is risky, as the information provided by previous migrants might be fictitious or unrealistic (Davis, 2017). It is on this premise that [McGillivray \(2021\)](#) avers that 49.1% of users have read false news on social media and have been misinformed, which has led them to make inappropriate decisions. In the same vein, Singh et al.'s (2017) study in India concluded that while social media has had a positive impact on some persons, it also has a negative influence on many of the youth.

2.8 ROLE OF GOVERNMENT, NGOS, AND SOCIAL MEDIA IN PROMOTING ACCURATE MIGRATION INFORMATION.

Misinformation is generally the result of prospective migrants not having access to adequate information about migration, according to IOM (2022). The role of policymakers, researchers, and organizations involved in migration management and social media regulation is crucial in combating this misinformation and properly managing migration (Pécoud, 2010). A growing number of countries in the European Union are now commissioning awareness campaigns in Africa (European et al., 2018). These interventions utilise various channels, including the mass media, school curriculum, community engagement, home visits, and informal gatherings, to deliver tailored, safe migration messages to potential migrants.

Based on a Cooperation Agreement, IOM has assisted the Government of Nigeria through capacity-building, advisory services, and technical assistance on migration-related matters in managing migration since 2002 to ensure informed migration (IOM, 2015). The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has been actively involved in migration information campaigns in Africa, aiming to provide accurate and relevant information to refugees and individuals considering migration. In Libya, in response to what it sees as a growing emergency, UNHCR started the "Know Before You Go" information campaign to curb misinformation on migration ([UNHCR, 2014](#)). Also, recent partnerships between fact-checking groups and social media platforms have given rise to a hybrid regulatory model wherein human fact-checkers collaborate with algorithmic results to provide information about the accuracy of news posts on platforms like Facebook ([Graves, 2018](#)). In response to the dissemination of misinformation and the advocacy of accurate Information on Facebook, Meta updated their official website on APR 2 to reflect their commitment to halting the spread of false information by using a combination of human review, enforcement technology, and independent fact-checkers to detect, evaluate, and remove this kind of content (Meta, 2024).

However, even if the prevailing objective of information campaigns relates to deterrence, potential migrants often dismiss the messages as untrustworthy and biased (Oeppen, 2016; Schans & Optekam, 2016). This is not to say that efforts by government, NGOs and social media platforms

have not yielded any positive results on migration; continuous efforts are still being made to curb misinformation on migration.

They also emphasized the importance of free speech and keeping people safe. Posts could be taken down from the social media site due to these efforts. The [European Commission \(High-Level Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation, 2018\)](#) demands further measures to enable people to confront misinformation and disinformation on social media, which aligns with this initiative. However, the speed and quantity of information on social media (Facebook) make it difficult to monitor, flag and curb misinformative content ([Kyza et al., 2020](#)), thereby exposing potential migrant to Facebook misinformation capable of influencing their decision on migration to Europe.

2.9 SUMMARY AND RESEARCH GAPS

The academic literature review on social media and migration sheds light on the complex interplay of social media in shaping migration patterns. With social media platforms like Facebook playing an important role in global migration, it is evident from the above that social media information can significantly influence migrants' perceptions and decision-making processes. However, while social media information can significantly shape these decisions, migrants are still susceptible to misinformation. This dual effect underscores social media's powerful yet potentially misleading role in shaping migration dynamics.

While several studies have been done in this area, there is still a gap in the existing literature. Considering Nigeria's large online population and the prevalence of false narratives on social media platforms, to date, no research has been conducted on the direct correlation between information obtained from social media platforms such as Facebook and the migration decisions made by Nigerians. The gap in literature underscores the need for a prompt investigation into the connection between Facebook information and the migration decisions of Nigerians living in Europe.

By considering how social media affects migration, the study will provide empirical evidence on the effect of Facebook information on the migration choices of Nigerians living in Europe. The research design will include qualitative methods for examining information dissemination on Facebook and its effects on migrants. Thus, it will contribute to whether and how Facebook information shapes the migration decisions of Nigerians and their perception of this information's reliability and sufficiency.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the procedure adopted for the study. This includes the design of the study, the population studied, the countries of the study, the data collection method, the method of data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

Research design is defined as the 'procedures for collecting, analyzing, interpreting and reporting data in research studies' ([Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007](#)). It is the overall plan that serves as the glue that unifies research projects, connecting conceptual research problems with pertinent and achievable empirical research. In that manner, a descriptive interview research design was adopted for this study. This was because people's views and opinions were sought and described accordingly to establish how Facebook information impacts migration decisions. This study employed a qualitative research method to explore the impact of Facebook on Nigerians' migration decisions to Europe.

This study employed a qualitative research approach to provide an in-depth insight into the motivation, personal expectations and perceptions of the subjects as provided in the interview questions. Using this approach, a thorough understanding of the role Facebook content played in shaping Nigerians in Europe migration decisions and perceptions during and after their migration process was reached by employing narratives, interviews, and thematic analysis. This approach enables the researcher to investigate the complex and subjective factors that influence individuals, capturing the nuances of their decision-making processes, which sometimes are little understood in quantitative terms.

3.2 Population and Sample

The study focused on Nigerians between the ages of 18 and 40 who actively use Facebook to access migration information and are currently living in Europe. A total of Fifteen (15) persons currently living in Portugal, Germany, and Italy were interviewed. A purposive sampling method was applied to select participants (male and female to have balanced perspectives) who have been influenced by Facebook information in their migration decisions. This ensures that the sample consists of individuals with relevant experiences and insights.

3.4 Determination of sample size and selection

Categorisation of country	Number of respondents	The age range of respondent	Method of data collection
Portugal	4	30 - 40	Interview
Germany	3	25 - 40	Interview
Italy	8	20 - 30	Interview

TABLE 1: Research respondents by age, country of residence and data collection technique.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The researcher designed an interview guide for Nigerians in Europe (Portugal, Germany, and Italy), which was used during the interview of respondents to stimulate the interviewee into giving a detailed discussion of Facebook content's impact on their migration decision to Europe. Data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with participants. This method allows for flexibility in questioning and enables participants to share their experiences freely, providing rich, detailed responses relevant to the study objectives.

The interview questions were divided into key categories to address different aspects of their migration experience. For example, questions regarding migration motivations, influence from Facebook networks (friends and Family), Facebook's role in the decision-making process and their expectations versus the reality of Europe upon arrival were all asked of the participants who were interviewed. Following this, all participants were then requested to reflect on their general experiences with information gathered from Facebook. This included portraying if they perceived a substantial sense of being informed or misinformed based on the information they were exposed to. Furthermore, they were asked to describe how the information gathered shaped their pre-emptive thoughts of Europe before and after migration. The interviewer requested clarification of their answers to ensure a robust understanding of all the various influences at play. This approach allowed the researcher to understand better the factors that influenced their decision-making processes.

3.6 Data Analysis and Techniques

Data analysis refers to the interpretation of the raw data collected into useful Information ([Kombo & Tromp, 2006](#)). Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data, following [Braun and Clarke's \(2006\)](#) Framework for identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within qualitative data. Thematic analysis was appropriate for this research because it allows the researcher to systematically identify patterns and themes that emerge from the participants' narratives. The process includes coding the data, categorizing key themes related to Facebook influence, and interpreting these themes to understand the broader impact of social media on migration decisions.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are fundamental to this study, particularly due to the sensitive nature of migration. The research followed the ethical guidelines outlined by the [British Psychological Society \(2014\)](#) to ensure participants' privacy and safety. Informed consent is obtained from all participants before conducting the interviews, and participants are fully informed about the study's objective, their right to withdraw, and how their data will be used. All data was anonymised to protect the identity of participants.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF KEY FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This section encompasses a qualitative analysis of the research findings gathered by the researcher from Nigerian migrants living in Portugal, Germany, and Italy on the impact of Facebook content on their migration decision to Europe. Data was represented and interpreted in view of the objectives in chapter one of this research. The qualitative analysis of interview responses revealed key themes that underlined the impact of Facebook on the migration decisions of Nigerians living in Europe. These themes highlight the profound interplay between social media narratives, personal aspirations, and the actual experiences of migrants. This discourse employs network theory to examine the impact of social networks and online platforms on perceptions and decision-making during their migration process.

Before diving deep into the qualitative analysis, a demographic analysis was also portrayed as key to comparing certain factors such as Age, Gender, and Country.

4.1 Demographic Analysis

Three key variables, age, gender, and country of residence were chosen to carry out this demographic analysis for all respondents who were interviewed in this study.

4.2 Age Distribution Analysis

For this study, the age range of all respondents, who were young and middle-aged adults, fell within 20 to 40 years. This age group is of special interest in migration literature and social media usage, as it often corresponds with key life transitions such as career development, job search, pursuit of higher living standards, or family formation. Social media networking plays an important role in this stage by providing information that shapes migration aspirations, especially in developing countries like Nigeria. At moments of important changes in one's career, job or family planning, social media provides people with tools for experience sharing, access to information, and interaction with those who have accomplished similar goals, as shown in the interview responses and graph below. This, during migration decision-making, instils hope and encourages prospective migrants in such critical periods that they can also achieve migration and other live changing opportunities. The age distribution of interviewees, as shown in Figure 2, is Ten out of the fifteen interviewees are between the ages of 20-30, while the other five respondents are between the ages of 30-40.

- **Young Adults (20-30 years):**

- ◆ The data show that the younger respondents used Facebook more than their older counterparts, judging from the fact that Facebook is one of the oldest social media platforms and a vast favorite of the younger generations.
- ◆ Typically, Nigerians in this age range, being in the early stages of their lives and careers, are more susceptible to being influenced by the need to migrate for higher living standards or job opportunities. They are more motivated by migration-related content on Facebook that portrays Europe as the hub of opportunity and greener pastures. This can be clearly seen in the figure below, where we have **all 8 of the younger** respondents interviewed **indicated** that they used Facebook in their migration decision. However, based on the interview responses, these Facebook contents on migration are most times exaggerated or misleading, creating a sense of an imagined world that may

not conform to actual reality. This is evident in the cases of the young Nigerians interviewed who migrated to Europe, as shown in the graph below.

- ◆ Looking at the theme 'discrepancies between expectations and reality of Europe', on figure 2 below clearly shows that there were more mismatch expectations for the young Nigerian adults, as six out of eight younger respondents' expectations were a mismatch with reality upon arrival in Europe, while only two out of eight mentioned that their expectations match their reality of Europe. This means that they saw a vast discrepancy between their expectations and the reality of their experience on arrival in their destination countries in Europe.

- ◆ Younger Nigerians interviewed were more vulnerable to misinformation on Facebook, such as exaggerated job prospects or higher living standards. As shown in the graph below, many were misinformed following Facebook communities (groups or discussion forums) that promised an overly optimistic or misleading representation of life in Europe, only to encounter difficulties upon arrival. This can be seen in Figure 2 on the theme titled "impact of Facebook content on migrants", where we have six out of eight respondents from younger Nigerian adults who were misinformed, with only two being well informed by the content shared by their migration networks on Facebook which largely shaped their perception of Europe.

- **Older Adults (30-40 years):**

- ◆ For the older respondents, Facebook played a significant role in their migration decisions, particularly in relation to job opportunities and a higher standard of living. As shown in Figure 2 below, five out of seven older respondents interviewed used Facebook in their migration decision, and the other two Nigerian migrants mentioned that they did not use it in their migration decision to Europe. Four out of the five respondents who used Facebook were influenced by Facebook content on their choice of destination country in Europe, unlike the younger respondents who were all influenced by the

information they got from Facebook on their choice of destination countries in Europe, as shown on the graph below.

- ◆ Unlike the younger Nigerians, the discrepancies between expectations and the reality of Europe among the older Nigerian respondents were less as most interviewees' expectations of Europe matched their reality. As shown in Figure 2 below, while six of the eight younger Nigerians interviewed had unmet expectations in Europe, only two of the five older Nigerians had a match of expectations with reality. This means that the overly optimistic or misleading representation of life in Europe portrayed by the interviewees through their Facebook migration networks impacted younger Nigerians more than older ones.
- ◆ The graph below illustrates that while older Nigerians utilized Facebook content in their migration decisions to Europe, they were less misinformed compared to the younger Nigerians migrants who were very optimistic and had higher and unrealistic expectations of Europe. As seen in the below graph, while three out of the five older interviews were well informed by Facebook content, only two of the eight younger respondents were well informed. This also resulted in them having an aligned or mismatched perception of Europe

FIGURE 2.

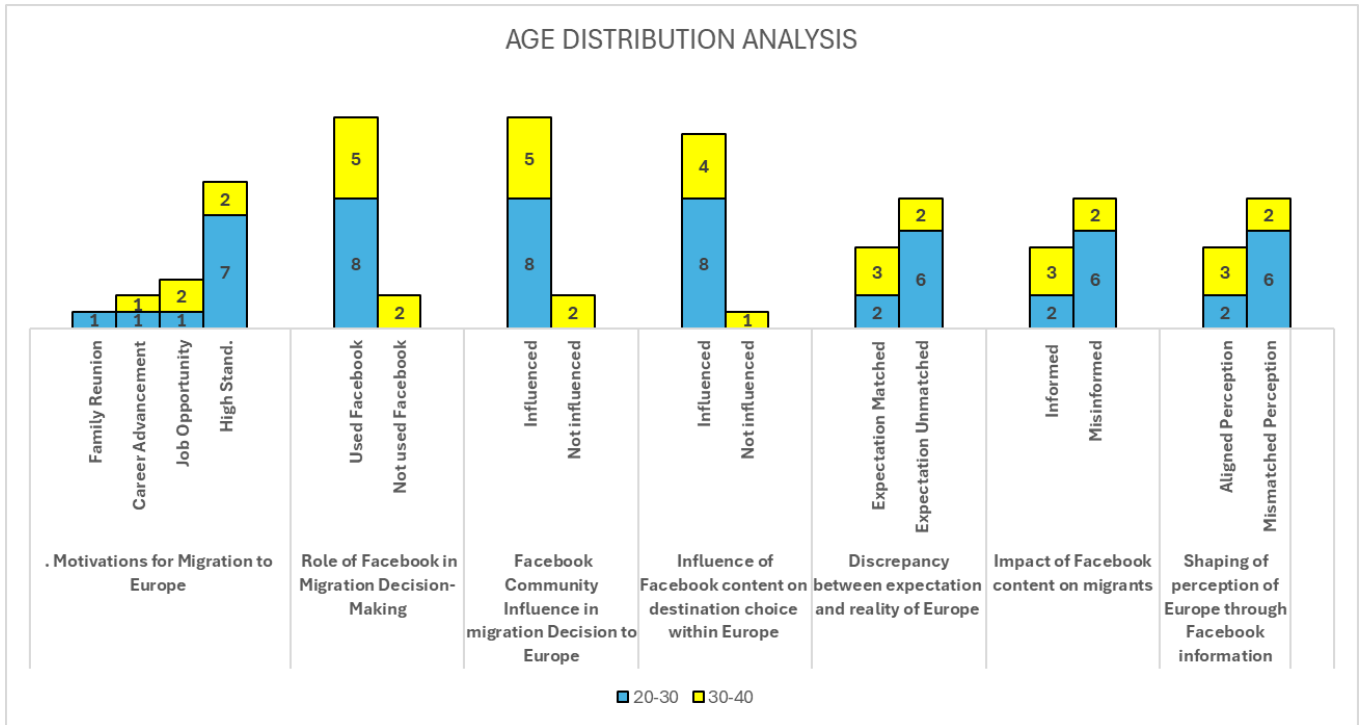


FIGURE 2: Analysis of Age distribution across Key themes for Qualitative analysis

4.3 Gender Distribution Analysis

GENDER:

As seen in **FIGURE 3**, 15 Nigerians in Europe were interviewed in total. Seven of the thirteen respondents who used Facebook in their migration decisions are male, while the other six are female. However, two respondents (male and female) did not use Facebook content in their migration decisions.

- **MALE:** The male respondent used Facebook to get information on career advancement and specific job roles, especially in the information technology sector. The graph below shows that they joined different communities (groups and discussion forums) on Facebook that offered direct advice on jobs, work permits, career success stories, and higher standards of living, which influenced their choice of destination countries in Europe.
- As shown in Figure 3 regarding the theme 'expectations versus the reality of Europe', the men have higher discrepancies in their reality of Europe than their female

counterparts. For the men, while only two of seven participants' expectations match reality, the female gender has three out of three participants whose expectations of Europe match their reality.

- Also, the male participants seemed more prone to misinformation on Facebook than their female counterparts. As seen in the theme 'Impact of Facebook content on migrants,' five male respondents were misinformed by Facebook content, while only two female respondents were misinformed by Facebook content.
- **FEMALE:** As seen in the data-based responses in Figure 3, women were more prone to participate in and subscribe to Facebook information, which focused more on family reunification and higher standards of living. They had a score of five respondents versus their male counterparts, who had just four.
 - As shown on the graph, six out of the thirteen respondents were female, and Facebook content played a role in their migration decisions. Regarding expectations and reality of Europe, three out of six had a positive outcome in their experience in Europe. Thus, the reason for their low discrepancy result, as shown in the figure below, is that three out of the six women interviewed were misinformed, unlike the male gender, which has five out of seven interviewees with unmet expectations upon arrival in Europe.

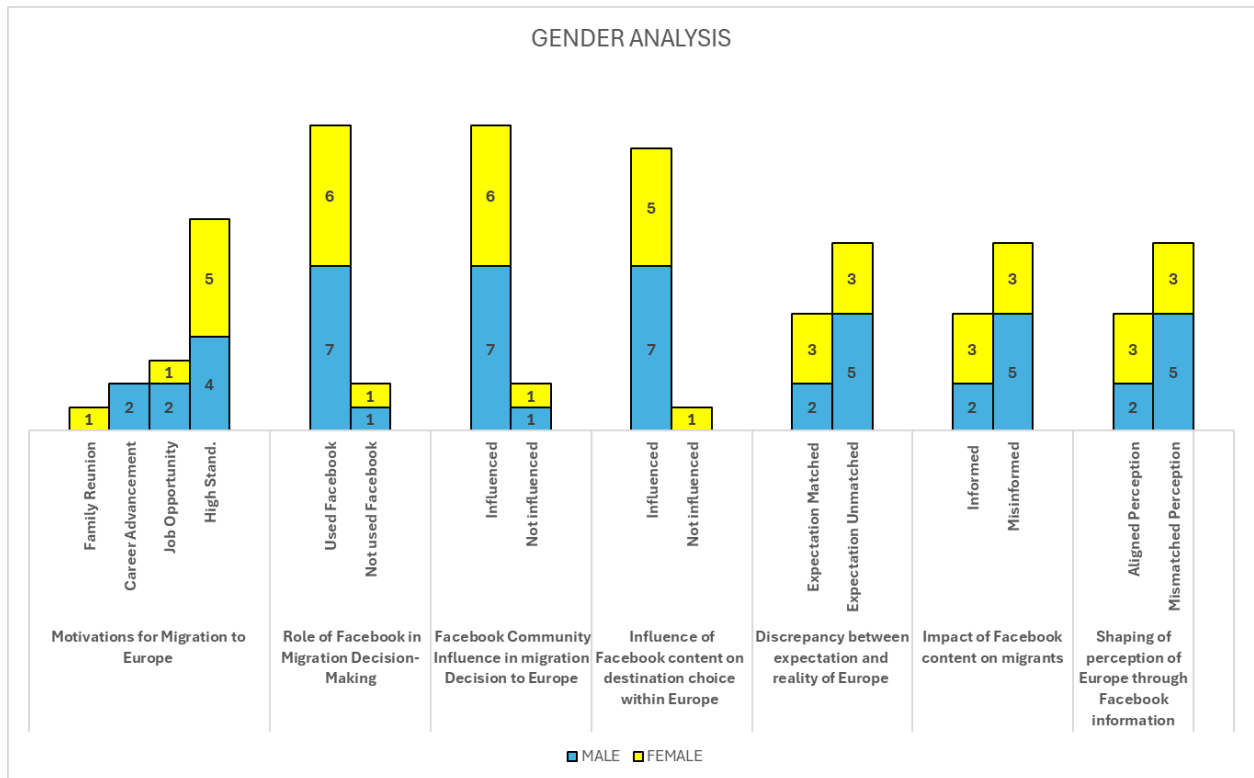


FIGURE 3: Gender demographic representation across Key themes in Qualitative analysis

4.4 Country of Residence Analysis:

- **Germany:** A total number of three Nigerians living in Germany were interviewed. These participants were more motivated due to the high number of job opportunities and career advancement, especially in the tech fields and industrialization, which were frequently mentioned on Facebook posts and discussion forums. This can be seen clearly in the graph as all three participants from Germany had key job opportunities and career advancement as their main motivators.
 - Facebook posts from family members, friends, and communities on Facebook not only influenced their choice of destination country in Europe but also their expectations and perception of Europe. One out of the three respondents' expectations matched reality, while the other two respondents had unmet expectations in Europe resulting from the impact by Facebook misinformation, as shown in Figure 4 below.

- **Italy:** The graph shows more respondents motivated by the high standard of living in Italy, as portrayed to them by Facebook content. This is due to the large Nigerian online community, friends, and family that reside in the country who constantly post on Facebook about their testimonials of having a smooth transition and better living state after leaving their home country, Nigeria. However, based on the interview results as shown on the below graph, most of the migration related content the respondent were exposed to was exaggerated or misleading information which resulted to a high number of unmet expectations and misinformation.
 - The result of the interview, as seen on the graph in Figure 4, shows that five out of the six Nigerians in Italy interviewed expectations were unmet and were misinformed by the migration content they came across on Facebook, and only one interview expectations match the reality of Europe after migration resulting from the positive impact of the information received from Facebook networks.
- **Portugal:** On the other hand, the Nigerian migrants in Portugal interviewed had a near perfect result of three out of four respondents who were well informed by Facebook content from Facebook communities, friends, and family abroad, which also aligned their perception of Europe with their expectations to a large extent.
 - As shown in the graph below, three out of the four Nigerians interviewed in Portugal were well informed by Facebook content, and only one respondent was impacted by misinformation on Facebook.

Summarily from the above and as shown in the below graph, Nigerians in Italy interviewed has the highest discrepancies of unmatched expectations with reality of Europe and misinformation compared to Germany and Portugal. However, Germany with only three Nigerians interviewed has the second highest with number respondents with unmatched expectations with reality and misinformation. On the other hand, Portugal has the highest number of Nigerian migrants interviewed with well informed Facebook content matching their expectations to the reality of Europe

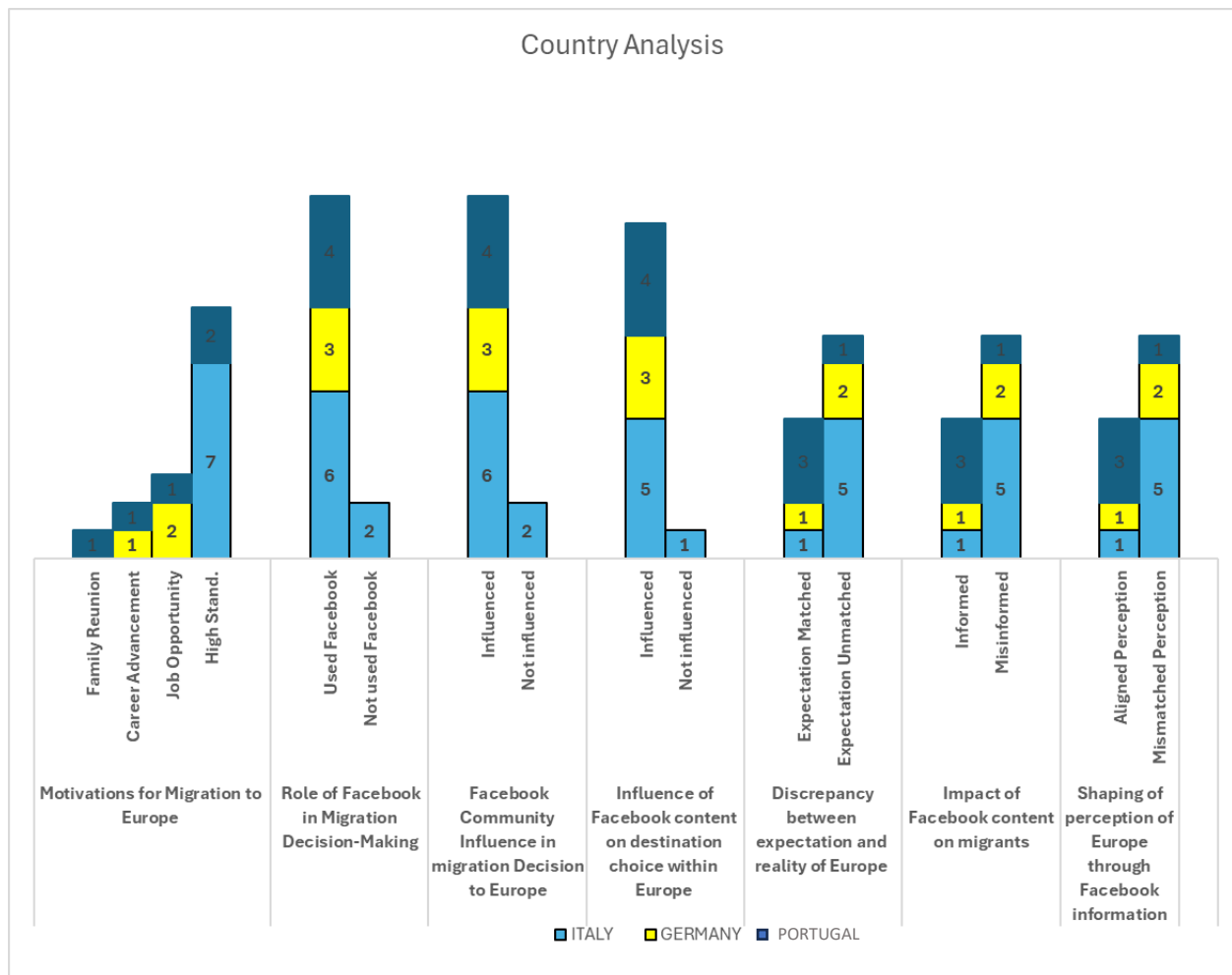


FIGURE 4: Demographic representation based on country of residence of respondents

4.4 Interview responses and summary.

The matrix below shows the summary of individual responses from the interview of 15 Nigerians in Portugal, Germany, and Italy on the impact of Facebook content on their migration decisions to Europe. The cell highlighted in green represents a 'Yes' response for each question, while those highlighted in red represent a 'No' responses to each interview question of the respondent.

highlighted in red represent negative responses to each interview question of the respondent.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
I1 (Female, 32, Portugal, 3 yrs in EU)	High standard of living									
I2 (Male, 39, Portugal, 4 yrs in EU)	Carrer advancement									
I3 (Female, 37, Portugal, 8 yrs in EU)	Job opportunities									
I4 (Male, 35, Portugal, 9 yrs in EU)	High standard of livin									
I5 (Male, 38, Germany, 8 yrs in EU)	Job opportunities									
I6 (Male, 26, Germany, 7 yrs in EU)	Carrer advancement									
I7 (Male, 27, Germany, 4 yrs in EU)	Job opportunities									
I8 (Male, 26, Italy, 6 yrs in EU)	High standard of living									
I9 (Female, 28, Italy, 5 yrs in EU)	High standard of living									
I10 (Female, 27, Italy, 4 yrs in EU)	High standard of living									
I11 (Male, 26, Italy, 3yrs in EU)	High standard of living									
I12 (Female, 25, Italy, 6yrs in EU)	High standard of living									
I13 (Female, 28, Italy, 8yrs in EU)	Family reunification									
I14(Male, 34, Italy, 5yrs in EU)	High standard of living									
I15(Female, 35, Italy, 7yrs in EU)	High standard of living									
	Can you share your story about your decision to migrate to Europe? What prompted your decision to migrate to Europe?	2. Was social media (particularly Facebook) used to obtain information regarding migration? If yes, describe the type of this information you came across on Facebook?	3. Did you join any groups or discussion forums on Facebook, to get advice on Migrating to Europe?	4. Has the information obtained from these groups or forums affected your decision to migrate to Europe?	5. Have you encountered migration information shared through Facebook by family members, friends or settled Nigerian residing in Europe? If yes, how has the information shared affected your perception about migrating to Europe	6. Was the migration information received on Facebook factual when compared to your real experience in Europe?	7. How has the information received from Facebook impacted your experience and expectations	8. Whether positive or negative, what are your thoughts on the impact of Facebook information on your migration decision to Europe?	9. How has the information influenced your choice of destination country in Europe?	How has the information shared on Facebook affected your perception of Europe and your choice of country within Europe?



Figure 5: Summary of interviewees responses representation

4.5 Motivations for Migration to Europe

The decision to migrate is frequently influenced by various interconnected factors, as evidenced in the responses. This study highlighted four primary motivations for Nigerians migrating to Europe, which were mainly influenced by Facebook content: Career advancement, job opportunities, family reunification, and higher standards of living. The responses showed that migration is usually conceptualized as a means to achieve greater opportunities in terms of jobs and living circumstances. For example, the respondents pointed out that one of the reasons people migrate to Europe is the better living conditions.

For instance, most respondents highlight the higher standard of living in Europe as a major pull factor. As one interviewee succinctly put, 'I saw on Facebook many Nigerians in Italy posting pictures, videos and talking about how life was much better in Europe, particularly in terms of the available opportunities and the living conditions, so I decided to take a leap to migrate to Italy

(Male, 26, Italy, 3yrs in EU). This underscores the prevailing attribute that Europe offers a better quality of life than what is attainable in Nigeria, and this is consistent with the migration push-pull theory (Lee, 1966), where people are 'pulled' to move to other destinations where they perceive they will find better opportunities and 'pushed' out of their homes by factors such as unemployment, poverty, and social or political instability. However, this theory did not adequately address the persistence of migration even after these factors have waned (McLean, 2020).

Job opportunities were also highlighted as a significant factor in their migration decisions. One respondent stated, 'Facebook gave me an overview of the job market in Germany, and that inspired me to migrate' (Male, 38, Germany, 8 yrs in EU). Another said, 'I saw on Facebook many posts about job vacancies in Portugal, and it seemed like jobs were readily available once you arrived in Europe' (Female, 37, Portugal, 8 yrs in EU). This corresponds with the network theory of migration, which posits that migrant networks in host countries significantly reduce the costs and risks associated with migration by providing valuable information, often through informal channels such as social media (Massey et al., 1993).

However, some interviewees also emphasized family reunification as an important motivator for migration. One noted, 'After separating from my twin brother who often posts on Facebook about his well-being here in Italy, I and my family resolved that it was time to be together again after years of separation' (Female, 28, Italy, 8yrs in EU). This response shows how family ties and existing social networks in a host country influence migration decision. Family members who have previously migrated frequently act as intermediates, offering both emotional support and practical information regarding the migration procedure, employment prospects and living conditions.

4.6 Role of Facebook in Migration Decision-Making

Facebook was the central information tool that aided in disseminating migration-related information and the decision-making process of the Nigerian migrants in Europe interviewed. Thirteen of the fifteen participants interviewed in this study acknowledged using Facebook to seek information on migration. As one respondent shared, 'The Facebook groups and discussion forums I joined had much helpful information about the migration process, especially visa application requirements and which countries had better job markets and living conditions (Male, 27, Germany, 4 yrs in EU). Therefore, migration and social media are interconnected, influencing plans and decisions to move [\(Thulin & Vilelmson 2014\)](#).

Basically, the role Facebook plays as a key information-sharing platform can be better understood or deciphered using the network theory of migration. According to this theory, social networks, be it friends, family or virtual based (such as those formed on social media platforms), provide migrants with principal resources that go a long way in curbing the risks and unknowns that are embedded with migration (Massey et al. 1993, Dekker & Engbersen, 2014). In this light, Facebook is a virtual link for all the networks involved, thus providing a vast amount of knowledge, information, and experiences that already migrated migrants share with aspiring ones.

Furthermore, Facebook also served as an online pool where inspirational content was shared, which usually paints a belief of what life in Europe could be. Most participants from the interview of this research did note their finding of success stories mentioned on posts on Facebook, which stirred their notion of seeing their migration goal as attainable. For example, one individual noted, "I saw several posts on Facebook mentioning migration success stories and migrants living a better life in Portugal than the ones they left back home in Nigeria; it made me believe I could do the same to escape the current hardship back home in Nigeria and start living a better life" (Male, 35; Portugal, 9 yrs in EU). This highlights how social media content, especially posts that focus on the positive aspects of migration, can create an image of Europe as a place of endless opportunity, influencing not just decisions but also expectations.

4.7 Facebook Community Influence in Migration Decision to Europe

The influence of community, particularly the role of Facebook groups, emerged as another central theme in the responses. Many respondents stated they actively joined different Facebook groups or discussion forums where advice and guidance on migration process were provided. For example, one participant stated: 'Before embarking on my migration journey, I joined several groups and discussion forums where Nigerians living in different European countries shared their migration experiences and success stories. Their advice and success stories not only gave me the confidence I needed but also empowered me to prepare for my relocation to Italy (Female, 28, Italy, 8yrs in EU). Similarly, another respondent stated: 'The Facebook group I belonged to was instrumental and informative, and I felt there was no way I would have come upon such information on my own in understanding the migration and integration process here in Portugal' (Male, 39, Portugal, 4 yrs in EU). These responses reflect how the network theory of migration applies to contemporary society.

Migrants are increasingly utilizing the internet for practical purposes such as receipt of information, obtaining the necessary resources or services, or even receiving emotional support. In this context, Facebook groups acted as synergetic that joined potential migrants with previously made successful migrants. Migration networks serve as social capital for migrants, helping them to gain information and advice that may prove useful while promoting migration (Boyd, 1989; Massey et al., 1993). The same idea holds true for online communities that are formed using Facebook.

Interestingly, respondents also noted the influence of family members and friends already living in Europe. Thirteen respondents stated that they had received information from relatives or friends who arrived in Europe earlier, which made them want to relocate even more. One of the respondents said, "I was influenced by the fact that my cousin who migrated to Italy before me would constantly flaunt Facebook pictures and videos of him depicting a better life in Europe." (Male, 26, Italy, 3yrs in EU). This highlights how established migrant networks in the country of destination can have a strong draw impact on prospective migrants, not just through direct communication only, but also via social media platforms.

4.8 Influence of Facebook content on destination choice within Europe

The influence of Facebook on the choice of destination countries within Europe was another important theme that emerged. Twelve out of thirteen respondents who acknowledged they used Facebook in their migration journey stated that the information they saw on Facebook influenced their choice of country to which they migrated. One participant stated, "My twin brother had previously relocated to Italy, and after several years of separation, my family and I resolved it was time to reunite again' and the idea of reuniting with my brother was my primary motivator for migration (Female, 28, Italy, 8yrs in EU). Another added, "One of the Facebook forums, which I am a member of, often posts about career advancement in Germany's Information technology (IT) sector. Also, many Nigerians who live here would discuss their job role, growth in their career and earnings per month. This made me choose Germany as my destination country of migration as I was looking forward to building my career in this sector (Male, 26; Germany, 7 yrs in EU). This highlights the increased role social media plays not only in the decision to migrate but also in the actual choice of migration destination. As the network theory of migration states, social networks facilitate the access of potential migrants to crucial information concerning the conditions of various destination countries, settlement possibilities, and prospects, thus simplifying their decision on the most suitable destination for their needs and aspirations (Dekker

& Engbersen, 2014). In this study, Facebook networking was the medium through which the migrant's gained knowledge of others and made their own decisions.

4.9 Discrepancy between expectation and reality of Europe

One of the significant themes that emerged from the analysis was the discrepancy between the imagined world created by Facebook content and the actual reality in Europe. While some respondents expressed gratitude to Facebook post and their network, most of the people interviewed regarding the arrival experience expressed disappointment, remarking that the positive image they had perceived on Facebook never resonated with their experiences. With regards to the positive response, one good example was when one respondent remarked, 'Much of the job-related information I came across in my field was accurate, although finding a job still requires effort' (Female, 37, Portugal, 8 yrs in EU). However, another interviewee who expressed disappointment said, 'The posts I saw showed that life in Europe were perfect. Based on this, I had expectations of a higher stander of living when I arrived in Italy, but I realized how tough things were as I did not get the proper information about legal process that will enable me to have access social warfare services and other basic needs' (Female, 28, Italy, 5 yrs in EU). Another shared, 'Facebook posts made it look as if getting a job was going to be like a walk in the park, but it was a lot harder than I thought as I could not speak the Portuguese language at that time' (Male, 38; Germany, 8 yrs in EU).

This theme of unmet expectations shows that social media is a double-edged sword, as it can promote misinformation and foster unrealistic expectations when digital interactions fail to translate into real-world connections (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014). Migrants often present success stories on social media while showcasing fewer stories that depict hardship and struggles. This leads to an illusion about the possibilities of migration, which, when unmet, results in such a disappointment that it is appropriate to call a possible negative impact of social media.

The gap between expectations and reality was particularly evident in discussions around higher standards of living and job opportunities. While a few interviewees had positive responses about their expectation matching the realities of thing in the country they migrated to, many respondents who were motivated by the promise of better a better living condition or job prospects in Europe expressed disappointment in the reality of things when they arrived Europe, several expressed difficulties in accessing social warfare without having the necessary documentation, while other express the challenges they faced in finding employment which was more than they had anticipated.

4.10 Impact of social media misinformation on migration

A connected theme was the dissemination of misinformation on Facebook, which misled many migrants with unrealistic expectations. Several respondents argued that Facebook is one of the critical sources of unrealistic expectations for migrants where there is a lot of misinformation. Several respondents commented that the information on posts they came across on Facebook was overly positive and sometimes even a false representation of life in Europe. A respondent stated, 'The posts I saw made it seem like once I got here, everything will be in its place, but it turned out to be so difficult for me to have the quality life I imagined, as I was not properly informed on the legal procedure of migration and integration here in Italy' (Female, 28, Italy, 5 yrs in EU). Another respondent quoted, 'There were many inspiring success posts on Facebook about Europe that were greatly misleading. It was not as easy for me here in Germany as they portray in these stories' (Male, 38, Germany, 8 years in EU).

This indicates a risk that may arise from the assumption of using the users' content for significant decisions, especially migration. According to the Network theory of migration, the presence of existing social networks for migration alleviates the risk and uncertainty synonymous with migration (Massey, 1990). However, in cases such as when these networks carry wrong and biased information, as affirmed by Davis, they may also do more harm than good by increasing risk, causing unrealistic expectations, disappointment, and misinformation (2017).

In addition, it provokes issues with the ethics surrounding the use of social media in making decisions concerning migration. While social networking platforms like Facebook can be valuable tools for information-sharing, they also possess the drawback of rendering misinformation. Therefore, appropriate measures to enhance truthful information-sharing are warranted to limit or eradicate the spread of misleading narratives that can have dire consequences on people making such life-changing decisions.

4.11 Shaping of perception of Europe through Facebook Content

Finally, the analysis indicated that Facebook content significantly shaped Nigerian migrants' perceptions of Europe due to the information received on migration. While a few respondents mentioned that the information they had from Facebook before migrating matched their expectations of things in Europe and positively shaped their perception of Europe, many others

acknowledged that Facebook content gave them an overly positive impression of life in Europe, influencing them to migrate. However, these expectations did not match their experiences in Europe. For instance, an interviewee noted that; 'The information I got from discussion forums and groups on Facebook confirmed my perception of Europe as a great place to settle, and Portugal has been a perfect country for me and my family, and I feel welcomed' (Male, 39; Portugal, 4 yrs in EU). However, another respondent noted, 'Based on the information I came across on groups and posts from my cousin and other Nigerians living in Italy, I expected to find a good job and maintain a balanced life with my family here. However, finding a job in English was a huge struggle, and I felt misled by the exaggerated post as my perception of Italy was overly optimistic (Female, 28, Italy, 5 yrs in EU). Based on the exaggerated and misleading image painted, many imaged Europe as a place of Eldorado (vast riches or abundance), where they could live the kind of life they imagined. However, the case was not the same for most respondents.

This theme highlights the effect of social networking sites on shaping people's perceptions, particularly on migration. Social networking platforms like Facebook are saturated with information, most of which come from users. Therefore, potential migrants come across many stories of living in Europe, most of which are positive, while ignoring the possible challenges Faced. This creates unattainable expectations, thus leading to disappointment when the expectations do not match the reality one hopes for after viewing social media content.

4.12 Interpretation of Results

The qualitative research conducted for this study offered valuable insight into understanding how Facebook content influenced Nigerians in their migration decisions to Europe. Several key findings were drawn from the analysis of the interview responses, emphasising both the positive and negative impacts of social media on migration decisions.

4.13 Facebook as a Central Platform for Migration Information

One important finding is the emerging evidence of the central role Facebook played in the process of making migration decisions. Out of the fifteen respondents, thirteen of them acknowledged engaging in Facebook with the aim of sourcing information that relates to migration process, higher standard of living, or job opportunities. They formed opinions based on the information gathered from articles, success stories from family and friends, and advice posted on Facebook groups and forums to make their migration decisions and expectations. This underlines the

significance of Facebook site as a source of helpful information for migrants seeking practical and reliable information on their migration journey.

Facebook, on the other hand, was not only a platform for practical information, but also aspirational content, as most of the respondents admitted being influenced by success stories and images of migrants who have made it. The portrayal of life in Europe as a place of boundless opportunities with less or no struggles led to the notion that being a migrant is an easy undertaking that will improve one's life almost immediately. This attraction of Facebook content is a hope for many of the people from Nigeria who are aspiring to migrate and survivors in the struggling economic and social milieu of the country.

4.14 Influence of Social Networks and Communities

The study highlights the importance of social networks, particularly Facebook groups, discussion forums, friends and family members, in making migration decisions. Many respondents spoke about their active participation in some migration-focused group or forum where they could meet people who have already migrated to Europe. All these different information sources provided practical information in decision-making to reduce the uncertainty and encourage making migration decisions.

This demonstrates the function of virtual communities as migration networks, where prospective migrants seek information and assistance from experienced migrants. In this sense, Facebook is a further extension of existing migrant networks, as the migration network theory suggests. These networks reduce the risk and cost of migration by providing information about migration procedures, employment opportunities, and standard of in the choice of destination country.

The impact of Facebook is also noticeable when it comes to the decision of what country to migrate to within Europe. A total of 12 respondents mentioned the influence that migration-related content found on Facebook had in leading them to their choice of country within Europe. This illustrates the fact that social media not only contributes to decision-making about migration but also decides to which country they would migrate to within Europe. The migration network theory claims that migration-related uncertainties are reduced by making important information available for informed decision-making. In this case, the Facebook platform supports this process by enabling migrants to share their experiences as well as views on what European country to migrate to.

4.16 Unmet Expectations and Disappointment

One of the most striking findings from the interviews was the overwhelming gap between what Facebook content advertised and the realities of life in Europe. A few people were happy about how things turned out, but most respondents were disappointed when they arrived. They noted that things were way more challenging than shown on social media.

The disappointment permeated even more evidently regarding access to higher living standards and job prospects. Quite a number had relocated, promising themselves that they would have a better life and access to job opportunities would be very easy in Europe. However, only to be met by the fact that they had difficulties securing a good job and very tough competition. This and other factors caused much dissatisfaction and made the respondent feel misinformed. Most of them complained about the unfairness of the over-glamorized life in Europe, as seen on Facebook. This explains the impact of social networks in influencing the perception of migration that success dominates, and the other side of the struggle is suppressed.

4.17 Spread of Misinformation on Facebook

The study further showed that many respondents were deceived by the information they came across on Facebook. Many responded that the posts appear more favourable and, at times, too fictitious about Europe than it is. This leads us to another significant problem with social networks: misinformation or biased information that may determine key life-turning events such as migration. This highlights an important drawback of social media: the dissemination of false or manipulated information that can affect vital decisions about migration. Success stories and positive images of life in Europe missed the hardships involved, such as obtaining a decent job, a higher standard of living, or assimilating into a different culture and society. Such narrative creation is dangerous as it harbors false hopes for aspiring migrants who are ill-prepared to face the realities when they finally get to Europe.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 Summary of findings

This study investigated the role of Facebook in shaping the migration choices of Nigerians with respect to moving to Europe, looking at the sociable nature of migration in terms of how social media informs, forms expectations, and influences migration-related choices. Through stories collected during semi-structured interviews, some key themes were prominent, establishing the representation of Facebook as both a source of informative material and ideology and a source of misinformation. Facebook was found to be used purposefully for collecting valuable information, joining communities, and exploring inspirational stories about other people's accomplishments. Nevertheless, looking at the positive images of life in Europe on social media made several respondents report that their expectations of life in Europe did not come forth as they had expected, leaving them disappointed. These results call for a more accurate and fair representation of migration and information in social media, and there needs to be more outstanding education on the adverse effects of user-generated content on such important decisions as moving from one social milieu to another.

5.1 Conclusion

This study has shown the extent to which content on Facebook influences Nigerians' decision to migrate to Europe. The site further influences migrants' perceptions and expectations regarding their integration into European societies, as it is also used as an important platform for sourcing migration-related information. Facebook was practical in two dimensions. It was a source of critical information that effectively bridges the gap of perfecting the process of migrating; on the contrary, most of the information availed came with an exaggeration and an unrealistic picture of what Europe offered, thereby setting up many migrants for disappointment.

It was noted that social networks, whether virtual or through families, ascertained the facilitation to make the migration decision. Access to Facebook groups and personal networks facilitated potential migrants to access detailed information to ease the risks involved in migrating. However, the research also addressed the risks and the dangers of misinformation on social media; while some respondents say they were well informed about migration, most respondents felt that life in Europe was made too beautiful, especially on Facebook and that they were misinformed. Young adults were observed to be most affected by a mismatch between expectation and reality upon arrival in Europe when compared to older adults. Similarly, Nigerians in Italy interviewed had the

highest discrepancies of unmatched expectations with the reality of Europe when compared to Germany and Portugal, while Portugal had the highest number of Nigerian migrants interviewed with well-informed Facebook content matching their expectations to the reality of Europe.

This study has succeeded in pushing the boundaries of what we already know about migration and digital platforms like Facebook in the sense that it affirms the increasing influence and importance of Facebook as a source of information for migrants, especially Nigerians. It contributes to our understanding of how migrants use Facebook to navigate the difficult process of migration. This research also pushes the boundaries of what we already know by shedding light on the potential downside of social media. It shows how exaggerated Facebook information can result in unrealistic expectations, which results in difficulties upon arrival to the country of migration. In the context of increasing global migration trends, this is particularly important as it emphasizes the urgent need for migrants to acquire critical information literacy skills to help them evaluate migration information on Facebook. Also, insights from this study can help inform government interventions and policies aimed at assisting migrants in the area of promoting media literacy and combating misinformation on social media.

In conclusion, this study underscores the critical need for accurate and fair information in social media networks, particularly in the context of migration. While social media is often viewed positively as a tool for sharing information, promoting causes, and building communities, it also has a darker side. This includes the spread of misinformation that can mislead people into making life-changing decisions online.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the subsequent recommendations are proposed:

Improving Access to Balanced Information:

Social media, particularly Facebook administrators, should join efforts with reliable organizations, migration specialists, and government institutions to ensure that potential migrants are informed appropriately about migration and the environment or culture of the target country. This could be operationalized through enhanced fact-checking collaborations and migration information campaigns. This may also entail verifying the information contained in pro-migration materials and disseminating information education materials on the reality of emigration and success and challenging narratives associated with being a migrant in Europe.

Encouraging Responsible Content Sharing:

People who utilize Facebook to share narratives about their migration experiences and advice should be encouraged to ensure balance in all aspects of their migration process, including success, challenges and lessons learned. This would assist prospective migrants in having appropriate expectations and prevent disappointment.

Establishing Official Facebook Pages of Migrants:

It is also worth suggesting that governments, NGOs, and other organizations dealing with migration should form official social pages where proper information and reliable sources of advice can be presented to potential migrants. The groups may be helped by professionals with sound knowledge of migration, requirements, and life in Europe and provide helpful assistance to migrants seeking help.

Promoting digital Literacy and Critical Resonation Skills:

There is a necessity for affirmative policies or programs that educate prospective migrants on skills such as digital proficiency and critical reasoning, otherwise known as critical thinking. This is particularly important because many people cannot think critically about the information available via the internet, making them easy targets for fake news. Such campaigns encourage them to develop abilities to determine the legitimacy of the materials posted on sites such as Facebook and make better decisions.

Further Research on the Specific Function of Social Media in Migration:

This study has indicated the enormous significance of Facebook in making migration decisions; however, more specific regions and social groups have to be explored further. Further, the effects of social networks on the settlement and adaptation of migrants in the host country should be studied to understand the trends of social networks in their lives after the migration process.

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can contribute to the responsible use of these platforms while migrating and provide potential migrants with access to accurate and well-rounded information they need to make informed decisions.

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