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Backward Emigration: Implications to Economic Development in the Communities

Oko, Agha Christopher
Department Of Humanities and Social Sciences
School Of General Studies
Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas Bonny

Ekuri, Daniel Agbor
Department Of Psychology
Ekiti State University, Ondo State
Corresponding author: E-mail; Oko Agha Christopher: aokris065@gmail.com
Ekuri Daniel Agbo dekuri@yahoo.com
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Abstract

Backward emigration, also known as reverse migration or return migration, implies the movement of individuals from developed countries back to their countries of origin or less developed regions, a common practice that have some implications on community development. Accordingly, this paper would seek to explore the impact of backward emigration on economic development by examining the push and pull factors that drive individuals to return to their home countries. It considers economic, social, and cultural factors that influence the decision to reverse migrate. It also investigates the role of policy frameworks, such as government incentives and repatriation programs, in facilitating or hindering backward emigration. The implications of backward emigration as observed on economic development are analyzed and they include: the return of skilled and educated individuals that can contribute to human capital formation and knowledge transfer in the home country, the potential brain gain and brain drain dynamics associated with reverse migration, considering the impact on the labor market, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Challenges and opportunities arising from backward emigration are examined. The potential strain on social welfare systems is studied, along with the potential for remittances and diaspora networks to foster economic growth and development. Ultimately, it's potential impact on the host country, including the loss of skilled labor and the tendency for a reduced diversity and cultural exchange.

***Key words**: Backward Emigration, Reverse Migration, Economic Development, Push and Pull Factors, Policy Frameworks*

Introduction

Emigration, or the act of leaving one's country of residence to settle in another, is a complex phenomenon that has significant implications for both the individuals involved and the countries of origin and destination. While emigration is often associated with young individuals seeking better economic opportunities abroad, there is also a considerable number of older individuals who choose to return to their home countries during their retirement years. This phenomenon, known as emigration back home at old age, can have various implications for economic development, both positive and negative.

Emigration can have significant implications for community development, particularly in the communities left behind. One of the primary concerns is the loss of human capital, as skilled and educated individuals emigrate, taking their knowledge, skills, and experience with them (Bhagwati & Hamada, 1974). This can lead to a brain drain, where the community is deprived of the talent and expertise needed to drive development and innovation.

The implications of emigration on community development can also be felt in the social and cultural fabric of the community and can have significant implications for community development, particularly in the communities left behind. One of the primary concerns is the loss of human capital, as skilled and educated individuals emigrate, taking their knowledge, skills, and experience with them (Bhagwati & Hamada, 1974). This can lead to a brain drain, where the community is deprived of the talent and expertise needed to drive development and innovation.

The implications of emigration on community development can also be felt in the social and cultural fabric of the community. Emigration can lead to the dispersal of families and social networks, resulting in a sense of disconnection and fragmentation (Castles & Miller, 2009). Additionally, the loss of community members can also lead to a loss of cultural heritage and traditional practices, as well as a decline in community cohesion and social capital (Putnam, 2000).

To mitigate these effects, communities can implement strategies to stay connected with emigrants, such as diaspora engagement programs (Gamlen, 2014). These programs can help to maintain social and economic ties between emigrants and their communities of origin, promoting knowledge transfer, investment, and innovation. Additionally, communities can invest in initiatives that promote community development and retention of talent, such as education and training programs, to reduce the likelihood of emigration and mitigate its negative impacts.

This paper acknowledges that individuals who have previously emigrated may face various obstacles and uncertainties when contemplating a return to their home country. The problem statement seeks to explore and address these challenges, providing insights and guidance for those considering or planning to emigrate back home and accordingly, examine the reasons and motivations behind individuals choosing to emigrate back to their home country, further analyze the social, economic, and cultural implications of backward emigration on both the home country and the individuals involved and finally investigate the impact of backward emigration on the labor market, including potential skill gaps or brain drain effects.

While the researchers intend further to explore the challenges and opportunities faced by individuals reintegrating into their home country's society and workforce, they would ultimately identify policy recommendations and strategies to facilitate successful backward emigration and maximize its positive outcomes.,

IMPLICATIONS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Emigration, the movement of people from one country or region to another, has significant implications for community development. On one hand, emigration can lead to brain drain, loss of skilled workers, and reduced economic activity in the community of origin. This can result in decreased tax revenues, reduced consumer spending, and diminished social capital. Moreover, emigration can disrupt social networks, family structures, and community cohesion, leading to feelings of isolation and disconnection among those left behind.

On the other hand, emigration can also have positive effects on community development. Remittances sent back by emigrants can provide a vital source of income for families and communities, supporting economic growth and development. Emigrants can also serve as bridges between their countries of origin and destination, facilitating cultural exchange, trade, and investment. Furthermore, emigration can relieve pressure on local labor markets, reduce unemployment, and increase access to education and healthcare. Effective diaspora engagement strategies can harness the skills, resources, and networks of emigrants to support community development initiatives.

The implications of emigration for community development are complex and context-dependent. Factors such as the scale and composition of emigration, the destination countries, and the policies governing migration all influence the outcomes. Communities with high levels of emigration may experience significant changes in demographic composition, cultural identity, and social norms. Effective community development strategies must consider these dynamics and seek to mitigate the negative impacts while leveraging the positive effects of emigration. This includes investing in education, healthcare, and infrastructure, promoting entrepreneurship and innovation, and fostering social cohesion and community engagement.

Accordingly, the various ways emigration could be of benefit or cause of concern to community development include the following as ascertained by the researchers:

1. **Remittances:** One of the potential positive impacts of emigration back home at old age is the inflow of remittances. Older individuals who have spent a significant portion of their lives working abroad often have accumulated savings and pensions that they bring back to their home countries. These remittances can contribute to the local economy by boosting consumption, investment, and overall economic growth

   From figure 1, below sourced from world bank bulletin, it can be clearly seen that

remittances inflow into Nigeria from around the globe by emigrants to GDP is extremely humongous and can be seen to have influence on local consumption by benefitiaries and ultimately would contribute to the local economy.

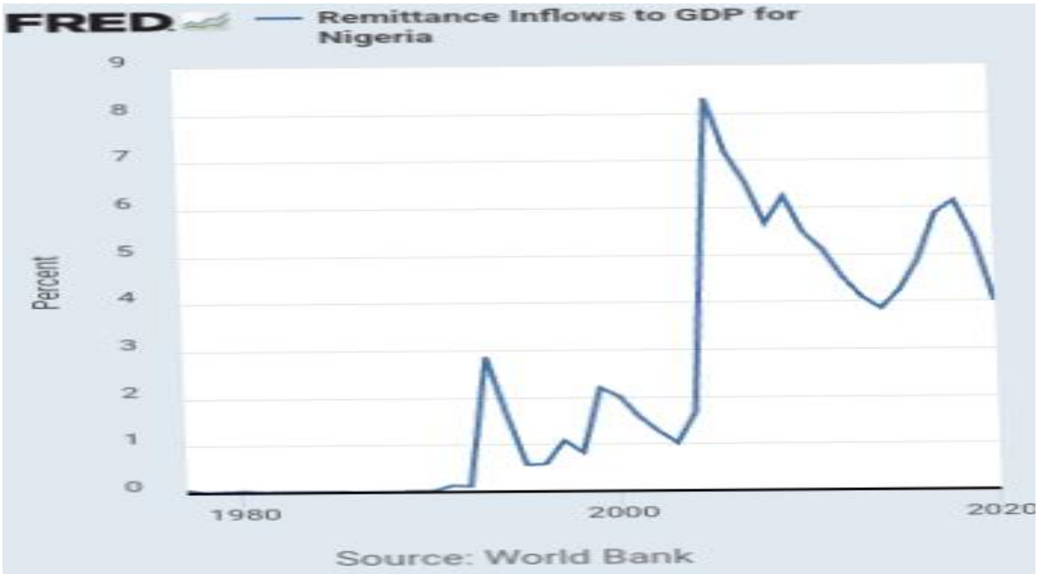


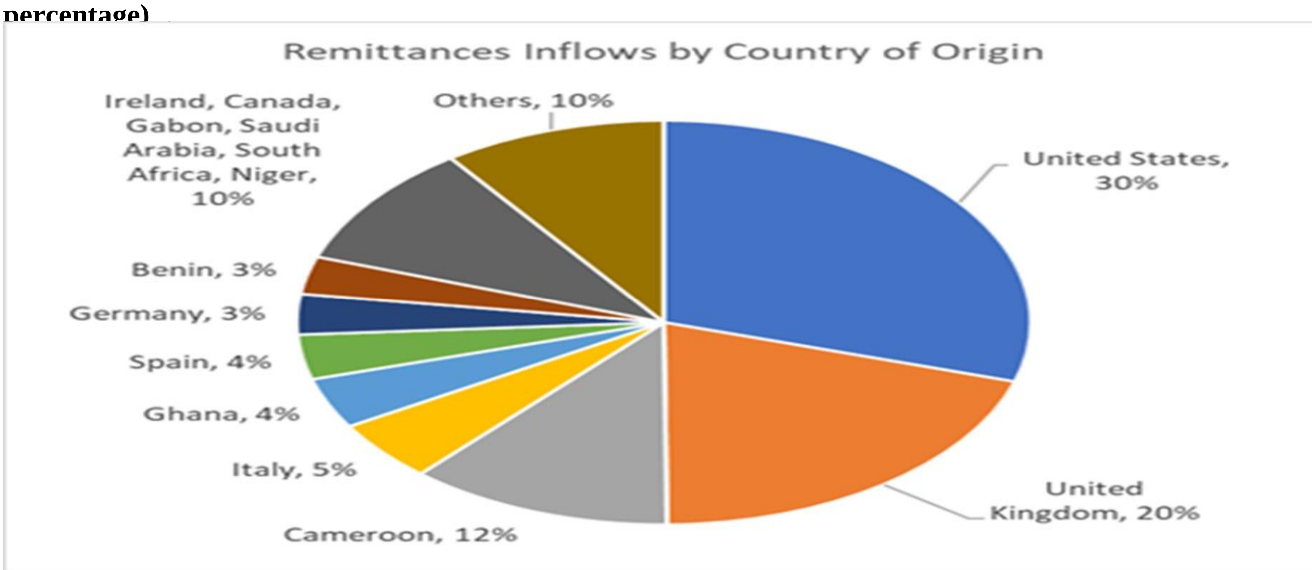
Fig. 1 showing volume of remittances from emigrants to Nigeria

2. **Skills and Knowledge Transfer**: Older individuals who return to their home countries after spending years abroad often bring with them valuable skills, knowledge, and experiences gained from their time overseas. This transfer of skills and knowledge can contribute to the development of local industries, entrepreneurship, and innovation, thereby enhancing economic growth and productivity.

3. **Social and Cultural Capital**: Emigrants who return home at old age often have established networks and connections in their home countries as well as in the countries they emigrated to. These social and cultural ties can facilitate trade, investment, and collaboration between the home country and the host country, promoting economic development through increased international cooperation.

Figure 2, indicating remittance inflow into Nigeria showing country of origin is equally huge and can as a matter of fact would improve social and cultural capital in the local economy. The highest country of origin of inflow into Nigeria is the USA contributing up to 30 percent of the total inflow.

percentage)



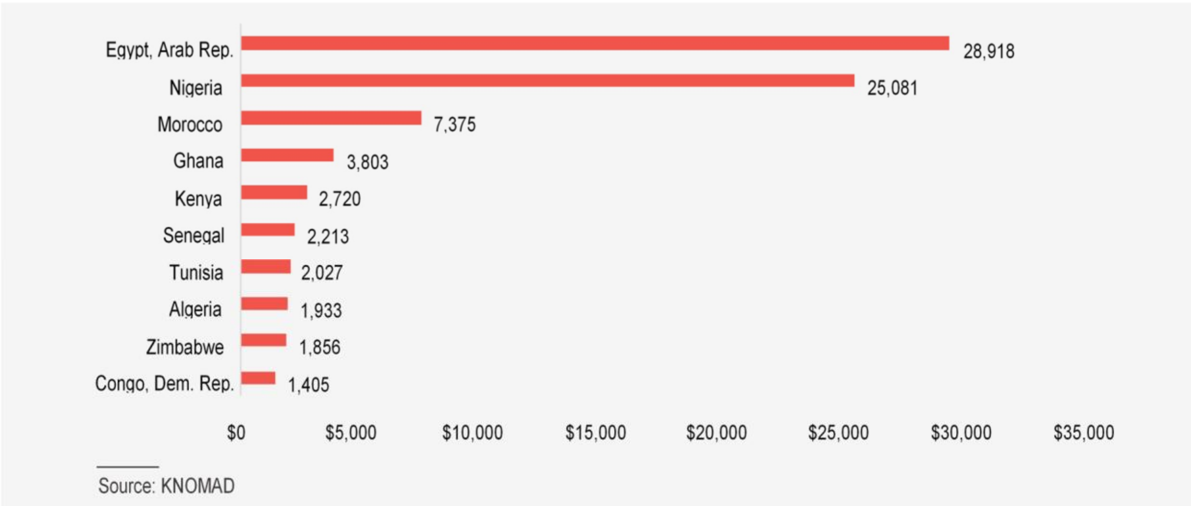
Source: World Bank (2023)

Figure 2: Remittances Inflows by Nigerians in Diaspora from their Host Country (in AJPAS 2024)

4. **Aging Population Challenges**: On the other hand, emigration back home at old age can also pose challenges for economic development. The return of older individuals may strain local healthcare systems and social welfare programs, as they may require additional support and services. This can put pressure on public finances and limit resources available for other development initiatives.

5. **Brain Drain Reversal**: Emigration back home at old age can also be seen as a reversal of the brain drain phenomenon. When highly skilled and educated individuals return to their home countries, it can help mitigate the negative effects of brain drain by replenishing the talent pool and fostering human capital development. This, in turn, can contribute to long-term economic growth and development.

Figure 3: Africa's Top Ten (10) Recipients of Diaspora Remittances in US $Billion.



Source: Knomad (2023).

Emigration back home at old age can have multifaceted implications for economic development. While the inflow of remittances, skills transfer, and social capital can positively impact the local economy, challenges related to an aging population and the strain on public resources should also be considered. Governments and policymakers need to carefully assess and manage the implications of emigration back home at old age to maximize the potential benefits and minimize the potential drawbacks for economic development.

From figure 3, it can be seen that Nigeria is the second largest remittance recipient country in Africa according to Knomad (2023) running into US $Billions. This to a large extent confirm the impact of emigrants on the economic development of home countries.

The objective of the paper is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the implications of backward emigration, shedding light on its effects and offering insights for policymakers, researchers, and individuals considering or experiencing this phenomenon.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines the implications of emigration on national development. Emigration, the act of leaving one's country of origin to settle in another, has significant consequences for both the emigrant's home country and the receiving country. This review explores the economic, social, and political implications of emigration on national development, drawing upon a range of scholarly articles, reports, and books. The findings highlight the multifaceted nature of emigration's impact on various aspects of national development and provide insights into potential strategies for managing and harnessing the benefits of emigration. The concept of "backward emigration" refers to individuals or groups returning to their home country after living abroad. Several theories can be used to discuss this idea, including:

According to Jagdish Bhagwati and Koichi Hamada's (1974) in their seminal work, they highlighted the potential negative consequences of backward emigration on community development. Specifically, they argued that the influx of remittances from emigrants can lead to Dutch Disease-like effects, where the appreciation of the local currency due to remittance inflows hampers the competitiveness of the domestic export sector. This, in turn, can stunt economic growth and community development. Furthermore, Bhagwati and Hamada noted that backward emigration can also result in brain drain, as highly skilled individuals leave their home communities, leading to a loss of human capital and reduced economic activity.

The issues raised by Bhagwati and Hamada (1974) remain pertinent today, particularly in the context of India's large diaspora community. Research has shown that while remittances can contribute significantly to household income and poverty reduction, they can also create dependency and reduce incentives for local economic activity. Additionally, the brain drain resulting from emigration can exacerbate regional disparities in economic development, as skilled workers are drawn to urban centers or foreign destinations. To mitigate these effects, policymakers must consider strategies to harness the benefits of remittances while promoting local economic development and human capital formation. This study aims to contribute to this debate by examining the dynamic linkages between remittances, export diversification, FDI, renewable energy consumption, economic growth, and CO_2 emissions in India.

The fallout of backward emigration on community cohesion and social capital is a pressing concern. Castles and Miller (2019) argue that emigration can lead to the erosion of social networks, community ties, and social trust. As skilled and educated individuals leave, communities lose their most active and engaged members, resulting in a decline in volunteerism, civic participation, and community organizations. This "brain drain" not only reduces human capital but also undermines the social fabric of communities, making them more vulnerable to social and economic shocks.

Furthermore, Castles and Miller (2019) contend that backward emigration can exacerbate social disarticulation, leading to decreased social cohesion and increased social isolation. The departure of younger, more educated individuals can disrupt traditional social structures, leaving behind an aging population with limited social support. This can result in decreased social capital, as community members become disconnected from one another and from local institutions. The loss of social capital, in turn, can hinder community development initiatives, reduce collective efficacy, and compromise community resilience.

The shortcomings of backward emigration policies, as identified by Castles and Miller (2019), are particularly evident in their failure to address the social and community-level consequences of emigration. Policies often focus solely on economic development, neglecting the social and cultural impacts of emigration. To mitigate these effects, policymakers must prioritize community-based initiatives that promote social cohesion, social capital, and human capital development. This includes investing in education, healthcare, and community infrastructure, as well as implementing programs that foster social connections and community engagement. By addressing the social fallout of backward emigration, policymakers can promote more sustainable and equitable community development. The theories that can be employed in this discussion include the following:

1**. Push-Pull Theory**: This theory suggests that individuals are pushed out of their home country due to factors such as economic instability, political unrest, or lack of opportunities. Conversely, they may be pulled back to their home country due to factors like cultural ties, family obligations, or improved conditions, sickness, old age, failures in ones pursuits.

2. **Brain Drain Theory**: This theory focuses on the loss of skilled individuals from their home country. It suggests that backward emigration can have negative consequences for the home country's development, as the return of skilled individuals can contribute to economic growth and knowledge transfer.

3**. Transnationalism Theory**: This theory emphasizes the interconnectedness between home and host countries. It suggests that backward emigration can be seen as part of a transnational lifestyle, where individuals maintain strong ties to both their home and host countries, engaging in activities that benefit both.

4. **Cultural Identity Theory**: This theory explores how individuals' sense of identity is shaped by their experiences abroad. It suggests that backward emigration can be driven by a desire to reconnect with one's cultural roots and preserve a sense of identity.

5. **Network Theory**: This theory focuses on the importance of social networks in migration decisions. It suggests that backward emigration can be influenced by the presence of supportive networks in the home country, such as family, friends, or professional connections.

These theories provide different perspectives to understand the motivations, consequences, and dynamics of backward emigration. By considering these theories, one can analyze the factors that influence individuals' decisions to return to their home country and the potential impacts on both the individuals and the home country.

RESEARCH DESIGN

To undertake this research study, a cross-sectional approach was employed to Examine the phenomenon at a single point in time while to collect the required data, the quantitative methods of data collection were employed which consist of the following:

Secondary data:

This research study data were essentially collected from the office of National Population census with Migration statistics from government agencies (e.g., Ministry of Labor, Immigration Department) and International organizations' reports (e.g., IOM, UNHCR)

Survey research:

Questionnaires administered to emigrants, returnees, and non-migrants using a Sampling frame, which included a stratified random sampling or snowball sampling size of 300 respondents were employed for this research study.

Administrative data:

Remittance data from financial institutions and Employment records from government agencies were also collated and analyzed.

Qualitative Data:

1. In-depth interviews:

Interviews were conducted employing seasoned persons who at one time of the other had travelled out of their home countries to other places were engaged, Emigrants, returnees, and non-migrants were interview to sort for their views. Key informants (e.g., community leaders, migration experts) which comprised of not less than 30 interviews.

2. Focus group discussions:

The researcher made use of six (6) focus groups with 8 participants each to explore themes and perceptions

Data Collection Tools:

For this study, the researcher employed the following tools for data collection:

1. Questionnaires
2. Interview guides
3. Focus group discussion protocols
4. Secondary data extraction forms

Data Analysis Methods:

Quantitative Data:

1. Descriptive statistics
2. Inferential statistics (e.g., regression analysis)
3. Data visualization (e.g., charts, graphs)

(Data Sources)

1. Government agencies:
   - National Bureau of Statistical Office
   - Ministry of Labor
   - Immigration Department
2. International organizations:
   - International Organization for Migration (IOM)
   - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
   - World Bank
3. Financial institutions:

- Banks
- Money transfer services

4. Community organizations:
   - Migrant associations
   - Community centers

Research Design:

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Backward emigration refers to the movement of people from a developing country or region to a more developed country or region, resulting in a loss of skilled and educated individuals, reduced economic activity, and decreased social capital in the country or region of origin

Therefore, from this study, the following research issues were discovered with respect to emigration matters as they affect community development making it imperative to establish a well-coordinated diaspora engagement program that can be utilized to mitigate the impact of backward emigration by:

1. Encouraging diaspora members to invest in their countries of origin through entrepreneurship, remittances, and philanthropy, thereby promoting economic development and job creation, if pursued vigorously, the emigrant would have a sense of identity with their communities for the simple reasons that their investments are in their communities.

2. Through Fostering knowledge transfer and skills exchange between diaspora professionals and their counterparts in the country of origin, helping to bridge the human capital gap and promote sustainable development.

Key Strategies for Diaspora Engagement Programs:

1. Digital platforms for networking and collaboration when created, would go a long way to ensuring that people outside would constantly have a meeting point where information’s and developments at home could be shared

2. Mentorship programs for entrepreneurs and students would easily be shared and passed around to people at the home front because, every person that has knowledge must find a way to share them so as to shore up people at home with the view to ultimately reduce dependence.

3. Investment incentives for diaspora-led businesses would always be encouraged by the home government as a means to encourage more diaspora fund transfers

4. Skill-sharing initiatives for professionals’ initiatives are fall out from a well-coordinated and supported diaspora program by home government to encourage skills sharing and possible transfers.

5. Philanthropic initiatives for community development activities are supported by diaspora fund as people living outside home often identify with their home front and most often return sizeable fund for community development initiatives.

Benefits:

From the findings obtained in this research study, there are several benefits accruing from proper coordinated diaspora relationship and they include the following

1. Brain gain through knowledge transfer

2. Economic growth through investment and entrepreneurship

3. Social capital development through community engagement

4. Reduced brain drain and skills loss

5. Enhanced global connectivity and cooperation

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthening education and skills development: To mitigate the negative impact of backward emigration, it is crucial to invest in education and skills development programs. This will help in building a skilled workforce and reducing the brain drain effect.

2. Creating favorable economic conditions: Governments should focus on creating a conducive economic environment that encourages investment and job creation. This can be achieved through policies that promote entrepreneurship, attract foreign direct investment, and support local industries.

3. Implementing targeted immigration policies: Governments can consider implementing immigration policies that encourage the return of skilled individuals who have emigrated. This can be done through incentives such as tax breaks, job opportunities, and support for reintegration.

4. Strengthening diaspora engagement: Governments should actively engage with their diaspora communities to harness their skills, knowledge, and resources. This can be done through initiatives such as diaspora networks, mentorship programs, and investment opportunities in the home country.

5. Enhancing research and innovation: Investing in research and innovation can help countries develop competitive industries and attract skilled individuals. This can be achieved through partnerships between universities, research institutions, and industries, as well as providing funding and support for research projects.

It is important to note that these recommendations should be tailored to the specific context and challenges faced by each country. Further research and analysis may be required to develop a comprehensive strategy for addressing the implications of backward emigration on national development.

Backward emigration, also known as return migration or reverse migration, refers to the movement of individuals back to their home countries after living abroad for a certain period. The implications of backward emigration on national development can be both positive and negative. Here is an overview of some key implications:

1. Brain gain: Backward emigration can lead to a "brain gain" for the home country. Return migrants often bring back valuable skills, knowledge, and experiences acquired abroad. This can contribute to the development of various sectors such as education, healthcare, technology, and entrepreneurship.

2. Economic impact: Return migrants may invest their savings, start businesses, or engage in productive activities in their home countries. This can stimulate economic growth, create job opportunities, and attract foreign investment. Additionally, remittances sent by return migrants to their families can boost local economies and improve living standards.

3. Cultural exchange and innovation: Backward emigration facilitates the exchange of ideas, cultures, and practices between the home country and the host country. Return migrants can introduce new perspectives, technologies, and innovations, which can enhance local industries, arts, and traditions.

4. Social and political implications: Backward emigration can influence social and political dynamics in the home country. Return migrants may bring back democratic values, human rights awareness, and advocacy for social change. They can contribute to the development of civil society organizations, participate in political processes, and promote inclusive governance.

5. Brain drain risks: While backward emigration can bring benefits, it also poses risks of brain drain. If a significant number of highly skilled individuals leave the home country, it can lead to a loss of expertise and talent. This can hinder national development and exacerbate existing inequalities.

6. Reintegration challenges: Return migrants may face challenges in reintegrating into their home countries. They may encounter difficulties in finding suitable employment, adapting to cultural changes, or accessing social services. Adequate support systems and policies are necessary to ensure a smooth transition and maximize the potential benefits of backward emigration.

Overall, the implications of backward emigration on national development depend on various factors such as the scale of return migration, the skills and resources brought back, and the policies and support systems in place. It is crucial for governments and societies to recognize and harness the potential benefits while addressing the associated challenges to ensure sustainable development.

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