Social Networks and Business Performance of Igbo Migrant Traders in Ibadan, South-West Nigeria

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Abstract
This study focused on social networks and business performance among Igbo businessmen in Ibadan, South-west Nigeria through the exploratory research design. Social exchange, social network and social capital theories were employed as theoretical framework. Twenty-six in-depth interviews, key informant interviews and case studies were conducted with purposively selected respondents in four business locations in Ibadan. The results showed that among the factors that facilitated migration of the Igbo to Ibadan were their interest to learn a trade, their inability to attain higher education, and having a relative in Ibadan. The types of social networks available showed that social network was not location bound, as all the respondents belonged to town progressive unions and mutual benefits/cooperative associations. Social networks played vital roles in business performance, including social support, access to loan, business growth and expansion. The main challenges to maintaining adequate social network in business were distrust, envy, unbridled competition, dishonesty and inability to keep terms of agreement. The study concludes that social networks have positively influenced the business performance of migrant Igbo in Ibadan. There is need for the Igbo to strengthen their social networks through honesty, forthrightness, and transparency in all their dealings.

Keywords: Igbo-businessmen, social networks, ethnic associations, social capital, Ibadan

Introduction
Social network refers to how individuals or groups are linked together by one or more social relationships. It is basically a social structure made up of a set of social actors and set of dyadic ties between actors (Scott and Marshall, 2005). This may be in form of kinship, friendships, town union associations, community development associations, and other informal associations formed to bolster the common interest of a particular group of people. Over the last twenty years, there has been growing interest in the role of social networks in facilitating social relations (Faist and Ozveren, 2004). This process of networks depends on relationships across space, linking professionals and non-professionals (Portes, 1998). These relationships often influence decisions,
accommodation, jobs, and emotional support and so on. Social network matters significantly in business performance in transitional societies like Nigeria.

Among the Igbo of Southeast Nigeria strong bonds of kinship and brotherhood as evidenced in the maintenance of cultural groups, town unions and Community Development Associations (CDAs) in distant lands where *Ndigho* reside, is a common feature of Igbos in the diaspora. Perhaps this may be a way of fostering the *Umunna, Igwebuike* and *Nwanne di na mba* (unity and strength in togetherness) philosophy. With colonialism, the consolidation of a unitary Igbo identity was accompanied by a widening Igbo Diaspora, creating commercial contacts with a greater range of Nigerian ethnic groups. In the centuries before colonialism, this framework of trust and protection across community lines supported the development of a remarkable market infrastructure, including roads, currencies, credit systems and networks of local and regional markets. Credit networks, based on the ‘trust system’, operated across clan and even ethnic boundaries, linking Igbo communities with the trading peoples of the coast (Afigbo, 1981; Dike and Ekejiuba, 1990). These historical processes contributed to the development of indigenous economic networks that were not hampered by the limitations of primordial identities.

Although stateless and dispersed in pre-colonial times, Igbo communities ‘were embedded in a variety of networks establishing trans-local, regional, and even more far-reaching linkages without any overarching governing institutions’ (Harniet-Sievers, 2006: 43). These relationships, referred to by Silverstein (1983) as ‘Pan-Igbo’ institutions, bound Igbo society together in a broad cultural and economic sphere despite the absence of a common ethnic identity. Propelled by economic and population pressures, the Igbo rapidly took advantage of new economic opportunities available across Nigeria, moving to different locations in the country. Igbo groups migrated widely within the Igbo territory, but the bulk of migration was outside the Igbo hinterland to Western and Northern Nigeria, as well as to neighbouring countries such as Ghana, Cameroun and Fernando Po, giving rise to a new grouping known as ‘the Igbo Diaspora’ (Onwubu, 1975). As Silverstein (1983) observed in her study, the system of apprenticeship also followed a diasporic pattern, in which masters settled apprentices in other parts of Nigeria so as to widen their networks and avoid problems of oversupply in a given area. Against this background, this study intends to examine the relationship between social networks and business performance, particularly among Igbo businessmen in Ibadan.

**The Problem**

Historically, some scholars are of the view that Igbos are descendants of Jews who had migrated to western Africa over many centuries, possibly following the path of the Arab conquests (Okafor, 1982; Njoku, 1990). Igbo as a group is one of the most migratory ethnic groups in Nigeria dating back to pre-colonial period when they were engaging in long distance trading and economic activities with their neighbours (Afigbo, 1981). The main article of trade
during this period included palm oil, palm kernel, salt, slaves, etc. In doing so, the Igbo established economic and social ties with their neighbours. But more than that, in the course of their trading activities they also tried to establish contacts with fellow Igbo residents in the areas in order to facilitate their businesses. The latter became middlemen whom the migrant Igbo themselves used to facilitate their businesses, social and economic interactions with their neighbours (Uchendu, 1965; Afigbo, 1981; Alutu, 1986).

According to Achebe (2012), the rise of the Igbo in Nigerian affair was due to self confidence engendered by open society and their belief that one man is a good as another, and that no condition is permanent. He identified the main factor that spurred the Igbo to migrate to other parts of Nigeria in search successes in education, economic and even political success as land scarcity, so much so that by 1921 there were about 3,000 Igbo in Northern Nigeria; by 1931, the number had risen to nearly 12,000 and by 1952 to over 133,000 (Achebe, 1983). It is pertinent to note that in Nigeria when migration takes place outside ethnic boundaries people feel more comfortable relating with members of their ethnic group for social support, protection and advancement of their economic interest (Smock, 1971; Imoagene, 1993). For the Igbo, this is a precursor for the establishment of tribal mutual aid societies and town unions in the host communities (Achebe, 1983; 2012). In post colonial Nigeria, many Igbo have taken up government positions, however, quite a large number them have migrated outside their ethnic domain and engage in private businesses. It has been argued that the Igbo still constitute the bulk of the Nigerian informal economy (Odi, 2008).

Several studies on Igbo migration to other parts of Nigeria have been approached the phenomenon largely from historical (Afigbo, 1981; Okafor, 1982; Achebe, 1983; Alutu, 1986; Imoagene, 1993; Uwalaka, 2003; Achebe, 2012) and demographic perspectives (Dike, 1982; Okoronkwo, 2012) by focusing on the push and pull factors affecting their decision to migrate and the patterns, determinants and consequences of their migration. Industrial sociologists have not shown sufficient interest to empirically investigate what roles social networks have played in the business performance of the migrant Igbo in Nigeria. Against this background, the following questions guided this study: what factors facilitated the migration of the Igbo to Ibadan? What types of social networks are available to the migrant Igbo businessmen in the study area? What roles have social networks played in their business performance? What are the challenges they face in maintaining social networks for improved business performance in Ibadan?

**Brief Literature**

Migration has become one of the major issues of concern in the world in the last few years. The accelerated pace and impact of international migration on countries of origin, transit and destination is a phenomenon
that will likely continue. In his report on the strengthening of the United Nations an agenda for further change, the last but one UN Secretary-General, Kofi Anan identified migration as a priority issue for the international community (Nwajiuba, 2005). The phenomenon is an inevitable part of human existence, with a long history. However, its pattern and nature has changed considerably over time, from the search for space, especially in the middle ages, to that of congestion in large cities (rural-urban migration) in the modern age (Addo, 1972; Amin, 1974; Udo, 1975; Brown, 1980).

For Ibiloye (2011), migration is an integral part of the history of mankind. Prior to the evolution of nation-state system, trans-continental migrations were the order of the day in all parts of the globe. Migration involves a change of residence across a defined geopolitical boundary. A mere change in residence may not always constitute a migratory movement especially if there is no intention to make the change a permanent one (NPC/ICF Macro, 2009).

Research suggests that the Igbo of South Eastern Nigeria are the most migratory among the 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria (NISER, 1997). This according to Achebe (1983, 2012) is largely due to the fact that Igbo culture being receptive to change, gave the Igbo man an unquestioned advantage over his compatriots in searching credentials for advancement in Nigeria’s colonial society. Silverstein (1983: 130) observed that the rapid expansion of the Igbo diaspora was a product, not only of population pressure at home, but of the prior development of social ‘blueprints for migration’ in pre-colonial Igbo social organization. The organization of craftsmen and traders into itinerant groups with specialized territories created a framework for migration that did not rupture linkages between migrants and their home areas. Institutions requiring the annual return of migrants to their hometown for festivals had already begun to emerge in pre-colonial times (Dike and Ekejiuba, 1990). As Silverstein (1983) shows in her study of Nnewi entrepreneurs, systems of apprenticeship also followed a diasporic pattern, in which masters settled apprentices in other parts of Nigeria so as to widen their networks and avoid problems of oversupply in a given area.

These developments took advantage of opportunities provided by new colonial arrangements, but depended essentially on indigenous organizational efforts (Alutu, 1986). While Igbo informal enterprise was tolerated by the colonial government, it was given little encouragement, and no real support. After Nigerian Independence in 1960, Igbo informal traders and producers became even more marginalized in the face of state efforts to promote the development of the formal economy. The Kilby Report on small-scale industry in Eastern Nigeria, based on fieldwork conducted in 1961, identified an active small-scale manufacturing sector that had essentially been left to ‘shift for itself’ (Kilby, 1963). The Nigerian Civil War, from 1967 to 1970, intensified the role of self-reliance in the development of Igbo enterprise. Forrest (1994) and Brautigam (1997) suggest that the Civil War encouraged a trend toward accelerated local industrialization in the context of the three-year siege of the
Igbo State of ‘Biafra’, and the subsequent marginalization of the Igbo after their defeat. Even after the war, local self-help institutions, and a capacity for economic and social accommodation with other ethnic groups, played a central role in the recovery of Igbo enterprise, at home and in the Diaspora.

According to Bastia (2007), social networks play an important role in the development of niches, and participation in migrants’ social networks is clearly gendered. Social networks are also influenced by the social relations migrants develop among themselves prior to migrating, and these were also found to be gendered. Social networks built with people outside of their primary community of reference are shown to be important for upward social mobility, with men’s higher access to friendship based social networks likely to have allowed them diversify their job opportunities and increase their chances for upward social mobility by undertaking further training.

Coniglio’s (2003) study indicated models of chain migration and ethnic cluster formation by considering migration as ethnic-community wide phenomena where migrants strategically provide support to newcomers. Coniglio (2003) proposed a model that explains both established migrants support to newcomers and the formation of ethnic communities on the basis of the existence of “ethnic consumption externalities”. In his model, established migrants play a key role in determining the migratory experience of the ethnic community through the strategic use of support to reduce mobility cost of subsequent migrants. The model is able to produce a rich set of scenarios, which he argues are in line with the heterogeneous migration dynamics showed by different ethnic groups.

Nafzinger (1968) argued that ethnic networks were highly exclusive, highlighting ‘barriers to inter-tribal (sic) economic relations’ such as language and credit. He maintained that in Nigerian informal business systems, people could only trust those from a similar socio-ethnic background, and suggested that the Civil War was likely to further undermine the prospects for economic cooperation between ethnic groups.

Harniet-Sievers (2006) observed that long history of Igbo migration and ethnic identity formation before 1966 always included productive interaction with other groups. It continued after 1970 in the everyday life of the re-established Igbo Diaspora. By 1952, the Igbo constituted almost half of the total non-indigenes of the Lagos Metropolis (Anber, 1967). The need to migrate has been persistently pointed out, had to do with the struggle to survive. This struggle to survive increased in a rapidly monetizing capitalist economy with emphasis on agriculture, for which they did not have enough land. Consequently, they had to migrate to urban areas as traders, shop keepers, clerks, skilled workers, and domestic employees. They rose into white-collar positions in a short time, soon to cultivate an intellectual elite consisting of educators, journalists, professionals, and businessmen. They have been able to achieve these by generating and maintaining a communal civic spirit in
Diaspora. The communal spirit is the life-blood of the entrepreneurial ability of the Igbos, and manifests itself in the apprenticeship network founded to achieve economic progress.

In pursuing economic advancement, in order to achieve political supremacy, the Igbo in Diaspora formed mutual benefit association, credit societies, and “improvement” organisation which had ties with rural homeland. An Igbo Union was formed in Lagos in 1934 and later expanded to become the Igbo Federal Union (subsequently the Igbo State Union) in 1944, to include all local Igbo associations throughout the country. Frequency, the “improvement” or “progressive” unions, as they were called, functioned as organs of local self-government, providing ad hoc courts to settle disputes, supplying members with welfare benefits or employment opportunities, levying taxes, and generating a communal civic spirit (Alutu, 1986).

The seriousness of the desire for migration to these advanced countries by the Igbo is often demonstrated by family willingness to sell land to raise funds to sponsor the migrant’s journey. In the olden days, the community used to rally round to contribute substantial amount of money to send an individual abroad with the hope that such individual would come back to assist in the development of that community. As stated elsewhere, the perception of an economically buoyant Europe and North America fuels the desire to migrate to those countries (Uchendu, 1965; Njoku, 1990). In addition, social factors, including similarity in education and language also impact on a migrant’s choice of destination. Interestingly, when the migrants do not achieve their ambition in one area, they tend to move to other areas of interest legally or illegally.

The migration of the Igbo can be explained historically, culturally and geographically. Chukwuezi (2001) linked the historical impact of the Nigerian civil war with spurring the outward-directedness of the Igbo into the private sector, specializing in trading that takes them to all parts of Nigeria. Linked to this is the culture of kinship which Smith (1999) identified above all other factors as the thread that links particular rural and urban communities in Nigeria and connects individuals and communities with access to resources and opportunities and the wider economy. Part of this kinship network among the Igbo operates through kin base business apprenticeship thus linking urban business success to labour recruitment from the rural home base and delivering manpower for Igbo society (Chukwuezi, 2001).

The legendary success of Igbo trading and manufacturing networks since the Civil War has been a product of cooperative relations across ethnic cleavages rather than of ethnic exclusivity. As one Igbo informant observed, “historically we migrated and saw that it was good to have foreigners” (Forrest, 1994). While communal solidarity has played a central role in Igbo economic advancement, symbiotic forms of institutionalized collaboration with other ethnic groups have been just as critical for widening markets and gaining access to new sources of labour, technology and skills.
Theoretical Perspectives

Three theories guided this study. These are social exchange, social network and social capital theories. Social exchange theory is based on the principle that one enters into relationships in which we can maximize the benefits and minimize costs. Social exchange theory is based on a central premise that the exchange of social and material resources is a fundamental form of human interaction. The theory proposes that social behaviour is the result of an exchange process. The purpose of this exchange is to maximize benefits and minimize costs.

According to this theory, people weigh the potential benefits and risks of social relationships. The benefits are things that the individual gets from the relationship such as fun, friendship, companionship and social support (social network). The basic unit of analysis to exchange theorists is on ‘social relationship’ (Blau, 1964). For this theory, personal exchange transactions between people give rise to differentiation of status and power, which leads to legitimation and organisation, which sow the seeds of opposition and change. People are attracted to each other for a variety of reasons that induce them to establish social associations. Once initial ties are forged, the rewards they provide to each other serve to maintain and enhance the bonds. The opposite situation is also possible: with insufficient rewards, an association will weaken or break. Rewards that are exchanged can be either intrinsic (for instance, love, affection and respect) or extrinsic (for instance, money, physical and labour). The parties cannot always reward each other equally; when there is inequality in the exchange, a difference of power will emerge within an association. For Blau (1964), the mechanism that mediates among the complex social structures is the norms and values (the value consensus) that exist within society: commonly agreed upon values and norms serve as media of social life and as mediating links for social transactions. They make indirect social integration and differentiation in complex social structures as well as the development of social organisation and reorganisation in them.

Social network theory is associated with the works of Freeman (1979), Wasserman and Faust (1994) and Scott (2000). This theory is used to describe a social structure determined by interactions. The ties (sometimes called edges, links, or connections) in the structure are called "nodes". The nodes through which any given social unit connects represent the convergence of the various social contacts of that unit. Many kinds of relationships may form the "network" between such nodes, but interpersonal "bridges" are a defining characteristic of social networks. Social network theory views social relationships in terms of nodes and ties. Nodes are the individual actors within the networks, and ties are the relationships between the actors. There can be many kinds of ties between the nodes. In its most simple form, a social network is a map of all of the relevant ties between the nodes being studied.
The network can also be used to determine the social capital of individual actors.

The major concern of Network Theory is the pattern of ties linking the members (individual and collective) of society (Burt, 1992). In view of network theorist, normative approaches focus on culture and the socialization process through which norms and values are internalized in actors. In the normative orientation what holds people together are sets of shared ideas. Social networks have also been used to examine how people interact with each other, characterizing the many informal connections that link people together, as well as associations and connections between individual employees at different companies. These networks provide ways for companies to gather information, deter competition, and even collude in setting prices or policies.

Social Capital theory is premised on the works of Coleman (1988), Portes (1998) and Fine (2001). In a nutshell Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. It assumes that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the sentiment that holds them together. The central premise of social capital is that social networks have value. In this sense Social capital is about the collective value of all ‘social networks’ (who people know) and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other (norms of reciprocity). In a narrow view of social capital, it is viewed as a set of horizontal associations between people, consisting of social networks and associated norms that have an effect on community performance and well-being. Social networks can increase performance by reducing the costs of doing business. Social capital facilitates coordination and cooperation between and among the people. Viewed from a broader perspective, social capital accounts for both the positive and negative aspects by including vertical as well as horizontal associations between people, and includes behaviour within and among associations, which may be trade or ethnic. This view recognizes that horizontal ties are needed to give member of an association a sense of identity and common purpose, but also stresses that without narrowing the ties that transcend various social divides (e.g. religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status), horizontal ties can become a basis for the pursuit of narrow interests, and can actively preclude access to information and material resources that would otherwise be of great assistance to members of the association (e.g. access to credit).

Methods

The study was conducted in Ibadan, South Western Nigeria. As a former capital of the Western Region, Ibadan, like many cities that has been swelling with recent in-migration. The core population of Ibadan is Yoruba, but as a cosmopolitan city its population has always been ethnically mixed. Although industry is less developed than in Lagos and Kano, it services the city with many of its needs and there are large numbers of traders and artisans. Ibadan
also houses Nigeria’s premier university (University of Ibadan), which lends its economy a significant intellectual, professional and artistic profile. By virtue of the university presence, there are notable ethnic and class variations. In a nutshell, Ibadan encapsulates so many characteristics of modern Nigeria (Agbaje, 2002).

The study population comprised migrant Igbo businessmen aged 21 years and above who have resided in Ibadan and doing businesses for upward of one year. The method of data collection was qualitative, comprising Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), In-depth Interviews (IDIs) and Case studies. This involved 21 purposively selected businessmen from four business locations in Ibadan namely; Iwo Road, Salvation Army Road, Dugbe and Ojoo Areas. These business locations were selected because they have largest concentration of migrant Igbo businessmen in Ibadan. In these locations, businesses such as building materials, electrical parts, auto spare parts, clothing materials and among others thrive. Seven respondents were selected from Iwo Road, six from Salvation Army Road, five from Ojoo, and three from Dugbe.

Five case studies were conducted with pioneer founders of businesses and ethnic association leaders who had gained a lot of experiences in their various businesses using social networks. Qualitative instruments were used to collect data on the respondents demographic profiles, the factors that facilitated their migration to Ibadan, the type of social networks were available to them, the roles social networks had played in their business performance, and challenges they face in their attempt to maintain social networks for improved business performance.

Results

Factors that facilitated the movement of Igbo businessmen to Ibadan

The study investigated why the respondents came to Ibadan. Results showed that the major reasons why the respondents moved to Ibadan were economic in nature: to learn a trade or a line of business in order to become financially dependent. A respondent stated:

*Circumstances brought me to Ibadan, I never wanted to be a businessman, I wanted to be an Accountant, but after writing my SSCE senior secondary certificate examination, my elder sister’s husband who was sponsoring me died and that changed the whole plan. I had to move on with some other things, I worked in a small scale factory where they produced feed mills but it was not able to sustain me, then I came to Ibadan with my Aunty.*

(IDI/Male/35 years/Salvation Army Road/2013)

Another respondent who has been in Ibadan for about 23 years had this to say:

*I came to Ibadan because it was my choice to learn a trade; I wanted to be as rich as my uncle. Nobody begged me to come to*
Ibadan, I made the decision and as soon as the opportunity came, I was ready. (IDI/Male/40years/Iwo Road/2013)

Another male respondent said:

I moved to Ibadan because I wanted to do business, since I dropped out of school, I had to come so that I will be able to help my family. (IDI/Male/35years/Iwo Road/2013)

Similarly, another male respondent had this to say:

I came to Ibadan because I was not satisfied with my previous location, besides, what makes a man is his ability to move on if he is not making it where he is. (IDI/Male/35years/Ojoo/2013)

From the responses above, it is evident that the respondents came for a number of reasons which essentially centred on economic survival.

**Types of social network available to the migrant**

The results showed that the social networks available to the migrant Igbo traders were not location bound. A lot of the respondents stated that ones they moved to a new location they would locate their town or village associations and identify with them. A respondent in one of the In-depth interviews noted:

*Our customs and culture demand that, once an individual is of age, he or she must be a member of the village association or age grade group. My master introduced me to the association immediately after my apprenticeship.* (IDI/Male/44years/Iwo road/2013)

A man put his case thus:

*Any Igbo man that does not belong to any association is not a real Igbo man. Usually, when an individual gets to a new location, it is important to identify and associate with his people. My elder brother told me about the association, but he did not introduce me to the association, I decided to join voluntarily.* (IDI/Male/46years/Ojoo/2013)

Another male had this to say:

*I knew about the association from my village, I know that it is mandatory for everyone to join, so when I came to Ibadan, I looked for one and joined after my apprenticeship.* (IDI/Male/35years/Salvation Army road/2013)

Another male respondent’s view is thus:

*Before I left the village for Ibadan, my mother told me, “as soon as you get to Ibadan, make sure you locate your people and associate with them.” Before coming to Ibadan, I already had it*
at the back of my mind that that I will be a member of my town association. So when the time came for me to join, it was easy (IDI/Male/40years/Ojoo/2013).

The view of a woman was also very insightful:

My husband is a member of town association, so I had to join the women’s wing of the association. In Igbo land, once you are married, you automatically join the association your husband belong to and not your own association.

(IDI/Female/35years/Iwo road/2013)

From the responses given above, it is evident that for any Igbo person, social network is not location or gender bound, it is necessary for survival especially in a new location. Also, from the above, individuals enjoy a lot of benefits by belonging to the village associations ranging from social support accessible through ones social ties which could be in form of emotional support (empathy, trust, love, esteem and concern towards their members), instrumental support (money, labour, time) information support (advice, suggestions, recommendation and guidance) and appraisal support (affirmation, feedback, social comparism and self-evaluation). Also, identity formation or sense of belonging is created in the course of associating. These associations also serve as an avenue for dispute settlement (Alutu, 1986). Since they see being a member of the association as mandatory, they appreciate the intrinsic benefits which clearly a motivator for them to become a member. These associations are only attended by the Igbo. In the association every member is guided by the constitution of the association.

**The Role of social networks in Business Performance**
As regards the roles social network plays in business performance, the results showed that although all Igbo businessmen are engaged in one form of business activity or the other, the influence and the effect their network of social relations play on their business varies from one individual to the other. Some respondents had this to say:

The town association I belong to does not have any direct influence on my business as such. I do not get to discuss my business in my town meeting. My business has little to do with my town union. We Igbo usually join our trade associations. As a member of the trade association, I am able to take goods on credit pending when I am able to pay, I can also get interest free loan from the trade association which has helped in the growth and general outcome of my business.

(IDI/Male/53years/Salvation Army Road/2013)
In addition, the response of another male respondent is put as follows:

*Being a member of my town association has influenced on my business outcome. Being a member of the town association has enabled me to get some connection and business contacts. Also, as a member of the association it is important every member knows what you are doing and by implication, they patronize and recommend me when the need arises.*

(IDI/Male/36years/Salvation Army Road/2013)

Furthermore, another male respondent offered:

*For anyone to be a member of an association, it means the association has a positive influence on the person. Being a member of the association has linked me up with a lot of people who have patronized me and I have gotten recommendation.*

(IDI/Male/36years/Salvation Army Road/2013)

Another male respondent has this to say about the role the association has played in his business outcome:

*Being a member of the association has affected my business outcome in many ways. I belong to eight associations, one of which is traders association, two are my town and local government area associations and the remaining five are different associations which are more like clubs in which all the members are Igbos. These clubs have helped and enabled my business growth in many dimensions. For example, I got the idea and link for the importation of goods (clothing and textile) and my business has expanded in that I am a dealer in building materials because of the availability of cash.*

(IDI/Male/29years/Dugbe/2013)

In a related view, another male respondent said:

*The membership of this association has helped and affected my business in a positive way. When I came to Ibadan after my SSCE my elder brother died, I was meant to take over the business but because I was not involved in the business from the onset, the business almost collapsed. During that period the members of the association rallied round me, they supported the business by giving me goods free of charge for some months and made some freewill donations for me pending the time the business stabilized.*

(Case Study/Male/Iwo Road/2013)

Supporting the respondent above, another male respondent reported his own case as follows:

*My business has blossomed as a result of me belonging to the association and the efforts of my father have also helped in*
linking me up with those that matter to the business. Business performance has to do with who you know and the information one gets. (IDI/Male/28years/Iwo Road/2013)

In addition, a male respondent also said that:

My membership of this association has helped my business outcome, it has helped me save my money so I do not spend the money carelessly and in times where capital are needed, I can go back to get money. I get to save about 100,000 Nair a weekly. The trade association has also affected my business outcome, we pay our tax collectively and in case of police case or any incriminating issue, my association intervenes. (IDI/Male/35years/Iwo Road/2013)

Also, a particular female respondent made the following submission:

The association has helped my business outcome. As a woman the association encourages me not be ideal, it has helped me to keep doing the business and render necessary help and assistance to my husband. We make monthly contribution in which two women are given the money monthly which they can use for any business they desire. (IDI/Female/35years/Iwo Road/2013)

In support of the female respondent above, male respondent made the following statement:

The various associations and clubs I belong to have affected my business outcome and enhanced my business performance. The business I do is capital intensive, so whenever I need money I can fall back to the association to get an interest free loan. (IDI/Male/40years/Ojoo/2013)

Having examined the roles social play in business performance, the responses of the respondents show that the membership of the association affected the business outcome of the Igbo businessmen in Ibadan in various ways. Belonging to the association has a direct influence on the total business outcomes, since business is built on trust, and trust is a function of who you know and who you know is a function of who you identify with, based on trust relationship, goods can be taken in credit as result of mutual trust, through the association, business contacts and connections are made and links with people. The association gives room for individuals to interact and as a result innovations are made, money can be saved and recommendation and increase in patronage are some of the benefits derived by belonging to the association.
The challenges of maintaining social networks for improved business performance

On the challenges of maintaining social networks, respondents identified several challenges which ranged from greed, jealous, disunity leadership tussle. For instance, a respondent said:

"We, the Igbo, always want to show off... the challenge of maintaining social network the way I see it is mainly in the area of greed and jealous. That a person is doing well does not mean that the person you call your brother (another Igbo fellow) is happy with you. Sometimes it’s this fellow Igbo man that may set you up to ensure that you don’t succeed because he knows that the moment you succeed you are going to be a big person in the anytime you go to village...." (IDI/Male/ 37 years/Salvation Army Road/2013)

Also, another respondent identified another challenge thus;

"Every Igbo here is Ibadan is here to survive. Therefore you should expect that people can overstep their boundaries. The major challenges for me are unbridled and cut throat competition, envy, disunity and leadership tussle.... We the Igbo don’t love ourselves. So people are not very careful when they join any town or trade associations and that is why we have so many town associations or factions and each faction competes with another. But if there is love and unity and everybody will submit to the leadership, we can form one big and united association so that when a person has problem his brothers will quickly come to his aid. As a leader, I spend much of my time settling disputes over business issues, failed deals, default payment of goods bought and other related issues. (KII/Male/Married/56 years/Iwo Road/2013)

Moreover, another respondent mentioned another challenge of maintaining social networks when he said:

"Igbo people in business do not trust themselves. There are instances where a group friends in on line of business contributed money to give to one person to go to Onitsha, Aba or even Lagos to buy goods and wares in order to reduce cost and risk of everybody being on the road at the same time. The fellow may come back to tell you that armed robbers attacked them on the way and took the whole money away. What are you going to do under that circumstance? The relationship you have with that person will suffer...and you finances would have reduced. You will see the fellow who duped you by framing armed robbery attack prospering...in this case you too may want to do same to another person and people will tell you 'after all when a fish
In essence, what the above responses show is that maintaining social network is not always easy. It comes with some costs and challenges.

Discussion of Results

This study found that motivated migration to Ibadan was basically their interest in business. The study also found that although the respondents had little or no information about Ibadan before migrating, all of them had a relative in Ibadan, and they came to Ibadan because of the interest they had in learning a trade. Contextualizing within the social exchange theory, it can be inferred that people are attracted to each other for a number of reasons especially the one that induces them to form and establish social relationship. An Igbo trader before migrating already has a link with their kinsmen who are ready and willing to accept them. The relationship that exists among these persons is basically master-servant relationship in which the master takes care of the servant for some period: a number of days, month or years. The new arrival serves under the tutelage of the master learning a trade that will lead to the eventual independence of the servant (Silverstein, 1983; Alutu, 1986). To the master, the help the servant renders and the ability to train him in his kind of trade and the success that individual derives for doing business is based on social exchange. On the other hand, the risk involved in the relationship may be stealing, running away or the death of the servant. Also the servant may regard the exchange relationship as a loss if he/she is unable to achieve the major goal (learning a trade) of migrating to Ibadan. Since social exchange is important and necessary for human survival, the servant enters into the relationship because of the perceived benefits (learning a trade).

On the types of social network available to migrants in Ibadan, the result showed that the Igbo in diaspora usually form a mutual benefit association, credit society and progressive town unions or associations which tie them together irrespective of the location they find themselves. This is to say that social network is not location bound. This form of social network is formed in the Diaspora because they are of the view that nobody is totally self-sufficient and they need each other to survive especially in a new location. Also the social networks formed by the Igbo migrants serve many benefits; they may serves as an indigenous court where disputes are settled amicably among members, and members are supplied with different information; they provide welfare benefits, employment opportunities and monthly levy which is used to develop their home towns (Achebe, 1983). Using the social network theory to explain the findings of this objective, the theory sees how culture (ways of life) and socialization process (norms and values) are internalized in actors so much that they do not want to lose touch with their point of origin. In line with the
argument of Onwubu (1975), among the Igbo a responsible and successful person is one who goes outside his domain and through series of networks brings something home to share with his kindred.

As regards the roles social networks played in business performance, result showed that being a member of their town association and the traders association plays a significant role in business performance and eventual outcome. Based on trust relationship, goods can be given or taken on credit, money could be borrowed based on trust, through the association business contacts and connections are made, money can be saved, recommendations can be made and increase in patronage are some of the benefits derived by belonging to the association as observed by Harniet-Sievers (2006).

On the challenges of maintaining social networks for improved business performance among the studied businessmen, it was found that the major challenges included disunity, lack of trust, leadership tussle, greed, and envy in various Igbo trade and town associations existing in Ibadan. This has the tendency to reduce the kind of help an individual businessman may receive from his social networks. In line with social exchange theory, it should be envisaged that when people interact and relate with each other, overtime the crises of confidence, trust, unity may set in which may limit what members of the group can achieve. If these crises remain unresolved over a period of time, they may weaken the group interest and undermine the capacity of group members to achieve their expectations. The implication of this relation to the studied migrant businessmen in Ibadan is that despite their sense of industry there are some challenges that may undermine the social networks they have formed.

Conclusion

Social networks exist among Igbo businessmen in Ibadan, which cuts across gender, class, gender, religion and social status in general. The implication is that social network was used as an intervening factor in enhancing the business outcome of the studied group. The research showed the link and various dimensions of social networks among Igbo businessmen which helped to boost their business opportunities and individuals who were related to them. In addition, social network is important in migration as it facilitates the migration of individuals from one location to the other and provides social capital that sustains interactions and relationships. Also, there are push factors that strongly encourages a person to move to a new location and the pull factor which attract immigrant; social network is one of those attractions. Social networks help to provide welfare and business opportunity and advancement, connecting them with influential personalities, patronage and recommendations that positively affect their business outcomes. Therefore, there is the need to make these social networks to benefit maximally those who utilise them in their businesses. Hence, there is the need for members of trade association and town unions existing in Ibadan to display forthrightness, honesty, humility, trust, loyalty and transparency in the dealings and conduct of all their affairs.
References


