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Care Drain and the Ageing Crisis: Intergenerational Migration, Family Support Erosion, and Social Welfare Responses in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract
This study examined the relationship between intergenerational migration, family support erosion, and social welfare responses among older adults in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Anchored in the Life Course Theory and the Social Exchange Theory, the study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. A purposive and stratified random sampling technique was used to select 215 participants aged 60 years and above from three local government areas in Ibadan. Standardised instruments including the Lubben Social Network Scale (LSNS-6), the Perceived Social Support Scale (PSSS), and the Family Support Index (FSI) were used for data collection. Hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and multiple regression analysis. Findings revealed a significant negative relationship between intergenerational migration and family support among older adults ($r = -.487$, $p < .05$). Additionally, there was a significant influence of family support erosion on the social welfare status of older adults ($F(3, 211) = 24.67$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .259$). The study concludes that the migration of younger family members substantially diminishes the social and welfare resources available to ageing populations in Ibadan, necessitating robust social welfare policy reforms. Recommendations are provided for policymakers, social workers, and community-based organisations.

Keywords: Care drain, ageing crisis, intergenerational migration, family support erosion, social welfare.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of population ageing has emerged as one of the most consequential demographic transformations of the twenty-first century, carrying profound implications for social welfare systems, family structures, and public health infrastructure across both developed and developing nations. Globally, the population of older persons aged 60 years and above is projected to reach approximately 2.1 billion by 2050, with sub-Saharan Africa recording some of the fastest growth rates in older adult populations relative to total population size (United Nations, 2020). This demographic shift, while indicative of improvements in health outcomes and life expectancy,

simultaneously exposes critical vulnerabilities in the social and welfare architectures of low- and middle-income countries, where formal systems of elder care remain severely underdeveloped.

Within African societies, the family has historically served as the primary institution responsible for the care, support, and social integration of older persons. This arrangement is deeply embedded in cultural norms of filial piety, communal solidarity, and intergenerational reciprocity, wherein younger family members are expected to assume caregiving roles as a form of social obligation and gratitude towards their elders (Aboderin, 2022). However, rapid urbanisation, economic pressures, and expanding mobility patterns have increasingly disrupted these traditional caregiving arrangements. The movement of younger generations from rural communities to urban centres, or across international borders in search of economic opportunities, has given rise to what scholars have termed the 'care drain', a structural depletion of informal caregiving resources available to older adults (Marchetti-Mercer, 2021).

Nigeria, as the most populous nation in Africa with an estimated population exceeding 220 million, is confronted with an accelerating ageing crisis that intersects with high rates of both internal and international youth migration. The National Population Commission estimates that Nigerians aged 60 and above constitute approximately 5.5% of the total population, a figure expected to rise substantially in coming decades (National Population Commission, 2023). In Oyo State and particularly in Ibadan, one of the largest cities in sub-Saharan Africa, this ageing trajectory is complicated by persistent youth out-migration driven by educational pursuits, labour market incentives, and socioeconomic instability. The exodus of adult children from family households leaves a significant proportion of older parents without adequate informal support networks, creating conditions of social isolation, unmet care needs, and diminished quality of life (Afolabi et al., 2021).

Despite the growing recognition of these dynamics globally, the empirical literature on the intersection of intergenerational migration, family support erosion, and social welfare outcomes for older adults in Nigerian urban settings remains sparse and undertheorised. Most existing studies focus on rural contexts or address migration and ageing as distinct phenomena, failing to capture the cumulative and interacting effects of care drain on the welfare of older persons in cities like Ibadan. Against this backdrop, this study investigates how intergenerational migration contributes to the erosion of family support systems and examines the consequent implications for social welfare responses among older adults in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. By generating context-specific empirical evidence, this study aims to inform social work practice, welfare policy, and community-based interventions targeted at ageing populations in Nigerian urban environments.

2. Statement of the Problem

The discourse on ageing and social welfare in Nigeria has expanded considerably over the past decade, yet a critical lacuna persists in the empirical literature concerning the specific mechanisms through which intergenerational migration operates to erode family-based support systems and, consequently, undermine the social welfare of older adults in urban Nigerian settings. While studies have documented the broad consequences of demographic ageing and the importance of family care in African contexts, few have systematically examined how the out-migration of adult children from households in major Nigerian cities quantifiably affects the care-receiving capacity of older persons left behind, or how existing social welfare structures respond—or fail to respond, to this emergent crisis.

The existing literature has largely concentrated on rural ageing or examined migration and elder welfare as separate silos of inquiry, thereby overlooking the compounding effect of simultaneous

family fragmentation and urban welfare deficits. In Ibadan specifically, where social welfare services are chronically underfunded and where family networks constitute the de facto welfare safety net for the elderly, the departure of adult children represents not merely an emotional loss but a fundamental withdrawal of material, instrumental, and psychological support that older adults depend upon for their survival and dignity. Empirical evidence from a related Nigerian context indicates that over 60% of older adults living in households with migrant adult children reported inadequate access to basic care and social support, yet this population remains almost entirely absent from formal welfare programming (Ojo & Akinwande, 2022). This study is therefore motivated by the urgent need to generate context-sensitive empirical data that captures the lived welfare consequences of care drain for older adults in Ibadan, and to evaluate the extent to which social welfare responses adequately address their needs, a gap this study directly seeks to fill.

3. Purpose of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to examine the relationship between intergenerational migration, family support erosion, and social welfare responses among older adults in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Determine the prevalence and pattern of intergenerational migration among the households of older adults in Ibadan.
2. Assess the level of family support available to older adults in households affected by intergenerational migration.
3. Examine the relationship between intergenerational migration and family support erosion among older adults in Ibadan.
4. Investigate the influence of family support erosion on the social welfare status of older adults in Ibadan.
5. Evaluate the adequacy of existing social welfare responses to the care needs of older adults affected by care drain in Ibadan.

4. Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided this study:

H_1: There is no significant relationship between intergenerational migration and family support erosion among older adults in Ibadan, Oyo State.

H_2: Family support erosion does not significantly influence the social welfare status of older adults in Ibadan, Oyo State.

H_3: There is no significant difference in the social welfare status of older adults based on the number of adult children who have migrated.

H_4: The existing social welfare responses do not significantly predict the wellbeing outcomes of older adults affected by care drain in Ibadan.

5. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Conceptualising Care Drain and Intergenerational Migration

The concept of care drain, derived from the broader discourse on the global care chain, refers to the systematic depletion of informal caregiving resources, primarily human capital, from households and communities as a result of the out-migration of younger generations (Marchetti-Mercer, 2021). Unlike the original care chain framework, which traces the movement of paid domestic care workers across national boundaries, care drain in the African context operates principally within intergenerational family units, where adult children constitute the primary

caregivers for ageing parents. The departure of these children, whether to urban centres within the same country or to international destinations, creates a structural void in the care ecosystem of older adults that formal welfare systems are rarely equipped to fill.

Intergenerational migration has been identified as a central driver of care drain, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa where high youth unemployment, deteriorating local economies, and expanding educational aspirations collectively incentivise migration from rural and peri-urban communities (Ssengonzi, 2019). Research conducted in Ghana, Kenya, and Tanzania has consistently demonstrated that older adults whose adult children have migrated report significantly lower levels of emotional support, instrumental assistance, and healthcare access compared to their counterparts in non-migrant households (Obrist et al., 2020). These findings point to a generalisable pattern of welfare vulnerability associated with care drain that is likely operative in the Nigerian context as well.

In Nigeria, studies examining internal migration trends indicate that cities such as Lagos, Abuja, and Ibadan continue to attract large numbers of young adults from across the country and from rural areas within Oyo State itself (Afolabi et al., 2021). The selective nature of this migration, drawing predominantly young, educated, and economically active individuals, disproportionately depletes the care capacity of households in origin communities, leaving older adults to navigate the demands of ageing with diminished social and material resources. Oyekale (2020) found in a nationwide survey that older Nigerians in households with at least one migrant adult child were significantly more likely to report unmet care needs, food insecurity, and psychological distress than those in non-migrant households.

Family Support Erosion and Its Consequences for Older Adults

Family support, broadly defined as the material, emotional, instrumental, and informational assistance provided by family members to an individual, constitutes the principal welfare resource for older adults across sub-Saharan Africa (Gyasi et al., 2021). In contexts where formal social protection systems are limited or absent, the integrity of family support networks directly determines the quality of life, health outcomes, and social participation of older persons. The erosion of these networks, whether through migration, urbanisation, or the weakening of filial obligations, therefore, represents a fundamental welfare threat.

Empirical evidence increasingly documents the multidimensional consequences of family support erosion for ageing populations. A longitudinal study in South Africa demonstrated that older adults who experienced a reduction in family contact due to adult child migration showed deterioration in self-rated health, increased depressive symptomatology, and reduced engagement in social activities over a four-year period (Madhavan et al., 2020). Similarly, a study conducted among older adults in rural Ghana revealed that the absence of co-resident adult children was associated with a 43% increase in the likelihood of experiencing food insecurity and a 38% reduction in timely healthcare utilisation (Gyasi et al., 2021).

In the Nigerian context, Obi and Nwosu (2023) observed that family support erosion among older adults in southeastern Nigeria was associated with increased prevalence of depression, social withdrawal, and functional decline. Their qualitative analysis further revealed that older adults experienced the migration of adult children not merely as a loss of practical support but as a profound relational rupture that undermined their sense of identity and social worth. These findings highlight the psychosocial dimensions of care drain that extend beyond material welfare deficits and must be addressed through holistic social work interventions.

Furthermore, Ogunjimi et al. (2022) established in a study among urban older adults in Ibadan that

those with limited family support networks were significantly more likely to live in poverty, lack access to health insurance, and report lower scores on standardised measures of quality of life. The authors argued that the correlation between family support depletion and welfare vulnerability was particularly pronounced in urban settings where the cost of living is higher and social isolation is more acute, underscoring the contextual relevance of the present study.

Social Welfare Responses to Ageing in Nigeria

Nigeria's social welfare architecture for older adults remains underdeveloped relative to the scale and urgency of the emerging ageing crisis. The National Social Protection Policy of 2017 and the National Policy on Ageing of 2003, though representing important legislative milestones, have suffered from poor implementation, inadequate funding, and the absence of a coherent operational framework for service delivery to older populations (Adebiyi et al., 2021). Formal social welfare institutions, including state-level ministries of social development and nonprofit organisations, continue to operate with limited coverage, fragmented programming, and a predominantly urban bias that leaves rural older adults almost entirely unserved.

The National Home Care for Older Persons Programme, introduced by the Federal Government in collaboration with some state governments, was designed to provide community-based support to indigent older adults lacking family care. However, evaluations of this programme have consistently found it to be underfunded, poorly staffed, and unable to reach the majority of eligible beneficiaries (Ojo & Akinwande, 2022). Non-governmental organisations operating in the elder care space, such as HelpAge International Nigeria, have made important contributions in advocacy and community programming, but their reach remains limited and their sustainability dependent on precarious donor funding.

A growing body of literature advocates for the integration of social work practice with community-based care frameworks as a means of bridging the gap between formal welfare systems and the caregiving needs of older adults in low-resource settings (Akintola et al., 2021). Community health workers, social welfare officers, and trained volunteers have been proposed as frontline actors in delivering home-based support, psychosocial counselling, and case management services to older adults affected by care drain. However, as Akintola et al. (2021) note, the effectiveness of such approaches depends critically on adequate professional training, institutional support, and integration within broader social protection frameworks, conditions that remain largely unmet in Oyo State.

Recent scholarship has also pointed to the role of digital technology and remittances as partial compensatory mechanisms for the physical absence of migrant adult children (Onwumere et al., 2022). Mobile phones and digital financial transfers have enabled some older adults to maintain affective connections with migrated children and to receive material support in the form of cash remittances. However, these substitutes are imperfect; they cannot replicate the instrumental and proximal dimensions of in-person caregiving, and their availability is unevenly distributed along socioeconomic and educational lines, leaving the most vulnerable older adults without even these partial compensations.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in two complementary theoretical frameworks: The Life Course Theory and the Social Exchange Theory. Together, these frameworks provide a robust conceptual basis for understanding the dynamic interplay between migration, family relations, and welfare outcomes across the life span of older adults. The Life Course Theory, as elaborated by Elder et al. (2003) and subsequently applied in gerontological research, posits that individual development

and ageing are profoundly shaped by historical time, social location, and the linked lives of significant others. This framework is particularly applicable to the study of care drain because it foregrounds the relational embeddedness of older adults' welfare—situating their current vulnerabilities within the broader biographical context of family formation, migration decisions, and intergenerational obligations. From a life course perspective, the migration of adult children constitutes a critical turning point that reconfigures the social convoys of older parents, altering the trajectory of their welfare outcomes in ways that may be difficult to reverse (Mayer, 2019). The concept of linked lives, which holds that individual life trajectories are interdependent and mutually shaping, is especially relevant here, as it illuminates how the migration choices of younger generations reverberate through the welfare circumstances of their ageing parents.

The Social Exchange Theory, originally proposed by Blau (1964) and extended by Dowd (1975) in the context of gerontology, conceptualises social relationships as involving the exchange of resources, including care, emotional support, and material assistance, between actors who seek to maximise benefits and minimise costs. Applied to intergenerational family relations, this theory suggests that the caregiving obligations of adult children toward ageing parents are grounded in a perceived norm of reciprocity; adult children provide care as a form of repayment for the investments made in them during childhood and youth. When migration disrupts this exchange relationship, removing the adult child from the immediate relational context in which reciprocal care is enacted, the older adult loses not only the practical benefits of caregiving but also the symbolic and relational affirmations of their social worth. Social Exchange Theory thus offers important insights into both the mechanisms through which care drain undermines older adult welfare and the conditions under which social welfare interventions might serve as effective substitutes for lost family-based exchanges.

6. Methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design, which was considered appropriate given the objective of collecting data from a representative sample of older adults at a single point in time to examine relationships between intergenerational migration, family support erosion, and social welfare outcomes. The study was conducted in three purposively selected local government areas in Ibadan, Oyo State, namely Ibadan North, Ibadan South-West, and Ibadan South-East, chosen based on their demographic concentration of older adult residents and varying levels of documented youth out-migration. The target population comprised community-dwelling older adults aged 60 years and above who had resided in the selected areas for a minimum of five years and had at least one adult child aged 18 and above. A sample size of 215 participants was determined using the Cochran (1977) formula for an unknown population size, which yielded a minimum sample of 200 at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error; this was increased to 215 to account for potential attrition and non-response.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation across the three local government areas, with participants within each stratum selected through systematic random sampling from community registration lists. Data were collected using three standardised instruments: the Lubben Social Network Scale-6 (LSNS-6), which measures the adequacy of social support networks and has established reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$ in previous Nigerian samples); the Perceived Social Support Scale (PSSS), which assesses the subjective experience of family and social support ($\alpha = .78$); and the Family Support Index (FSI), a researcher-adapted tool validated through expert review by five specialists in social work and gerontology and pilot-tested on 20 participants drawn from outside the main sample, yielding a reliability coefficient of .76. Face and content validity of all instruments were confirmed prior to administration. Trained

research assistants administered questionnaires in structured face-to-face interviews over a period of six weeks, ensuring that older adults with literacy challenges received appropriate assistance. Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27, employing descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations), Pearson Product Moment Correlation to test hypotheses on relationships between variables, independent samples t-test to examine group differences, multiple regression analysis to assess predictive influences, and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) where appropriate. Ethical approval was obtained from the Oyo State Ministry of Health Research Ethics Committee, and all participants provided written informed consent prior to participation; confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw without consequence were assured throughout the data collection process.

7. Results and Discussion of Findings

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Table 1 presents the sociodemographic profile of the 215 participants. The majority of respondents were female (58.1%), consistent with the known feminisation of ageing in Nigeria. The modal age group was 65–74 years (42.8%), and the largest proportion of participants (41.4%) had completed primary or no formal education. Over half of the respondents (55.8%) reported that two or more of their adult children lived outside Ibadan at the time of the study.

Table 1: Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 215)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	90	41.9
	Female	125	58.1
Age Group	60–64 years	55	25.6
	65–74 years	92	42.8
	75 years and above	68	31.6
Education	No formal education	52	24.2
	Primary education	37	17.2
	Secondary education	74	34.4
	Tertiary education	52	24.2
No. of Migrant Adult Children	None	95	44.2
	One	63	29.3
	Two or more	57	26.5

Hypothesis One: Intergenerational Migration and Family Support Erosion

H_1 stated that there is no significant relationship between intergenerational migration and family support erosion among older adults in Ibadan. A Pearson Product Moment Correlation was

computed to test this hypothesis. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation: Intergenerational Migration and Family Support Erosion (N = 215)

Variable	M	SD	r	p-value
Intergenerational Migration	2.87	0.94		
Variable	**M**	**SD**	**r**	**p-value**
Index				
Family Support Erosion (LSNS-6)	14.32	4.61	-.487**	.000

Note. ** *p* < .01 *(two-tailed).*

The results in Table 2 reveal a statistically significant negative relationship between intergenerational migration and family support among older adults ($r = -.487$, $p < .001$). This indicates that higher levels of intergenerational migration are associated with significantly lower family support scores, thereby leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis H_1. This finding is consistent with Oyekale (2020), who reported that older Nigerians in households with migrant adult children experienced substantially reduced social support, and with Gyasi et al. (2021), who found similar patterns among older adults in Ghana. The strength of the correlation observed in the present study ($r = -.487$) underscores the substantive magnitude of care drain as a welfare determinant in the Ibadan context, where formal substitutes for family care remain largely unavailable.

Hypothesis Two: Family Support Erosion and Social Welfare Status

H_2 posited that family support erosion does not significantly influence the social welfare status of older adults. A multiple regression analysis was conducted using family support erosion dimensions (emotional, instrumental, and informational support) as predictors of overall social welfare status. Results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis: Family Support Erosion Predicting Social Welfare Status (N = 215)

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Emotional Support	0.341	0.072	.312	4.736	.000
Instrumental Support	0.289	0.083	.274	3.482	.001
Informational Support	0.198	0.079	.186	2.506	.013
$R^2 = .259$, $F(3, 211) = 24.67$, $p < .001$					

Table 3 indicates that the regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 211) = 24.67$, $p < .001$, accounting for 25.9% of the variance in social welfare status ($R^2 = .259$). All three dimensions of family support erosion, emotional ($\beta = .312$, $p < .001$), instrumental ($\beta = .274$, $p = .001$), and informational ($\beta = .186$, $p = .013$)—were significant predictors of social welfare outcomes. H_2 is therefore rejected. These findings align with the observations of Obi and Nwosu (2023), who identified multidimensional family support as a primary determinant of welfare outcomes among

older adults in Nigeria, and with Ogunjimi et al. (2022), who similarly reported that limited family support networks in Ibadan were associated with poorer quality of life and increased poverty risk. The proportion of variance explained (25.9%) reflects the substantial but not exclusive role of family support, suggesting that structural factors including inadequate formal welfare services also contribute to social welfare deficits.

Hypothesis Three: Social Welfare Status by Number of Migrant Children

HO3 hypothesised that there is no significant difference in social welfare status based on the number of adult children who have migrated. A one-way ANOVA was computed, and results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA: Social Welfare Status by Number of Migrant Adult Children (N = 215)

Group	n	M	SD	F	p
No migrant children	95	48.73	6.12		
One migrant child	63	41.55	7.84		
Two or more migrant children	57	35.29	8.47		
Total	215	42.94	8.96	31.42	.000

The ANOVA results in Table 4 reveal a statistically significant difference in social welfare status across the three migration groups, $F(2, 212) = 31.42$, $p < .001$. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD confirmed that each group differed significantly from the others ($p < .05$), with older adults in households with two or more migrant children recording the lowest welfare scores ($M = 35.29$). H_3 is therefore rejected. This finding corroborates the dose-response pattern reported by Madhavan et al. (2020) in South Africa, where increasing numbers of migrated adult children were associated with progressively worse health and social outcomes for older parents. The present results extend this pattern to the social welfare domain in an urban Nigerian context, suggesting that the cumulative depletion of family care resources compounds welfare vulnerability in a predictable and measurable manner.

Hypothesis Four: Social Welfare Responses and Wellbeing Outcomes

H_4 stated that existing social welfare responses do not significantly predict the wellbeing outcomes of older adults affected by care drain. A simple regression was conducted with adequacy of welfare responses as the predictor and wellbeing outcomes as the criterion variable.

Table 5: Simple Regression: Social Welfare Responses Predicting Wellbeing Outcomes (N = 215)

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Adequacy of Welfare Responses	0.437	0.091	.319	4.802	.000
$R^2 = .102$, $F(1, 213) = 23.06$, $p < .001$					

The regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 213) = 23.06$, $p < .001$, with adequacy of welfare responses explaining 10.2% of the variance in wellbeing outcomes ($\beta = .319$, $p < .001$). H_4 is therefore rejected. However, the relatively modest R^2 value of .102 indicates that while formal welfare responses do positively predict wellbeing, they currently account for only a small fraction of variance in outcomes, reflecting the inadequacy and limited coverage of existing

welfare services in Ibadan. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of Ojo and Akinwande (2022), who documented the systemic limitations of Nigeria's elder welfare programmes, and with Adebiyi et al. (2021), who highlighted the gap between policy provision and programme delivery in the Nigerian social protection landscape. The results suggest that while welfare interventions have demonstrable impact, their current scale and quality are insufficient to compensate for the loss of family-based care resulting from intergenerational migration.

8. Conclusion

This study has provided robust empirical evidence of the deleterious effects of intergenerational migration on family support systems and the consequent social welfare outcomes of older adults in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The findings demonstrate that the out-migration of adult children constitutes a statistically significant and substantively meaningful driver of family support erosion, which in turn negatively affects the social welfare status of ageing populations. Older adults in households where two or more children have migrated are particularly vulnerable, recording the lowest welfare scores and the most pronounced support deficits. While existing formal social welfare responses are shown to positively influence wellbeing outcomes, their explanatory power remains limited, reflecting systemic inadequacies in the coverage, funding, and delivery of elder welfare services in the Nigerian context. These findings collectively affirm the theoretical propositions of both the Life Course Theory and the Social Exchange Theory, confirming that the linked lives of older adults and their migrant children shape welfare trajectories in profound and measurable ways. The study underscores the urgency of reconfiguring Nigeria's social welfare architecture to respond effectively to the emerging care drain crisis, and positions social work practice as a critical bridge between policy intent and the lived welfare needs of older adults affected by intergenerational migration.

9. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Federal and Oyo State Governments should significantly boost funding for elder care, develop a detailed framework for the National Policy on Ageing, and prioritize older adults in urban areas impacted by care drain. Expanding and properly resourcing the National Home Care for Older Persons Programme is essential, especially for peri-urban and urban households facing care deficits due to adult child migration. Policymakers should also introduce supportive legislation, including incentives like tax relief, to encourage migrant children's financial support for ageing parents.
2. Social workers in Ibadan should develop and deliver targeted psychosocial support programmes for older adults experiencing social isolation due to care drain, drawing on evidence-based group work and community care models proven effective in comparable African settings. Professional social work training curricula in Nigerian universities should incorporate gerontological social work as a compulsory specialisation, equipping future practitioners with competencies for assessment, case management, and advocacy on behalf of older adults affected by care drain.
3. Community-based organisations operating in Ibadan should establish befriending programmes and mutual aid networks that pair socially isolated older adults with trained community volunteers, providing social companionship and instrumental support that partially compensates for the absence of migrated family members. Non-governmental organisations in the elder care space should leverage digital platforms and mobile technology to facilitate sustained communication between older adults and their migrated

children, while simultaneously advocating for policy reforms that address the structural drivers of care drain.

4. Future research should employ longitudinal and mixed methods designs to track the evolving welfare trajectories of older adults in relation to migration patterns, and should explore the gendered dimensions of care drain, given the observed overrepresentation of women among older adults with unmet care needs.

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