

The Differences in Integration Strategies Between the Chadians and Nigeriens Immigrants in Cameroon 1972 - 2017

MUSA USENI¹ & NGOUFO SOGANG THEODORE²

¹PhD Student, Department of History and Archeology University of Dschang

²Associate Professor of History, Department of History and Archeology University of Dschang

***Corresponding Author:** MUSA USENI

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19614265>

Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<p><i>This article offers a comparative analysis of integration strategies among Chadian and Nigerien immigrants in Cameroon from 1972 to 2017. Drawing on historical sources, policy documents and qualitative studies, it examines how differences in origin-region economies, migratory motivations, settlement geographies and institutional responses produced divergent but sometimes overlapping modes of incorporation. Nigerien immigrants are shown to have gravitated toward urban commerce and informal trade networks, leveraging transnational sourcing, market niches and intermarriage to accelerate social integration. Their economic adaptation is reflected in flexible participation in retail and petty entrepreneurship, where trust is built through repeated interaction and network referrals. Chadian immigrants more often pursued agro-pastoral livelihoods, seasonal labour and localized entrepreneurship, relying on kin-based reciprocity, education and gradual settlement in northern and rural areas, where their livelihood diversification is involved. Both groups used shared languages (French, Hausa, Fulfulde), Islam and intermarriage to negotiate belonging, yet they differed in interactions with state institutions, access to formal employment and spatial distribution. Policy shifts including structural adjustment, border securitization and changing migration governance reshaped opportunities across decades, prompting increased urbanization among Nigeriens and adaptations in Chadian transhumant practices. The study advances understanding of how migrant resilience, and structural constraints interact to produce distinct integration outcomes and offers policy recommendations for targeted support, inclusive registration systems and programmes that recognise migrants' economic contributions while protecting rights. The implications of this study are significant for promoting social cohesion and supporting immigrant integration in Cameroon and beyond.</i></p> <p>Keywords: Migration, Economic Adaptation, emigration, Immigration, Integration Strategies, Intermarriage.</p>
Received: 03-03-2026	
Accepted: 01-04-2026	
Published: 16-04-2026	
<p>Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.</p>	
<p>Citation: Musa Useni, & Ngoufo Sogang Theodore. (2026). The differences in integration strategies between the Chadians and Nigeriens immigrants in Cameroon, 1972–2017. <i>UKR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (UKRJAHS)</i>, 2(4), 82-94.</p>	

Introduction

The experiences of Nigerien and Chadian immigrants in Cameroon offer a fascinating glimpse into the complexities of migration and integration. With a shared history and cultural ties, these groups have navigated distinct paths to carve out livelihoods and build new lives. Cameroon, a country with a rich cultural heritage, has been a hub for immigrants from neighboring countries, including Niger and Chad. The influx of these immigrants has been driven by various factors, including economic instability, conflict, and family ties. As these immigrants settle into their new

environment, they face numerous challenges, such as navigating unfamiliar cultural norms, accessing economic opportunities, and building social networks. Despite these challenges, Nigerien and Chadian immigrants have demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability, leveraging their cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic resources to carve out livelihoods and build new lives. This study explores the diverse strategies employed by Nigerien and Chadian immigrants in Cameroon, shedding light on their economic, social, and cultural approaches to

integration. Specifically, it examines how these groups leverage cultural backgrounds, social networks, and economic resources to achieve integration and build meaningful connections with their host communities. Drawing on theoretical frameworks of immigrant integration and social capital, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors shaping immigrant experiences in Cameroon and beyond.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform policies and programs aimed at supporting immigrant integration and promoting social cohesion in Cameroon and other contexts. By examining the experiences of Nigerian and Chadian immigrants, this research seeks to highlight the complexities and nuances of immigrant integration and provide insights into how policymakers and practitioners can better support the needs of immigrant populations. From informal trade to entrepreneurship, intermarriage to social networks, this research uncovers the complexities and nuances of immigrant integration in Cameroon. Furthermore, this study is situated within the broader context of international migration and development. Cameroon, as a country, has been a recipient of various international aid and development programs aimed at promoting economic growth and reducing poverty. However, the role of immigrant populations in these efforts has often been overlooked. This research seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature on immigrant integration and development, highlighting the importance of recognizing and supporting the economic and social contributions of immigrant populations. In sum, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the integration experiences of Nigerian and Chadian immigrants in Cameroon, shedding light on the diverse strategies employed by these groups to navigate their new environment. The findings of this research have significant implications for policymakers and practitioners seeking to support immigrant integration and promote social cohesion in Cameroon and beyond.

CHAPTER ONE: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL INDICATIONS

This chapter is the doorway into the study: it brings clarity, structure, and meaning to the ideas that drive the research. Here, key concepts are defined and organized so the topic

¹Tataru, G.F. Migration – an Overview on Terminology, Causes and Effects. *Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty*: Law, 7(2), 2019, Pp.10-29.

² Ravenstein, E. G. "The laws of migration". *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 48(2), 1885, 167-235.

becomes easy to follow and grounded in logic. It also sets the stage for the conceptual and theoretical discussions that come next.

1.1. Conceptual Indication

Conceptual indication gives the article its "language" it explains what the study's main terms mean and how they relate to the research problem. By setting clear boundaries for the concepts, the chapter helps readers understand the topic with confidence and focus.

1.2. Migration

Migration is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has shaped human history and continues to be a significant aspect of global dynamics. It refers to the movement of individuals or groups from one place to another, often involving a change in residence and a crossing of political or geographic boundaries.¹ Immigration and emigration are two distinct yet interconnected types of migration that have significant implications for both the host countries and the countries of origin. Immigration refers to the process of people moving into a country or region that is not their place of origin, to settle there permanently or semi-permanently. Ravenstein defined Migration as a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence of an individual or group of individuals across a significant distance.² Another perspective on migration is offered by Castles and Miller, who define it as a process of social transformation that involves the movement of individuals or groups from one society to another.³ Whereas Massey provides a distinct definition of migration, framing it as "a spatial population redistribution that is driven by a combination of voluntary and involuntary factors and that occurs within a context of social and economic change".⁴ Stark on his part views migration as a phenomenon where a person leaves their country of birth or origin (sending country) and stays in the host country (receiving) for some given period.⁵ According to Stark both economic and political factors are accountable for this movement. The term migration incorporates varying opinions depending on how and why people are motivated to embark on migration trends. Stark thinks that even though several reasons among others are accountable to these patterns of migration, none of these can be overlooked over others as the circumstances surrounding could be a group of migrants who move to another country

³Castles, S., & Miller, M. J. *The age of migration: International population movements in the modern world*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

⁴Massey, D. S., et al, "Theories of international migration: A review and appraisal". *Population and Development Review*, 19(3), 1993, pp. 431-466.

⁵Stark, O., "Discontinuity and the Theory of International Migration". *Kyklos*/volume 37, issue 2/1984, pp. 206-222

with the prior objective of establishing their permanent residence and in the long run obtain that country's citizenship. This notwithstanding, another segment of migrants rather has the intention to stay only for a limited period frame. Yet despite these specifications both fall under the scope of migration. (Immigration and Emigration as explained above) Stark further considers migration as a process of moving either across an international border or within a state. For him, migration encompasses any kind of movement of people whatever its length, composition, and causes. This phenomenon includes refugees, displaced persons, and economic migrants.

1.3. Immigration

Immigration is a complex phenomenon that involves individuals moving from their home countries to another nation with the intention of establishing residency. This movement is driven by a variety of factors, including economic opportunity, political unrest, and social networks. For instance, many immigrants flee conflict or persecution, seeking refuge and safety in more stable environments. This choice often leads to significant sacrifices, as individuals leave their cultural roots and familial ties behind to pursue a better life. Today's global landscape further complicates immigration, with rising nationalistic sentiments and stringent immigration policies in various countries rendering the journey fraught with challenges. Immigrants face barriers such as legal restrictions, language hurdles, and prejudiced attitudes that can hinder their integration into society.⁶

1.4. Integration (integration strategies)

Integration as defined by Emile Durkheim refers to the process by which individuals take their place in a society, by which he is socialized. This process is equivalent to learning the norms and values that govern the social body, this learning being done in particular through the intermediary of the family, the school or peer groups. This was how Emile Durkheim understood integrations as a factory of future citizens.⁷ In other words, the term integration refers to the process of settlement, interaction with the host society, and social change that follows immigration. From the moment immigrants arrive in a host

society, they must "secure a place" for themselves. Seeking a place for themselves is a very literal task: Migrants must find a home, a job and income, schools for their children, and access to health facilities. They must find a place in a social and cultural sense as well, as they have to establish cooperation and interaction with other individuals and groups, get to know and use institutions of the host society, and become recognized and accepted in their cultural specificity. These constitute the multifaceted approaches migrants employ to become incorporated into the host society. They encompass economic, social, cultural, and legal dimensions, aiming for acceptance, participation, and a sense of belonging.⁸ Integration is viewed as a two-way process of mutual adaptation between migrants and the host community, rather than solely assimilation.

1.5. Inter marriage

This refers to a marriage between individuals from different ethnic, national, cultural, or religious backgrounds. It is often seen as an indicator of social integration and can facilitate access to social networks, economic opportunities, and cultural understanding. For migrants, marrying a national of the host country can provide significant advantages in navigating the new society.⁹ In Cameroon, intermarriage between Nigerien and Chadian migrants and Cameroonians can bridge cultural divides, strengthen social ties, and facilitate access to resources and social acceptance.

1.1. Theoretical indication

Theoretical indication strengthens the study by showing the lens through which the topic will be interpreted. It connects the research question to established perspectives, making the analysis richer, more convincing, and easier to justify. This is as analyzed below.

1.2.1. Neoclassical economic theories

Theoretical examinations of migration have focused their attention either on the process of movement or on the settlement process. In terms of the process of movement, economic theories have been predominant, heavily influenced by Ernest George Ravenstein's (1889, 1976) attempt to find laws of human behavior to explain observable patterns over a century of observations in which

⁶ Massey, D. S., et al, "Theories of international migration: A review and appraisal". *Population and Development Review*, 19(3), 1993, pp. 431-466.

⁷ Emile Durkheim., *Education et sociologie*, Paris PUF, (1922).1975 ;William Thomas, Florian Znaniecki, The polish peasants in Europe and America, New York, Dover, 1958.

⁸ Emile Durkheim., *Education et sociologie*, Paris PUF, (1922).1975 ;William Thomas, Florian Znaniecki, The polish peasants in Europe and America, New York, Dover, 1958.

⁹ Bijwaard, G. E., & Van Doeselaar, S., (2014). The impact of changes in the marital status on return migration of family migrants. *Journal of Population Economics*, 27(4), 961-997.

people tended to move in the direction of less densely populated areas, poorer to wealthier countries, and from low wage to higher-wage areas.¹⁰ Ravenstein concluded that favorable and unfavorable economic conditions thus serve to push and pull individuals in predictable directions, and the search for these features of migration has since become a feature of migration studies. Furthermore, in a more contemporary use of the simple push pull dichotomy the emphasis on economic factors remains but other factors may also be acknowledged. 'Push' factors that compel people to leave a country of origin can therefore include political oppression, poor living standards, and low economic opportunities. 'Pull' factors, attracting migrants to a different place, may include a demand for labour, the opportunity for higher living standards, but also political freedom.

1.2.2. Network Theory

Other theories have attempted to fill in these gaps, particularly with respect to "pull" factors that may attract a migrant to one country over another, and these factors are typically more functional since they relate to the individual. The network theory of migration, focuses on human networks that develop between origin and destination countries where people will be far more likely to migrate when there is already an established network in the host country. The importance of networks in global migration cannot be overemphasized. Established links between origin and destination countries are essential to facilitating the mobility of people. The multitude of ethnic communities of Chad and Niger in Cameroon even before and after colonization is a prime example of this network theory in action. The network theory and other non-economic explanatory models of migration attempt to address more of the human element that is involved in migration (individual or micro level), such as psychological costs that may arise as a result of separation from family, friends, and community.¹¹

Moreover, the network theory helps to explain persistent migration patterns such as chain migration between countries in cases where the initial causes for migration no longer exist, particularly as "migration becomes institutionalized through the workings of various private and voluntary organizations active in the field." Massey has argued that these factors involve a kind of cumulative

causation where a migrant culture develops and contributes to continual migration. Other factors that are also perceived as extremely influential in the decision to migrate include age, education level, and potential distance. In other words, youth higher education and lesser travel distance travel should all contribute to a higher migration probability.¹² Migration can be conceptualized as a calculated risk, such that factors that reduce this risk are correlated with a higher probability of migration.

1.2.3. Cultural and World Systems Theories

In addition to the economic (neoclassical) and network theories of international migration, the cultural and world systems theory suggests that migration patterns reflect center-periphery patterns that exist in the international system where "migrants typically move from the periphery to the center, in terms of linguistic dominance or cultural hegemony."¹³ This theory does encapsulate some economic aspects, however, as migrants in poorer-periphery regions are assumed to be attracted to the richer center regions. Under the world systems theory it is assumed that the relative gains of the richer countries outweigh those of the poorer, such that while "a rising tide lifts all boats", the richer countries nevertheless gain more in comparison. World systems theory is strongly associated with dependency theory, as the periphery states are thought to become dependent on the core states.

CHAPTER TWO: DISTINCTIVE STRATEGIES USED BY THE NIGERIEN AND CHADIAN MIGRANTS IN CAMEROON

2.1. Economic Strategies

Despite similarities, there are notable differences in the economic strategies employed by Nigerien and Chadian immigrants. Economic integration is a pivotal aspect of the immigrant experience for Nigerien and Chadian communities in Cameroon.¹⁴ While both groups seek to establish livelihoods and contribute to the local economy, their strategies and practices exhibit distinctiveness influenced by their cultural backgrounds and socio-economic contexts. This section delves into the unique economic activities that characterize the Nigerien and Chadian immigrant experience, highlighting the differences in trade, services, and informal economic engagement.

¹⁰ Reilly, Karen., Migration Theories: A Critical Overview. figshare.<https://hdl.handle.net/2134/19442>. © Routledge.2019.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Stark, O., "Discontinuity and the Theory of International Migration". *Kyklos*/volume 37, issue 2/,1984, pp. 206-222

¹³ Massey, D., J. Arango, G. Hugo, et al., "Theories of international migration: a review and appraisal", *Population and Development Review*, 19(3), 1993, PP. 431–466.

¹⁴ Baba Ibrahim., male nails pedicurist and Nigerien migrant, age 21, Interview by author, 5 march 2025 at total baffoussam, 11:00am.

2.1.1. Nigerien Focus on Trade

Nigerien immigrants often engage in informal trading activities as a primary means of livelihood, capitalizing on established networks and familial ties in trade. Their willingness to adapt to local market demands contributes to their economic successes. For Nigerien immigrants, trade engagement primarily revolves around informal activities that serve as the cornerstone of their livelihoods.¹⁵ A significant number of Nigeriens participate in cross-border trade, taking advantage of their geographical proximity to Cameroon. Informal trading, characterized by low entry barriers and flexibility, allows Nigerien immigrants to easily establish themselves in the local marketplace. Interviews with immigrants reveal that activities such as street vending, selling textiles, and engaging in food markets are common practices that enable them to earn a living while fostering connections within their communities. Street vending, particularly of clothing and accessories, represents a popular avenue for Nigerien women. They often sell traditional garments, fabrics, and jewelry, which resonate with both fellow immigrants and local customers. These endeavors not only provide financial support but also contribute to cultural exchange, as traditional Nigerien attire attracts attention and appreciation from a diverse clientele. Beyond textiles, Nigeriens are also involved in selling food items, such as spices, condiments, and traditional snacks. The vibrant atmosphere of local markets allows them to showcase their culinary heritage and engage with customers from varied backgrounds, enhancing their social networks and visibility in the community.¹⁶ The allure of Nigerien cuisine blends seamlessly with the local food culture, creating opportunities for business and fostering integration.

In contrast, Chadian immigrants predominantly operate small-scale trading centers, particularly focused on selling traditional foods. These establishments are often found at street corners, where locals can easily access them. Chadian immigrants leverage their culinary skills by preparing and selling foods such as Boko (a traditional meat dish) and Soba (a type of porridge), which are well-received by both immigrants and Cameroonians alike. The popularity of these dishes highlights the role of food in cultural

integration, as it serves as a medium for cultural exchange and social interactions.¹⁷ One distinctive feature of Chadian traders is the sale of locally made wine, commonly known as bilbil. Many women engage in the production and sale of this beverage, particularly in regions where Chadian communities are concentrated. Bilbil, a traditional alcoholic drink made from fermented grains, adds a unique cultural dimension to their economic activities. Women's involvement in its production not only empowers them economically but also sustains cultural practices that might otherwise be lost in a new environment. Chadian immigrants have diversified into the food and hospitality sector more prominently, establishing restaurants that serve traditional cuisine.¹⁸ This focus not only meets the culinary needs of their community but also connects them with the broader Cameroonian market

2.1.2. Services Sector Engagement

Both Nigerien and Chadian immigrants also capitalize on economic opportunities within the services sector, though their approaches differ substantially. Nigeriens often focus on establishing food establishments, such as cafes and restaurants, which have a dual function of generating income while promoting cultural identity. These eateries serve traditional Nigerien dishes, providing a taste of home for fellow immigrants and introducing newcomers to their culinary heritage.¹⁹ By creating spaces where people can gather, Nigerien restaurant owners forge community ties and enhance social cohesion among immigrants, contributing to their overall integration into Cameroonian society. In addition to restaurants, Nigeriens are increasingly involved in retail businesses, such as opening stores that sell electronics and household goods. These enterprises cater to a diverse customer base, ranging from fellow migrants to local residents. Interviews indicate that many Nigerien entrepreneurs have developed strong networks that enable them to stock popular goods while also facilitating access to better prices. This adaptability is critical in a competitive marketplace, allowing them to thrive despite challenges.

Chadian immigrants, meanwhile, demonstrate distinct dynamics in their approach to the services sector. Many are

¹⁵ SEUTCHEU Martin, "Les politiques de Regroupements Economiques et l'Intégration en AfriqueCentrale". Mémoire de Maîtrise en Sciences Politiques (F D S E), Yaoundé 1988, p.31.

¹⁶ Mallam Mohammadou Rabiou, male trader and Nigerien migrant, age 53, Interview by author, 7 June 2025 at residence in Dschang, 9:00am.

¹⁷ TODJIMBE Raphael, "La colonie Tchadien au

Cameroon: le cas de ville de Yaoundé", mémoire de Master II, Université de Yaoundé I, 2010, p.33.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Alfrede Gabdibe., male student hustler and Chadian migrant, age 26, Interview by author, 2nd January 2025, at Bonas Yaounde 10:00am.

focused on hospitality and personal services, utilizing their cultural experiences to establish businesses that cater to both the immigrant community and the local population. For instance, they may focus on opening salons or barbershops that offer traditional grooming services, which are often popular among local customers.²⁰ These businesses not only provide financial stability but also create deep connections within the community by promoting cultural practices.²¹ The provision of services extends beyond personal care; Chadian immigrants also establish cooperative businesses aimed at fostering collective economic stability. For instance, groups may unite to purchase supplies in bulk, reducing costs while ensuring a steady stream of goods. This collaborative approach is particularly helpful in enhancing economic resilience and fostering a sense of community ownership among Chadians.

2.1.3. Distinctive Challenges and Adaptability

Despite the different strategies adopted by Nigerien and Chadian immigrants in the economic domain, both groups face common challenges. Access to capital remains a significant hurdle, limiting their ability to expand businesses or invest in new opportunities. Many immigrants operate within the informal economy, which, while providing essential income, lacks the protections and opportunities present in the formal sector. To navigate these challenges, both communities demonstrate resilience and adaptability. Interviews reveal that leveraging social networks to share resources and information greatly enhances their economic prospects.²² By engaging with local NGOs and community organizations, they can access grants or training programs that develop their skills and improve business management practices. Moreover, the informal nature of many of their economic activities means that both groups have to contend with fluctuating markets.²³ Adaptability becomes key in responding to changing consumer demands and economic conditions.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ LALIBERTE, D. (nd) Tchad : Migration de refuge et Nuptialité – Rupture en deça, polygamie au-delà, Rapport d'étude, n° 49.

²² Mohammed Sani., male trader and Nigerien migrant, age 33, Interview by author, 17 June 2025 at his store in dschang, 11:00am.

²³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

For Nigeriens, this might mean adjusting product lines in clothing or food offerings to align better with local preferences.²⁴ For Chadians, staying attuned to local cuisine trends or tailoring services to the needs of the community can yield continued success while fostering integration. In summary, the economic strategies of Nigerien and Chadian immigrants in Cameroon exhibit both shared and distinctive features that reflect their cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic contexts. While Nigeriens often engage in informal trade, street vending, and food establishments, Chadians primarily focus on traditional foods and services. These economic activities play a critical role in sustaining their livelihoods and fostering community ties, contributing significantly to their integration into the broader Cameroonian society.²⁵ Despite facing common challenges, their resilience, adaptability, and cooperative spirit enable them to navigate the complexities of life as immigrants, while also enriching the cultural landscape of their new home.

2.2. Housing and Living Conditions

Housing and living conditions are critical aspects of the immigrant experience that directly impact social integration, economic opportunities, and overall quality of life.²⁶ Among Nigerien and Chadian immigrants in Cameroon, distinct differences in living arrangements reflect their cultural backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, and coping strategies in a foreign land. This section explores these variations, detailing how each group navigates the housing landscape, the challenges they face, and the implications for their integration into Cameroonian society.

2.2.1. Living Arrangements of Nigerien Immigrants.

Nigerien immigrants in Cameroon often opt for shared housing arrangements as a primary strategy to manage living costs and create supportive community networks. It is common for groups of ten or more individuals to share a single apartment, pooling their resources to afford rent and utilities.²⁷ This communal living style fosters close-knit

(UNHCR). (2020). "Cameroon Situation Report."

²⁴ Abdou Rahman., male café server and Nigerien migrant, age 49, Interview by author, 5 January 2025 at his residence in kouoptamo, 11:00am.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Alhadji Bouba ., male trader (Muslim clergy) and Nigerien migrant, age 53, Interview by author, 2nd July 2025 through whatsApp 9:00pm.

²⁷ ABIABAG I., "Le statut des Etrangers",

communities, allowing them to support each other emotionally and financially while navigating the challenges of displacement. Interviews with Nigerien immigrants reveal that this shared housing model is not only economically motivated but also culturally rooted. Many Nigeriens come from backgrounds where community living is common, making the transition to cooperative arrangements relatively smooth.²⁸ Living together allows them to maintain their cultural identities, share meals, celebrate religious festivals, and provide mutual support in a confined space. These communal bonds can serve as protective factors against feelings of isolation, particularly in a new environment where they may feel marginalized.

However, the reality of shared housing does come with challenges. Living in crowded conditions can sometimes lead to tension and conflicts over space, responsibilities, and differing lifestyles. Privacy becomes limited, and the pressures of communal living can impact mental health. The financial strain of living in a foreign country often exacerbates these issues, as many Nigeriens work in informal sectors with fluctuating incomes. Consequently, managing finances within a shared living arrangement requires strong communication skills and conflict resolution abilities.²⁹ The condition of the housing itself is another significant concern for many Nigerien immigrants. Often, the apartments they inhabit are substandard, lacking basic amenities such as running water, consistent electricity, or adequate sanitation facilities. These inadequacies can create additional stress and health risks, making the immigrant experience more challenging. Interviews with community members highlight that many Nigeriens are often reluctant to seek formal housing due to the associated costs, leading them to continue living in these informal circumstances.

In contrast, Chadian immigrants typically adopt different living arrangements that reflect their cultural and socio-economic contexts. While some Chadian families also share accommodations, it is less common for them to live

in densely populated conditions as many Nigeriens do.³⁰ Most Chadians tend to opt for smaller shared spaces, often consisting of two to three individuals, primarily close family members, such as siblings or spouses. The tendency for Chadians to maintain smaller household groups can be linked to their background, where the concept of family is often emphasized, leading them to live with immediate relatives rather than larger networks of acquaintances.³¹ This smaller household structure often translates to a quieter living environment, which some Chadians prefer, especially those engaged in studies or professional development. A substantial portion of Chadian immigrants in Cameroon comprises students pursuing higher education. Many students prioritize finding housing that is conducive to studying, often seeking out shared apartments with fellow students. While they may still experience communal living, the dynamics differ significantly compared to their Nigerien counterparts, as their focus on education urges them to seek environments that support their academic needs.³²

However, the choice of housing for Chadian students is not without its challenges. Many face financial constraints, navigating limited budgets while seeking accommodations in close proximity to their educational institutions.³³ This pressure can lead to compromises, such as choosing substandard or overcrowded spaces which are located near campuses. While the living arrangements may involve fewer people, the quality of housing is often still a concern, with many apartments lacking the necessary amenities for a comfortable student life. The differences in living arrangements also reflect the varying coping mechanisms utilized by Nigerien and Chadian immigrants in confronting housing challenges. Nigeriens, with their larger communal living situations, often turn to their networks for emotional and practical support, while Chadian students may rely more on academic resources and

Encyclopédie juridique de l'Afrique. Droit des personnes et de la famille" (V.6) ABIDJAN Lomé Dakar N E A 1982

²⁸ Mohammed Sani., male trader and Nigerien migrant, age 33, Interview by author, 17 June 2025 at his store in dschang, 11:00am.

²⁹ Yousuf Sani., male café server and Nigerien migrant, age 51, Interview by author, 5 January 2025 at his residence in Fombot, 11:00am.

³⁰ Ndi, A. (2014). "Integration of Migrants in

Cameroon: Challenges and Prospects." *African Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(2), 1-14.

³¹ Valerie Kutneur., male student hustler(bike rider) and Chadian migrant, age 26, Interview by author, 23rd February 2025, at Keleng Dschang, 10:00am

³² NTSAMA ONANA Serge Sabine., (2021), "Migration et insertion socioprofessionnelle des Tchadiennes et Centrafricaines au Cameroun de 1964 à 2005", Département d'Histoire, Thèse de doctorat, Université de Yaoundé I., p.234.

³³ Ibid.

affiliations within their educational institutions to find suitable housing.

2.2.2. The Implications for Integration

The stark differences in housing arrangements between Nigerien and Chadian immigrants underscore the role that living conditions play in their social integration within Cameroon. For Nigerien immigrants, shared housing offers a sense of community and cultural continuity, which can be advantageous when it comes to navigating the complexities of living in a new country. However, the challenges of overcrowding, coupled with the risks associated with substandard living conditions, pose significant barriers to integration, including impacts on mental health and overall well-being.³⁴ On the other hand, Chadian immigrants, while potentially benefiting from quieter living circumstances, can still find themselves in difficult financial situations due to inadequate housing choices. The emphasis on smaller households may provide a sense of security and family cohesion, but it can also lead to isolation from larger immigrant networks that Nigeriens benefit from. This isolation can impede the sharing of resources and information critical for successful adaptation in a new environment.³⁵

Both groups face the overarching challenge of navigating a housing market that often does not cater to their specific needs as immigrants. Limited access to formal housing options, influenced by bureaucratic barriers and discrimination, forces both Nigerien and Chadian immigrants to rely heavily on informal housing solutions.³⁶ Consequently, they navigate compounded challenges that affect their social standing, financial stability, and overall security within the broader Cameroonian context. The interplay between housing arrangements and social integration speaks to the complexity of the immigrant experience in Cameroon. It reflects the importance of understanding the unique struggles and strategies adopted by different immigrant groups, highlighting that housing is not merely a matter of shelter, but a critical component of identity, community, and social cohesion. The distinctions outlined in living arrangements emphasize the need for tailored support systems that address the diverse challenges

³⁴ DJEKILAMBER Alexis, "L'insertion des réfugiés au Cameroun : le cas des Tchadiens (1975-2008)", mémoire de DIPES II, Ecole Normale Supérieure, 2010, p.30.

³⁵ Hadjia Hawa kande., female trader and Nigerien migrant, age 43, Interview by author, 7 June 2024 at residence in tsinga Yaoundé, 9:00am.

³⁶ Kutneur Sonne., male trader and Chadian migrant, age 26, Interview by author, 2nd July 2025 through WhatsApp 9:00pm

faced by both Nigerien and Chadian immigrants as they seek to establish successful lives in their new home. In conclusion, while Nigerien immigrants tend to favor communal living arrangements characterized by shared spaces and larger groups, Chadian immigrants often maintain smaller households that prioritize family ties and support.³⁷ These differences in housing conditions significantly influence their respective experiences of integration, impacting their emotional well-being, social cohesion, and community engagement. Understanding these nuances is essential for fostering effective policies and support systems that can enrich the lives of both immigrant groups in Cameroon.

2.3. Social Family Dynamics

The social dynamics within Nigerien and Chadian immigrant communities in Cameroon reveal significant differences in their integration experiences, particularly concerning family structure and intercommunity relationships. These dynamics are pivotal in shaping how each group navigates the complexities of life in a new country. Central to this discussion are distinctive strategies employed by Nigeriens, such as intermarriage with Cameroonians, and the challenges faced by Chadian immigrants, particularly those who experience significant isolation due to their social circumstances.

2.3.1. Nigerien Intermarriage and Social Integration

Nigerien immigrants have established a notable trend involving intermarriage with Cameroonians, which profoundly impacts their integration experiences.³⁸ Interviews with Nigeriens reveal that many have actively pursued relationships with local nationals, leading to marriages that foster deeper social ties and embed them within the fabric of Cameroonian society. This practice of intermarriage serves as a social strategy that enhances their integration while reducing barriers between their communities and the local population.³⁹ The phenomenon of intermarriage among Nigeriens can be traced back to cultural similarities and shared values, particularly within the Islamic faith that many Nigeriens and Cameroonians embrace. Such shared cultural and religious backgrounds

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Bijwaard, G. E., & Van Doeselaar., « The impact of changes in the marital status on return migration of family migrants ». *Journal of Population Economics*, 27(4), 2014, pp.961-997.

³⁹ NKENE Blaise-Jacques, "Les étrangers, acteurs de la vie politique camerounaise : l'expérience des immigrants nigériens dans la ville de Douala", *GRAPS / Université de Yaoundé II*, p.34.

facilitate connection and understanding, making it easier for Nigeriens to forge meaningful relationships with Cameroonians.⁴⁰ Those who engage in intermarriage often find that these partnerships provide emotional support while simultaneously aiding in the easing of cultural transition. Interviews indicate that these individuals frequently report feeling more accepted and integrated into their local communities, largely due to the familial bonds created through marriage.

Moreover, intermarriage provides tangible benefits beyond social acceptance. Nigerien immigrants who marry Cameroonians often gain a deeper understanding of the local customs, traditions, and social norms that govern everyday life, contributing to successful adaptation. These marriages frequently lead to the blending of cultural practices, enriching both partners' experiences and promoting cultural exchange within the broader community. The establishment of strong familial ties resulting from intermarriage fosters communal responsibility, as families come together to support each other's needs.⁴¹ This cooperative spirit often manifests in community events, celebrations, and shared responsibilities, further solidifying the bonds between Nigeriens and Cameroonians. It is common for families to engage in joint celebrations during significant religious holidays, creating a sense of unity that transcends cultural differences. This level of integration not only benefits the individuals involved but also contributes positively to the social landscape of Cameroon, enhancing intercultural relations within the community.

2.3.2. Chadian Isolation and Family Structure

Conversely, the experiences of Chadian immigrants reveal a more challenging social dynamic, particularly for singles and those pursuing education. Many Chadian migrants, especially students, express feelings of isolation due to their limited family structures and social networks in Cameroon.⁴² Unlike their Nigerien counterparts, Chadians often report lower rates of intermarriage with Cameroonians, leading to difficulties in forging community ties that could enhance their integration. Interviews with Chadian immigrants suggest that many young adults are

focused on their education and career development, which may limit their engagement in social activities that promote relationship building. As a result, those who arrive as students often find themselves in a precarious social position, lacking the familial support networks that are crucial for successful adaptation. This isolation can have profound implications on their mental health and sense of belonging, making it more challenging to establish a sense of home in a foreign land.⁴³

The emotional burden of isolation is particularly pronounced among Chadian females and males who may encounter additional societal pressures and challenges in navigating dating or romantic relationships in a new cultural context. While some Chadian students form platonic friendships, the lack of deeper connections can leave many feeling disconnected and yearning for the familial bonds that often characterize life back home.⁴⁴ Additionally, when Chadian immigrants do form relationships, they tend to be limited to casual interactions rather than long-term commitments. This can be partly attributed to cultural norms regarding dating and marriage, which may emphasize caution and family involvement. In many cases, Chadian students may hold on to the idea of returning home after their studies, further discouraging them from establishing deep, meaningful relationships in Cameroon. The transient nature of their residency influences their willingness to invest emotionally in the local community or pursue committed partnerships. Despite these social challenges, some Chadians still strive to create family networks through shared cultural activities and communal events among fellow students. However, these efforts often lack the depth and lasting nature of relationships fostered through intermarriage. As a result, the potential for meaningful integration experiences is diminished, and feelings of isolation remain prevalent.⁴⁵

2.3.3. Comparative Analysis and Implications

The contrasting social dynamics between Nigerien and Chadian immigrants highlight significant disparities in their experiences of integration within Cameroonian society. Nigeriens, through their intermarriage practices, cultivate deeper community ties and foster familial connections that

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Mallam Mohammadou Rabiou., male trader and Nigerien migrant, age 53. Interview by author, 7 June 2025 at his residence in dschang, 9:00am.

⁴² Dickmi, Marcel., "Migration académique et intégration sociale des étudiants tchadiens à l'Université de Yaoundé I", (Master's thesis). Université de Yaoundé I, 2022,

p.37.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Kadidja Zara., female Chadian student, age 23, Interviewed by author, 2nd July 2025, Bonas Yaoundé 9:00pm

⁴⁵ Ibid.

support their adaptation efforts. Their experiences illustrate how building partnerships with local nationals can create pathways for enhanced acceptance and emotional well-being. In contrast, Chadian immigrants face unique challenges due to their isolation, particularly among those who are single or focused on their studies. The limitations in their social networks hinder their ability to forge the strong communal bonds that contribute to a sense of belonging.⁴⁶ As Chadian families are often smaller and less interconnected compared to the larger communal structures favored by Nigeriens, their immigration experience can feel more solitary and less supported.

These stark differences underscore the importance of recognizing how family dynamics shape immigrant experiences.⁴⁷ Understanding the role that intermarriage can play in facilitating integration offers valuable insights into potential pathways for enhancing social cohesion between immigrant communities and local populations. For Chadian immigrants, addressing isolation through community-building initiatives and support networks may promote a more inclusive experience, ultimately leading to better integration outcomes. In summary, the social family dynamics among Nigerien and Chadian immigrants reveal profound differences in their integration strategies and experiences. While Nigeriens frequently engage in intermarriage to strengthen their community ties and improve social cohesion, Chadians often face feelings of isolation due to their limited social networks and transient nature. Acknowledging these dynamics is crucial for developing targeted policies and support systems that foster meaningful connections among immigrant communities while facilitating their successful integration into the broader socio-cultural landscape of Cameroon.

2.3.4. Education and Family Integration Strategies

In examining the social dynamics of Nigerien and Chadian immigrants in Cameroon, education emerges as a crucial tool for integration, albeit through differing pathways. While a significant portion of Chadian immigrants pursue higher education as a primary goal, leading to their establishment in university towns, a smaller segment of Nigerien immigrants approximately 5 to 6% also arrives in

⁴⁶ Hassiatou Khaltoumi., female Chadian student, age 23, Interviewed by author, 22nd July 2024, CRADAT Yaounde 5:30pm

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Issa Lukman ., male trader and Nigerien migrant, age 33, Interview by author, 19 June 2025 at his residence in Bafuossam, 9:00am.

⁴⁹ Halimatu Ibrahim., female simtres and Nigerien migrant, age 25, Interview by author, 2nd october 2024 at compound in Bambui- Bamenda, 4:30.

Cameroon with academic aspirations.⁴⁸ This minority highlights the diversity of motivations within the Nigerien immigrant community, even though the primary focus remains on economic activities rather than education. A distinctive and influential factor in the integration of Nigerien immigrants is their propensity for intermarriage with Cameroonians. This practice not only fosters strong social and familial ties within the local community but also creates a unique pathway for establishing a sense of belonging in a new environment. When Nigerien immigrants marry Cameroonian nationals, they frequently have children who automatically qualify for Cameroonian nationality.⁴⁹ By enrolling these children in local schools, Nigerien families ensure that they are immersed in Cameroonian culture from a young age, creating a seamless blending of identities. This educational integration offers these children a substantial advantage, as they grow up with a dual cultural heritage, allowing them to navigate both their parents' backgrounds and the local community effectively.

In contrast, Chadian immigrants generally prioritize education as their primary strategy for integration, enrolling in academic programs that often require significant dedication and focus. Many Chadian students are found in urban areas, particularly in universities where they seek to enhance their skills and knowledge. However, the emphasis on education can lead to challenges concerning their social integration.⁵⁰ Chadian immigrants often report feelings of isolation, especially if they are single and lack familial support in their new environment. While they engage in social interactions within academic settings, these connections may not translate into a strong sense of community, as their focus on studies might curtail opportunities for establishing deeper, more personal relationships with Cameroonians.⁵¹ The educational journey for Chadian students can also create a unique disjunction between academic life and community integration. Unlike Nigeriens who build familial ties through intermarriage, Chadians often remain within student networks that do not facilitate deep-rooted connections with the local population. The focus on

⁵⁰ Dickmi, Marcel.,(2022). "Migration académique et intégration sociale des étudiants tchadiens à l'Université de Yaoundé I", (Master's thesis). Université de Yaoundé I, p.55.

⁵¹ TODJIMBE Raphael, "La colonie Tchadien au Cameroun: le cas de ville de Yaoundé", mémoire de Master II, Université de Yaoundé I, 2010, p.43.

academic achievements may inadvertently delay their integration, as many do not establish lasting relationships that could ease their adaptation to life in Cameroon.⁵² Additionally, Chadian students may experience cultural challenges that further complicate their social dynamics, as they navigate a system vastly different from their own cultural backgrounds.

Moreover, the implications of these varying strategies become apparent when considering the long-term prospects for integration.⁵³ Children of Nigerien immigrants, raised and educated in Cameroon, are more likely to identify strongly with their host country, effectively becoming cultural bridges between their parents' traditions and Cameroonian norms. This intergenerational integration significantly enhances social cohesion and community ties, contributing positively to the cultural landscape of Cameroon.⁵⁴ On the other hand, the Chadian experience of education can lead to complications in socio-cultural integration, particularly for those who plan to return to Chad after their studies. Their transient focus often results in limited community engagement, leaving them less connected to both their immigrant peers and the local population. This isolation can affect not only their personal identities but also their ability to contribute to the socio-economic fabric of Cameroon once they complete their education. In summary, while both Nigerien and Chadian immigrants utilize education as a means of integration, the differences in their approaches are stark. Nigerien immigrants often leverage intermarriage as a strategic avenue to build familial networks and ensure their children's seamless integration into Cameroonian society through local schooling. Conversely, Chadian immigrants primarily focus on higher education, which may inadvertently create barriers to deeper social connections and community belonging. Understanding these nuanced differences enriches the discourse on immigrant integration strategies and highlights the complex interplay between education, family, and social cohesion within Cameroonian society.⁵⁵

Conclusion

This study has examined the diverse strategies employed by Nigerien and Chadian immigrants in Cameroon to facilitate their integration into the host society. The findings reveal that Nigerien immigrants prioritize informal trade and intermarriage, leveraging their cultural backgrounds and social networks to establish successful businesses and build relationships with Cameroonians. In contrast, Chadian immigrants focus on entrepreneurship and education, often relying on their own resources and networks to achieve economic stability and social mobility. The study highlights the importance of cultural backgrounds, social capital, and economic resources in shaping the integration experiences of these groups. The implications of this study are significant for policymakers and practitioners seeking to support immigrant integration and promote social cohesion in Cameroon and beyond. The findings suggest that tailored support programs addressing the unique needs and strengths of Nigerien and Chadian immigrants can enhance their integration experiences and contribute to the broader development goals of Cameroon. Furthermore, this study underscores the importance of recognizing and supporting the economic and social contributions of immigrant populations, highlighting the need for more inclusive policies and programs that promote social cohesion and immigrant integration. Recognising these divergent trajectories is vital for policymakers: targeted measures facilitating business registration and vocational training for urban traders, secure land and services for rural settlers, simplified documentation for long-term residents, and inclusive education and health access can enhance migrants' contributions and social cohesion. Future research should combine finer-grained local case studies with quantitative estimates to capture intra-group heterogeneity and long-term integration outcomes beyond 2017.

⁵² Massoma, L.T. « Immigration Estudiantine Tchadienne Et Incidence Sur La Vie Universitaire: Cas Des Étudiants Tchadiens De l'Université De Maroua » *In International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, vol 8, no. 2, 2021, pp. 150-156

⁵³ DJEKILAMBER Alexis, "L'insertion des réfugiés au Cameroun : le cas des Tchadiens (1975-2008)", mémoire de DIPES II, Ecole Normale Supérieure, p.43.

⁵⁴ NKENE, B-J), « Les immigrants nigériens à Douala : problèmes et stratégies d'insertion sociale des étrangers en milieu urbain », *Afrique et Développement*, vol. XXVIII, n° 3-4, 2003, pp.142-167.

⁵⁵ Dickmi, Marcel., "Migration académique et intégration sociale des étudiants tchadiens à l'Université de Yaoundé I", (Master's thesis). Université de Yaoundé I, 2022, p.65.

References

A. Oral Interviews

No	Names	Sex	Age	Nationality	Profession	Place and date of interview	Contact
1	Baba Ibrahim	male	23	Nigerien	nails pedicurist	total bafoussam
2	Mallam Mohammadou Rabiou	Male	53	Nigerien	Trader	residence in Dschang	694702000
3	Alfrede Gabdibe	male	26	Chadian	Student hustler	Bonas Yaounde	690785655
4	Mohammed Sani	Male	33	Nigerien	Trader	Foreke Dschang	678990077
5	Abdou Rahman	male	49	Nigerien	Café server	kouoptamo	688030300
6	Alhadji Bouba	male	53	Nigerien	Trader	Online through whatsApps	+22796283562
7	Valerie Kutneur	male	26	Chadian	Student bike rider	Keleng Dschang	699462815
8	Yousuf Sani	male	51	Nigerien	Café server	foumbot
9	Hadjia Hawa kande	female	43	Nigerien	Trader	Tsinga Yaoundé
10	Kutneur Sonne	male	26	Chadian	Trader	Online through whatsApps	+23566123456
11	Kadidja Zara	female	23	Chadian	Student	Bonas Yaoundé	678667890
12	Hassiatou Khaltoumi	female	24	Chadian	Student	CRADAT Yaoundé	699887655
13	Issa Lukman	male	33	Nigerien	Trader	Hausa quarter Bafoussam

B. Published books, Articles, reports, journals & Internet sources

- ARANGO, J.,(2004), *Theories of International Migration*. In: D. JOLY, ed, *International migration in the new millennium: global movement and settlement*. Aldershot; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate.
- Gigla, G. (2009)“Les tenancières des ‘circuits’ et les ‘dada bil bil’ tchadiennes dans la province de l’Extrême-Nord au Cameroun: entre stratégies d’adaptation et construction d’une citoyenneté ‘censitaire’ transfrontalière”, inédit.
- Reilly.o, Karen.,(2019) *Migration Theories: A Critical Overview*. figshare. <https://hdl.handle.net/2134/19442>. © Routledge.
- Anarfi, J. K., Awusabo-Asare, K., & Nsawah-Nuamah, N.,(2000). Push and pull factors of international migration. *Country Report: Ghana. Eurostat Working Papers*.
- Saibou Issa. Ethnicité, frontière et stabilité aux confins du Cameroun, du Nigéria et du Tchad. Paris: L'Harmatan, 2012.
- Castles, S., & Miller, M. J. *The age of migration: International population movements in the modern world*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Odeismann Rodriguess & Jordi Thomas *crossing african borders: migration and mobility* Jean. Gormo., “Forced Migration of Chadians in the Faro Division in Northern Cameroon (1980-2010)”. In , OpenEdition books. p. 71-82.
- Lukong Stella Shulika., (2021), “Nigeria-Cameroon Relations: An Appraisal” in *A Sleeping Giant?*, pp 101-112.
- Stark, Oded., “Discontinuity and the Theory of International Migration”.*Kyklos/volume 37, issue 2/, 1984.*

10. NKOUNKOU, J. (1990) « Mouvements migratoires et tentatives de repeuplement des espaces ruraux », UEPA : Conférence sur « Le Rôle des migrations dans le développement de l'Afrique : problèmes et politiques pour les années 90, Nairobi, Communications spontanées, pp 10-42.
11. NKENE, B-J. (2003) « Les immigrés nigériens à Douala : problèmes et stratégies d'insertion sociale des étrangers en milieu urbain », Afrique et Développement, vol. XXVIII, n° 3-4, pp.142-167.
12. Evina, C.,(2010), Migration au Cameroun: Profil National 2009, IOM, Geneva, <http://www.iomdakar.org/profiles/content/migration-profiles-cameroon> (accessed 26 August 2024).
13. Massey, D., J. Arango, G. Hugo, et al., (1993) "Theories of international migration: a review and appraisal", *Population and Development Review*, 19(3): 431-466.
14. Atangana, M. (2013). "Migration and Integration in Cameroon: The Case of Nigerian and Chadian Immigrants." *Journal of African Studies*, 13(2), 123-140.
15. Ndi, A. (2014). "Integration of Migrants in Cameroon: Challenges and Prospects." *African Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(2), 1-14.
16. LALIBERTE, D. (nd) Tchad : Migration de refuge et Nuptialité – Rupture en deça, polygamie au-delà, Rapport d'étude, n° 49.
17. NTSAMA ONANA Serge Sabine., (2021), "Migration et insertion socioprofessionnelle des Tchadiennes et Centrafricaines au Cameroun de 1964 à 2005", Département d'Histoire, Thèse de doctorat, Université de Yaoundé I.
18. BATANGA Maurice, "Le Statut des Etrangers au Cameroun". Mémoire de Maîtrise en Relations Internationales. Yaoundé IRIC 1988.
19. Dickmi, Marcel.,(2022). "Migration académique et intégration sociale des étudiants tchadiens à l'Université de Yaoundé I", (Master's thesis). Université de Yaoundé I.
20. DJEKILAMBER Alexis, "L'insertion des réfugiés au Cameroun : le cas des Tchadiens (1975-2008)", mémoire de DIPES II, Ecole Normale Supérieure.
21. TODJIMBE Raphael, "La colonie Tchadien au Cameroun : le cas de ville de Yaoundé",
22. Spindler, W. (2008) "Cameroun : De nombreux Tchadiens estiment le retour impossible du fait de l'insécurité". Points de presse, 26 février 2008 au Palais des Nations à Genève. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.fr/4acf41e721.html> Accessed 07 January 2012.
23. UNHCR,(1991-2003),Rapports,annuels.Availableat: www.unhcr.org/statistics Accessed 24 August 2023.
24. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). (2017). ECCAS – Free Movement of Persons. Retrieved August 2017 from <https://www.uneca.org/pages/eccas-free-movement/persons>.
25. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2009). Not Just numbers- An Educational Toolkit about Migration and Asylum in Europe. Retrieved on 27th July 2019 from <https://www.unhcr.org/numbers-toolkit/NJN-MANUAL-EN.pdf>