

## **A REVIEW OF URBANIZATION IN NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** The trend of urbanization differs from country to country but, in the case of Nigeria, rural-urban migration; influenced by the influx of migrants from rural areas seems to be a major cause of urbanization. This most likely, is a result of the rural-urban bias that seems to have taken root in most parts of the country. Thus, this study explored the trend of urbanization in Nigeria and answered four research questions which were formulated in the course of the study. Literature on urbanization in Nigeria; patterns, causes, benefits and challenges and how best to cope with urbanization, were reviewed. The study anchored on the rational choice theory because it best explains the trend of urbanization in Nigeria. The study adopted a desktop research method because; this study relied on existing literature. Data were therefore derived through secondary sources and analysed using a thematic method of data analysis. Findings revealed that the current pattern of urbanization in Nigeria is focused on the depopulation of rural areas and the increase in urban population and not the creation of cities or the transformation of rural areas into urban areas. It was also revealed that this breeds poverty, housing problems, pollution, overcrowding, heavy traffic congestion, improvement of urban planning laws, rules and guides, underdevelopment of rural areas, and loss of human and natural resources in rural areas. The study, therefore, recommends the creation of jobs especially, in the informal sector. It was also recommended that the government should ensure even development in urban and rural areas to curb rural-urban migration and perhaps, ensure equitable distribution of population in urban and rural areas.

**Keywords:** Rural Areas, Rural-Urban Migration, Urbanization, Urban Areas.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Urbanization is a process of social change in which rural areas transit into urban areas. This transition process is most often, characterised of commercialization, industrialization and an increase in administrative activities in the area. Obilor and Awogu (2022) stated that, urbanization summarily has to do with the growth or emergence of cities or urban centres. It is a process that is responsible for the growth of cities and the development of towns (Maigari, 2014).

Chen and Parish (1996), Chirisa (2008), Abiodun (1997) and Modal (2019) opined that the two major sources of urbanization are; rural-urban migration and the rate of natural increase. Chen and Parish (1996) and Chirisa (2008) further stated that rural-urban migration has been a net contributor to the growth of urban centres especially, in the 1950s to the 1970s, while natural increase contributes more to urban growth in the past two decades. Mortimore and Tiffen

(1995) posit that urbanization results from an extensive development of infrastructure, job creation and economic expansion which also, has led to a massive growth in urban population as people tends to migrate to urban areas to assess these jobs, infrastructure and economic opportunities.

In line with this, Tombari (2019) opined that urbanization is the steady increase in the number of people living in cities or urban centres. According to him, this occurrence is a concomitant of the continuous mass movement of people from rural areas or settlements to cities or urban areas. It can also result from natural increase that is, a decrease in mortality and an increase in childbirth due to technological advancement. Obilor and Awogu (2022) added that as urbanization increases so does the population in urban areas however, what constitutes an urban area tends to differ from one country to another (Tombari, 2019).

Modal (2019) opined that, before 1950, urbanization was more common in developed countries due to the industrialisation in Europe and North America in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The movement to cities was usually related to the need for better employment opportunities but, this trend stopped after 1950. Recently, this trend seems to have changed completely especially as, people tend to move from big cities to rural areas thereby, leading to counter-urbanization and thus, the growth of suburbs (Modal, 2019). Bodo (2015) asserts that urbanisation in developing countries, especially in Africa has been unique. This is because, urbanization in the region seems to be growing very fast even as Africans continue to migrate to other parts of the world for economic, leisure and religious reasons (Yi et al, 2018).

There is no doubt that the rural areas in most parts of Africa are primitive and underdeveloped and this may be a leading cause of the increase in population in urban areas. McGranahan & Satterthwaite (2014) stated that Sub-Saharan Africa is still urbanizing at about 1.3% and its urbanisation rate is declining more slowly than in Asia; with the result that by 2020, sub-Saharan Africa is projected to be urbanized faster than Asia. Except for North Africa, all the other regions are urbanising at well under half a per cent per annum, which is consistent with their all having had more than two-thirds of their populations living in urban areas in 2010. In affirmation of this growth rate, UNDESA (2019) argued that the African urban population is expected to be more than triple in over forty years; from 395 million in 2000 to 1.339 billion in 2050.

Salas (2011) argued that urban dwellers are rapidly becoming a major population most importantly, in big cities in developing countries. These countries accommodate most of the world's biggest cities which seem to be growing in an unprecedented rate. Similarly, Nigeria has one of the highest urban growth rates with of its cities ranking among the fastest growing cities in the world. According to Oladunjoye (2005), the country is not just experiencing one of the fastest growing rates of urbanization in the world; its urbanization has also been unique in scale, pervasiveness and historical antecedents and has resulted in a very dense network of urban centres.

Based on this premise, the study investigated the pattern, causes and effects of urbanization in Nigeria. This study covers the whole Nigeria and is a departure from other studies that narrowed their scope by focusing on particular cities in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The trend of urbanization differs from country to country. While urbanization in developed countries may be preceded by industrialization; people are attracted to areas with industries, urbanization in Nigeria; like other developing countries seems to have been caused by rural-urban migration. These migrants have been pushed into the city by the lack of employment opportunities, infrastructural facilities, good education and healthcare, low standard of living etc. that exist in rural areas. Thus, their migration may be prompted by the need to enjoy these facilities as they exist in cities and not because of the establishment of industries.

The regular migration of people in recent times seems to have grown the urban population beyond the available social amenities and economic opportunities in most cities in the country. This has led to numerous social consequences like traffic jams, pollution, unemployment, crime and strain on existing social amenities, especially in crowded cities like Lagos state.

Though this may be challenging especially, in light of its implications on the nation's socio-economic development more challenging is the rural-urban bias that seems to have taken root in most parts of the country. This continues to deprive rural areas of social amenities, employment opportunities, good standard of living etc. and therefore, continues to encourage the migration of people into urban areas thereby, increasing the population in the area and complicating its social and economic problems.

In view of this, this study is an expose on the trend of urbanization in Nigeria. It is aimed at giving an insight into the pattern, causes and effects of urbanization in Nigeria. Thus, this study answered the following questions. They are;

1. What is the pattern of urbanization in Nigeria?
2. What are the causes of urbanization in Nigeria?
3. What are the effects of urbanization in Nigeria?
4. How best can Nigeria cope with urbanization?

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **The Concept Urbanization**

Urbanization is the growth in the size and number of urban centres (Ujoh et al., 2018) which influences the transformation of towns, cities and metropolitan areas Adesina (2003), while at the same time depopulating the rural areas through a process of rural-urban migration. Adegun (2019) described it as the share of a country's total population that lives in urban areas which also, is signified by the steady increase in the population of urban dwellers (Tombari, 2019).

The rate of urbanization over time has increased greatly and continues to increase (UNDESA, 2014; UN-Habitat, 2016; UNDESA, 2019) especially as a large population of rural dwellers continues to move to urban settlements particularly, in Asia and Africa. Modal (2019) stated that the trend of urbanization in developed countries differs from that of developing countries like Nigeria. According to him, in developed countries urbanization is a concomitant of industrialization as industrialization causes people who seek to work in industries to migrate to areas where these industries are located thereby, leading to the growth of cities. On the other

hand, in developing countries, people migrate not necessarily because of the availability of industries but, to escape the rural deprivation experienced in rural areas (McCall, 1955).

In agreement, Eyong and Foy (2006) opined that the conditions in rural areas is pitiful however, most migrants may be faced with, “urban illusion” upon migration as their situation may become worse than it was before they migrated to the urban area due to the limited available resources in the area (Stifel & Thorbecke, 2003; Potts, 2006). In line with this, Adegbola (1987) asserts that while urbanization in developed countries may improve the living conditions of people, in most developing countries urbanization does not improve the living conditions of the people. Rather, it has increased the rate of wars and armed conflicts, insecurity, poverty and diseases (Boadi, et al, 2005; Fay & Opal, 2000).

In view of this, the fact that urbanization does not improve the living standard of people in developing countries could be linked to the varying causes of urbanization in developed and developing countries. While urbanization that is induced by industrialization may not be accompanied by social problems like, unemployment and its concomitant poverty, crime etc., urbanization that is induced by rural-urban migration especially when not associated with industrialization breeds “the urban illusion”. This is a situation where these migrants are unable to achieve the good life they envisage but are rather faced with worse problems like poor housing and social amenities, unemployment, poverty, and pollution; which they would not face in rural areas.

**Table I:** Population, Urban Population and Growth Rate in Africa

Year	Population (Thousands)	Urban population (thousands)	Average annual urban growth (Percentage)
1990	518,053	146,673	-
1995	593,183	181,582	3.79
2000	674,842	2 20,606	3.44
2005	764,328	266,935	3.40
2010	863,314	321,400	3.36
2015	970,173	384,696	3.28
2020	1,081,114	456,580	3.14
2025	1,193,752	537,128	2.98
2030	1,500,000	787, 000,000	2.10

**Source:** Adegun 2011

Table 1 shows that the rate of urban growth in Africa has reduced however, the rate of population growth in urban areas has quadrupled over the years; compared to what was obtainable in the 1990s and has been estimated to remain high in 2030.

**Table II:** Estimates of urbanization rates and urban population growth rates (all in % per annum) by region for 1950–2050

<b>Urbanization rates</b>										
Region	1950 – 1960	1960 –1970	1970 –1980	1980 –1990	1990 –2000	2000 –2010	2010–2020	2020 –2030	2030 – 2040	2040 – 2050
World	1.3	0.8	0.7	0.9	0.8	1.0	0.9	0.7	0.5	0.5
Sub-Saharan Africa	3.3	2.1	2.1	1.9	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.0	0.9
Northern Africa	2.0	1.6	1.1	1.0	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6
Asia	1.9	1.2	1.4	1.7	1.5	1.8	1.4	1.0	0.7	0.6
Europe	1.0	1.0	0.7	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	1.8	1.5	1.2	0.9	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
Northern America	0.9	0.5	0.0	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Oceania	0.7	0.6	0.0	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.2
<b>Urban population growth rates</b>										
World	3.2	2.8	2.6	2.7	2.3	2.3	2.0	1.5	1.2	1.0
Sub-Saharan Africa	5.5	4.6	4.9	4.8	4.0	4.1	4.0	3.6	3.2	2.9
Northern Africa	4.7	4.4	3.6	3.6	2.5	2.1	2.1	1.8	1.6	1.4
Asia	3.9	3.5	3.5	3.8	3.0	3.0	2.3	1.6	1.1	0.8
Europe	2.0	1.8	1.2	0.8	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1
Latin America and the Caribbean	4.6	4.2	3.6	3.0	2.4	1.7	1.4	1.1	0.7	0.5
Northern America	2.7	1.8	1.0	1.2	1.6	1.2	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.6
Oceania	3.0	2.9	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.2	1.1	1.0

**Source:** United Nations Population Division (2015).

Table II shows that, the rate of urbanization in the world was considerably high but is gradually undergoing a decline. In sub-Saharan Africa, the rate of urbanization has undergone a decline in more recent times but, is likely to increase from 2040 – 2050. In Northern Africa, the rate of urbanization is average and may remain average from 2040 – 2050. The rate of urbanization is low currently but may become high and average in time to come. The rate of urbanization in Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, Northern America and Oceania is low and is likely to remain low in future. The table also shows that, the urban population rate in the world is generally low but, is likely to increase and perhaps remain average in Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and Northern America

**Table III:** Major differences between rural and urban societies

S/N	Rural Areas	Urban Areas
1	Life in rural societies was very simple and reflects culturally in the way of dressing, food habits, shelter etc.	Life in urban areas is very complex and complicated.
2	The people in rural societies are most times homogeneous.	The people in the urban areas are heterogeneous.

3	The scope for occupational mobility in rural societies is very little.	In urban areas there are many occupations which also, make occupational mobility easy.
4	In rural societies, the family ties are strong and play a very significant and predominant role.	In urban areas family ties are not strong, and some functions which ought to be performed by the family are in most cases performed by other institutions and associations.
5	In rural societies changes are gradual and may not require social adaptability.	In urban areas change is faster and adaptability to suit such change is required for survival.
6	Culture is very deep-rooted in rural societies.	In urban areas it is difficult to find pure culture as culture is not unified or rooted deeply in the people.
7	In rural societies, there are little or no division of labour.	In urban areas there is always division of labour and specialisation in job allotment.
8	Rural societies love nature and are closer to nature.	In urban areas, people are detached from nature.

### **Pattern of Urbanisation in Nigeria**

Urbanisation in Nigeria started with cities like Kano, Ibadan, Benin, Zaria, Sokoto and others that were already urbanised, with about 450 ethnic groups existing before colonisation (Williamson, 1988). These areas were noted for local and international trade and some of the famous traditional palaces. After colonisation, more trade opportunities were created in the urban centres and the needed roads, rails and infrastructures were constructed in cities where certain items were needed in commercial quantities. These cities attracted people from other areas to come and do business and by so doing; new towns emerged along transportation routes in major towns.

After independence, the pattern of urbanisation in Nigeria was dependent on the Nigerian government's plans and policies (FGN, 1970). In 1967, the military president, General Yakubu Gowon created 12 states with new capitals and in 1976, the state structure was increased to 19 by General Murtala Mohammed, 21 in 1986 and then 30 in 1991 by General Ibrahim Babangida and finally to 36 states in 1993 by General Sani Abacha (FGN, 1991, 1993, 1994).

This sequence of state creation was redefining the Nigerian environment as revenues accrued from oil and other resources were shared monthly with the state governors to develop their state (FGN, 1996, 1997) even though priority was given to the state capitals at the expense of other areas in their states.

Daramola (2010) argued that this inadvertently facilitated the continuation of the rural-urban migration. According to Ogun (2010), the rate of migration and thus, urbanization was significantly low prior to 1970; when Nigeria was dependent on agriculture compared to recent times. This has brought about various problems like; poor security, extreme crime rates, high unemployment, high poverty rate, slums, insecurity and environmental degradation among others (Agbola, 2004).

Based on this, the root cause of urbanization is rural-urban migration. But, the rate of urbanization has increased greatly in Nigeria compared to what was obtainable before 1970 when Nigeria was basically, an agrarian economy. However, it is also important to note that,



there was a time in the history of Nigeria when commercialization was the root cause of urbanization in Nigeria.

**Table VI: Nigeria's Rural and Urban Population, 1950-2025**

Year	Rural Population	Urban Population	Urban Population as % of Total
1950	29,595,000	3,340,000	10.1
1955	32,605,000	4,489,000	12.1
1960	36,220,000	6,058,000	14.3
1965	40,396,000	8,280,000	17.0
1970	45,252,000	11,319,000	20.0
1975	50,835,000	15,511,000	23.4
1980	57,188,000	21,242,000	27.1
1985	63,448,000	28,568,000	30.9
1990	70,383,000	38,159,000	35.2
1995	77,533,000	50,16200	39.3
2000	84,853,000	64,768,000	43.3
2005	91,960,000	82,347,000	47.2
2010	98,435,000	102,831,000	51.1
2015	103,411,000	125,343,000	54.8
2020	106,458,000	148,935,000	58.3
2025	107,758,000	173,135,000	61.6

**Source:** UNDESA Population Division 2015

The population trend in Nigeria shows a wide population gap between the rural and urban areas. It shows that the population in urban areas have increased greatly. Nevertheless, both areas have experienced increase in population but, while the increase in population in rural areas may have been as a result of increase in childbirth, the increase in population rate in urban areas is likely to be as a result of rural-urban migration.

### **Causes of Urbanization in Nigeria**

Researchers have opined the causes of urbanization in the world are industrialisation, commercialisation, social beneficial services, natural increase and employment. Bodo

(2015) stated that, in Nigeria, urbanization is caused by rural-urban migration. Gilbert and Gugler (1982) argued that, the absence of essential basic amenities, unavailability of government presence and little or no commercial activities in the rural areas due to the rural-urban bias in most developing countries drives people away from the rural areas to urban areas.

Bodo (2019a) on the other hand opined that urbanization emerges as small villages gradually grow to become small towns, smaller towns become larger towns, and large towns become cities through the process of Rural Urban Transformation. He further stated that Nigeria has a system that focuses development in urban areas alone; with every government that comes into

power focusing on transforming and adding more colours to the already built city where the seat of power is located (Bodo, 2019; Bodo & David, 2018). Therefore, it is evident that the rural areas influence the formation of cities.

### **Benefits and Challenges of Urbanization in Nigeria**

The challenges posed by urbanisation are immense and have been observed to include; human and environmental poverty, declining in the quality of life and the untapped wealth of human resources (Chen, 2007). Bodo (2015) added that, housing and social amenities are inadequate, such that millions now live in substandard and subhuman environments, plagued by slums, and squalor. In affirmation, UNCHS (1982) stated that about one-third of the urban population lives in impoverished slums and squatter settlements.

In another vein, Bodo and David (2018) explained that urbanization has affected land, water, air and wildlife. This is because of the number of people, the number of buildings and the increased demands on the available resources in the cities. The lack of proper sanitation and drainage systems has led to the disposal of waste in wrong places thereby, contaminating the environment and leading to health hazards.

Gugler (1997) argued that urbanization has plugged the rural areas in Nigeria into further underdevelopment while increasing the population in urban areas and increasing the risk of the spread of an epidemic (CNN, 2016). This is based on the fact that, it leads to the loss of human and natural resources in rural areas (Hall, 2001; Kotter, 2004). UNDESA (2014) stressed that urbanization overstretches public services and facilities thereby, leading to heavy traffic congestion, pollution etc. in cities like; Lagos, Enugu etc.

Irrespective of these, urbanization attracts development to a locality and its environs. According to Sajor (2001), it necessitates the need to provide utilities and road networks alongside services such as schools, recreational parks, and healthcare and retail parks in a place. It also leads to the improvement of urban planning laws, rules and guides which helps to guide development and advance development projects (Kotter, 2004).

In view of this, though urbanization causes pollution, strain on the existing infrastructure and rural underdevelopment, it also provides a ready market for goods and services and a ready labour for production. It also has the potential to increase the government's revenue and ensure development in neighbouring towns.

### **Coping with urbanization**

Various researchers like, Abiodun (1997), Cohen (2006), Golden (1981), Goldstein (1990) and Rogers (1982) have suggested ways to cope with urbanization but, the World Bank reported that no country successfully solves the problem of urbanisation (Drakakis-Smith, 1995). Even at that, Castillo (2007) and Bodo (2015) stated that countries can effectively cope with urbanization by creating jobs especially, in the informal sector. This can be done through business-friendly policies, encouraging local investors and attracting of foreign investors. This will also curb some of the problems in urban centres like unemployment, poverty and perhaps, crime.



Drakakis-Smith (2000) opined that, if development were to be planned and evenly distributed between rural and urban areas, there may be a need to migrate in search of greener pastures because, the rural areas will not be underdeveloped (Olayiwola and Adeleye, 2005). In line with this, Bodo (2015) stated that it is possible to achieve even national development if ethnic and political sentiments are put aside. Bodo (2019b) future recommended that corruption and gross mismanagement of funds should be curbed and policies that favour the rural areas be implemented especially as it has been discovered that a major setback experienced in Nigeria, is the lack of policy implementation (Bodo, 2015).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study anchored on the rational choice theory because it effectively explains the urbanization trend in Nigeria. According to this theory, in decision making, actors tend to examine the choices available to them and then select the choice that best favours them in a situation.

Based on this theory, the population of rural dwellers tend to migrate to urban areas after assessing the pros and cons of remaining in the rural area as against migrating to the city. Some of the advantages that they may assess are; closeness to nature, lack of pollution and traffic jams, communalism etc. The disadvantages which may be assessed include; the lack of employment opportunities, the lack of social amenities, the lack of adequate power supply, poor living conditions etc. On the other hand, migrating to the city allows them to explore good employment opportunities, social amenities, a more stable power supply, good living conditions etc. but, at the expense of their communal lifestyle and their closeness to nature.

They may not be able to enjoy the good things which the rural areas provide but rather, be forced to adapt to pollution, traffic congestion, individualism and the like. Having weighed these, most youths seem to have resolved that migrating to the cities portends a better future for them; thereby, leading to the increased rate in rural-urban migration and thus, urbanization in Nigeria.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Urbanization in Nigeria started with cities like Kano, Ibadan, Benin, Zaria, Sokoto. This was triggered by commercialization as people began to move to these places to do business and roads, infrastructure and railways began to spring up. This was the trend of urbanization in the past; therefore, this study investigated the pattern, causes and effects of urbanization in Nigeria.

The study adopted a desktop research method because; this study relied on existing literature. Data were therefore derived through secondary sources like; textbooks, journals and internet materials. This is because it enabled the researcher to cover the entire Nigeria; which is the scope of the study. The literature reviewed focused on urbanization in Nigeria. These materials focused on the pattern, causes, effects and how best urbanization can be coped with in Nigeria. Data derived from this study were categorized and analysed using a thematic method of data analysis.

## Summary of Findings

### What is the pattern of urbanization in Nigeria?

The current pattern of urbanization in Nigeria is focused on the depopulation of rural areas and the increase in urban population and not the creation of cities or the transformation of rural areas into urban areas. Therefore, the rate of urban growth is not commensurate with the urban population growth in the country as urban population rate have continued to increase at an alarming rate even as the country experiences a decline in urban growth.

### What are the causes of urbanization in Nigeria?

The study revealed that the major cause of urbanization is rural-urban migration; influenced by the absence of essential basic amenities, unavailability of government presence and little or no commercial activities in the rural areas. It was further revealed that, urbanization could emerge through the process of rural urban transformation, where small villages gradually grow to become small towns, smaller towns become larger towns, and large towns become cities.

### What are the effects of urbanization in Nigeria?

The study revealed that urbanization breeds poverty, housing problems, pollution, crime, overcrowding, heavy traffic congestion, improvement of urban planning laws, rules and guides, underdevelopment of rural areas, loss of human and natural resources in rural areas.

### How best can Nigeria cope with urbanization?

The study revealed that Nigeria can effectively cope with urbanization through the creation of jobs especially, in the informal sector. It was revealed that, an even development of rural and urban areas would curb rural-urban migration and reduce population growth in urban areas.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Urbanization generally has to do with the growth of cities. In the past, urbanization in Nigeria was mostly influenced by commercialization. However, the creation of state capitals streamlined the government's attention to urban areas. This, therefore, made the capital the centre of development in the country thereby, denying the rural areas little or no development. In a bid to experience these development features, those who reside in rural areas have had to migrate to urban areas thereby, increasing the urban population in the country.

In view of this, the urban population has grown beyond the rate of urban growth especially, as urban centres in the country seem to have stopped growing. This portrays severe consequences for urban and rural areas alike. Therefore, this study recommends that:

1. Government and non-government organizations work together and create jobs for the teeming urban population. Self-employment should also be encouraged through skill acquisition training and the giving of grants.
2. The government should ensure even development in urban and rural areas by ensuring the establishment of job opportunities and social amenities in rural areas. This will help

to curb rural-urban migration and perhaps, ensure equitable distribution of population in urban and rural areas.

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