



## RURAL-URBAN MIGRANTS AND CRIME IN PORT HARCOURT

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to discuss rural-urban migrants and crimes in Port Harcourt. Specifically, this paper looked at the reasons for rural-urban migration in Port Harcourt and rural-urban migrants and crimes in Port Harcourt. The frustration aggressive theory was used as its theoretical framework. The design of the study is a descriptive survey. This study uses secondary data and content analysis was utilized to analyze the data. The study revealed that Quest for Educational Awareness, Industrialization, Quest for Health Care, Employment Opportunities, Inadequate Social and Infrastructural Facilities in Rural Areas and Trade are the reasons for rural-urban migration in Port Harcourt. Also, the rural-urban migrants have contributed to crime such as oil bunkery, kidnappings, armed robbery etc in Port Harcourt. Consequently, the study recommends even development of both urban and rural settlements in order to reduce the mounting pressure of migrants in Port Harcourt Urban.

**Keywords: Rural-Urban Migrants, Crime, Port Harcourt.**

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### Introduction

Considering the implications of population movements for places of origin and destinations, migration has garnered significant interest in recent scholarship. The geographical distribution of population globally has undergone major changes in the last century and will continue to experience significant transformations during the coming decades. The latter fact is essentially due to dynamic nature of migration. People continue to relocate from their usual place or region of residence (origin) to another (destination) in order to meet their desires and aspirations for good education and good health care (voluntary). However, other people are forced (involuntary) to relocate by environmental shocks, such as, floods, famine, desertification, and earthquake; and human induced shocks, such as, violent conflict, warfare and insecurity, slavery, child and human trafficking among others (United Nations, 2013; National Geographic Expeditions. 2013).

The trends, challenge and impacts of rural-urban migration have continued to generate great debates since the last three decades or so. The far reaching effects of rural-urban migration on crime are evident in most communities in Nigeria. Most of the communities in Nigeria and especially in

Rivers State are less developed and backward. This is because crime in recent times has been one of the major issues bedeviling majority of the Nigeria communities as evidenced in Port Harcourt. The 2014 Global Report on security indicated that Nigeria is one of the crime ravaging countries in the world. The report evaluated Nigeria high on the accompanying basic factors: unlawful ownership of arms, imitation, getting taken affectations, misrepresentations, thievery, burglary, Boko Haram, outfitted theft, grabbing, endeavored murder cases, homicide and so forth (Amirize, 2019).

Migration from rural to urban areas has historically played a key role in the rapid growth of cities and, together with the reclassification of rural localities into urban centres; it continues to be an important component of city growth. Urbanization as consequence of provincial metropolitan relocation impacted by highway development has carried various benefits to the public economies and openings for further developing individuals' prosperity, for destitution decrease and for the advancement of reasonable turn of events, yet it has additionally acquired genuine difficulties numerous nations, like Nigeria. Information and analysis are essential to





understand these challenges and to assist policy-makers define, formulate and evaluate policies and programmes that address them.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Wosu (2007) asserted that given the character and content of communal conflict, the social matrix of material conditions of existence and the entire cultural cosmos within communities in the Niger Delta have been destroyed. We witness the emigration of young persons, women and children to the urban city for refuge and survival and the inherent destruction of the social fabric of the communities from which they migrate. The contest for access to oil wealth has created factions and unrest in communities that result to conflicts of urban elites against local elites, chiefs against the youths, elites against the youths, youths against community, youths against youths and claims agents against community (Wosu, 2007). Evidence shows that rural-urban migration whether for circulation, temporary sojourns in towns or permanent urban residence, is the most significant form of migration and has attracted much study (Anele, 2003). The excessive migration from rural to urban areas is seen as the major cause of this growth (Odigie & Orobosa, 2008). Adekola (2016) studied “migration, urbanization and environmental problems in Nigeria”. This study looked at the factors inducing rural-urban migration and urbanization in Nigeria. Similarly, Bassey et al., (2020) researched on the influence of rapid urbanization on environmental quality in selected neighbourhoods in Port Harcourt Metropolis. This study assessed the influence of rapid urbanization on environmental quality in selected neighborhoods of Port Harcourt city and further reveals that provision of waste receptacle was inadequate in Port Harcourt (PH) Township thereby resulting to inadequate frequency of waste collection in the neighbourhood, also due to inadequate drainage facilities there was occurrence of flood in Mgbuoba and PH Township. Scholars have carried out different researches in this area but none of this study has actually looked at the role of migrants in urban crime in Port Harcourt. This is the gap this study intends to fill.

### **Research Questions**

The questions formulated by the researcher to guide this study are:

- i. What are the reasons for rural-urban migration in Port Harcourt?
- ii. What are the contributions of rural-urban migrants to crime in Port Harcourt?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general purpose of this study is to discuss rural-urban migrants and crime in Port Harcourt. Specifically, the study will:

- i. Ascertain the reasons for rural-urban migration in Port Harcourt
- ii. Ascertain the contributions of rural-urban migrants to crime in Port Harcourt

### **Significance of the Study**

The study has both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, this study will add to the body of knowledge in this area. It will throw more light on the existing literature with regard to rural-urban migrants and crime in Port Harcourt. It will be of great help to students and researchers who may want to investigate issues relating to this area. Practically, this work will produce data, which will enhance the understanding the best strategies for eliminating the migrant induced crimes in Port Harcourt. Based on this, governmental and non-governmental organizations would be able to mount effective policies to control migration in Port Harcourt City.

### **Operationalization of Terms**

The concepts of Crime and Rural-Urban Migrants are defined for better understanding and appreciation of this paper.

**Crime:** Crime is like other concepts in social sciences, which have no generally accepted definition. According to Adebayo (2013), crime is also seen as a violation of the rules agreed to be respected by all members of the society, and upon which the rest members of the society mete sanction upon those guilty of the violation.

**The Urban Concept:** Urbanization, simply defined is the process by which urban population





increases in absolute number and in proportion to rural population either through the increase in population of existing cities or through the growth of new ones. This definition is further amplified by Mabogunje (2005) who indicated that an urban settlement is as a large, compact, densely built-up area where open spaces are often in short supply except at the periphery. Urban centres are associated with the diversity of functions where all types of occupations, industries, and services are represented.

**Migrants:** Migrants are persons who leave or relocate from their habitual dwelling to go to new places to seek opportunities or safer and better prospects. Migrant is a person who travels away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.

**Rural-Urban Migrants:** Rural-urban migration is usually clarified as far as push-pull factors. Young people move to metropolitan regions with the likelihood of getting worthwhile work in the businesses. Rural-urban migrants are people who move from rural areas to urban areas in search of a better life.

### **Area of Study**

Port-Harcourt the capital city of Rivers State is located in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria with more than five ethnic groups or nationalities. The city serves as the commercial nerve centre of the state and has over the years witnessed an influx of migrants from the rural communities where farmland have been destroyed as a result of oil exploration and exploitation by multinational oil firms. Such areas include Ogoni, Etche, Abua and Ikwerre among others. In Ogoni for instance, oil pipelines crises-cross the farmland with oil spills rendering arable land infertile. The city is important as it is the centre of social and economic life of the state and thus highly congested. The city is a significant mechanical focus as it has an enormous number of global firms just as other modern concerns, especially business identified with oil industry. In 1973, a social overview found that travelers comprised of 72% of Port Harcourt's

populace, and from a space of 15.54km<sup>2</sup> in 1914, it became uncontrolled to a space of 360km<sup>2</sup> during the 1980s (www.wikipedia.org). Starting at 2016, Port Harcourt city assessed populace was 1,865,000, which was considered to have developed from the 2006 authority statistics populace figure of 1,382,592 occupants (NPC, 2006).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Frustration and Aggression theory will be adopted for this study. The frustration and aggression theory were proposed by John Dollard, Neal Miller (1939), and further developed by Miller, Roger Barker et al., (1941, pp.337-366) and Leonard Berkowitz (1969). These theorists asserted that "aggression is the result of blocking, or frustrating, a person's efforts to attain a goal" (Friedman & Schustack, 1999, pp. 204-207). The frustration and aggression theory explains why people are scapegoat (Whitley & Kite, 2010). It attempts to give reasons for the cause of violence in society. The proponents argued that frustration causes aggression, but when the basis of frustration cannot have contested, then, the aggression is carried out on the vulnerable. Breuer and Elson (2017, p.2) defined frustration "as an event instead of an affective state. The questionable advantage of describing dissatisfaction through perceptible characteristics of occasions or natural attributes is that it permits depiction and testing of its causal impacts, like those on animosity, impartially as opposed to depending on emotional self-revealed reflection." In applying this hypothesis to this examination it is seen that joblessness prompts dissatisfaction. The powerlessness to find a new line of work prompts disappointment and animosity, which hurt human security. While the accessibility of occupations is declining or restricted/consistent, the quantity of young people prepared to work is at an expansion. For example, youngsters troop into Port Harcourt looking for greener field, yet are baffled when they can't discover one. This frustration has resulted in young people getting involved in anti-societal behaviours such as cyber crime, drug trafficking, youth restiveness, rape, armed robbery, electoral violence, kidnap for ransom,





artisanal refining, and theft, among others to sustain their living.

### **Methodology**

The design of the study is a descriptive survey. This study uses secondary data. The secondary data was generated from outstanding literature on the subject matter, such as journals, articles and textbooks. In analyzing the data for this research, the paper adopted qualitative (descriptive) rather than quantitative method. The reason is simply because qualitative method does not pose the problem of obscurantism and therefore makes clearer the critical elements contained in the study. In other words, it obviates unwarranted manipulation of figures which sometimes defeats the aim of social researches.

### **Discussion**

This section is dedicated to answering the questions formulated to guide this study. This section will look at the reasons for rural-urban migration in Port Harcourt and the contributions of rural-urban migrants to crime in Port Harcourt.

### **Reasons for Rural-Urban Migration in Port Harcourt**

There are several socio-economic and environmental factors that facilitate the flow of people from rural areas to urban centers. These reasons are:

**Quest for Education/Awareness:** The level and spread of education is one of the indirect factors that influence the rate of urbanization. Most of the features of modernity are significantly absent in rural communities; hence, educated rural dwellers, whose awareness have been raised by education, are often pulled from rural to urban centers via rural-urban migration to urban centers, where the features of modernity exist and the education rural dweller can actualize his/her dreams and aspirations. A survey by the Federal Ministry of Education (2005) indicated there are more rural primary schools (53.4%) than urban ones; over half (51.8%) of secondary schools in located urban centers; and over 80.0 per cent of tertiary institutions in Nigeria are located in urban centers. There are so many institutions of higher

learning in Port Harcourt that students in their thousands flow into the city every year.

**Industrialization:** Agglomeration of industries in an urban centre is a pull factor that attracts labour (mostly able-bodied young folks) from surrounding local communities to the centre because industries require large labour. This is why Port Harcourt keep growing because it is one of the most industrialised cities not just in Nigeria but also in the entire West Africa. This explains why there is daily influx of myriads of people to Port Harcourt as young folks come searching for jobs in addition to those already here. Port Harcourt is home to many oil companies in Nigeria. Shell, Chevron and others have their operation main bases in Port Harcourt besides Eleme Port which is the second-largest also one of the busiest in Nigeria. Cities like these cannot escape massive influx of both skilled and unskilled labours which may subsequently lead to overpopulation. The question is who are the people who move into these cities and from where do they come? The answer is the movers are the young school leavers (graduates) who come in search of occupation after graduating and most of them come from the countryside.

**Quest for Health Care:** Human health is very critical to human wellbeing and development; hence, the saying, health is wealth. It is in this context that people, who have the wherewithal, can afford to go to any length and place to get effective health care, which can sustain their wellbeing. Rural communities globally are characterized by less fortunate wellbeing status and expanded issues of getting to wellbeing administrations contrasted and their metropolitan partners (Humphreys and Solarsh, 2008 in Ikwuyatum, 2016). Troubles of getting to wellbeing administrations result from the need to conquer distance hindrances and lessened neighborhood accessibility of medical care because of the significant expenses of giving wellbeing administrations in scantily populated regions (Hart, Larson, and Lishner, 2005). The disparity of medical services framework that will in general drive individuals to the metropolitan space or focuses is suggest by Adebajo and





Oladeji (2006) in kwuyatum (2016), when they opined that health care system infrastructure and access to health services is skewed towards the urban people and vary between zones and regions.

**Employment Opportunities:** The high deficit of employment opportunities in rural areas in most developing countries is a major push factor and a driver of the increasing flow of people from rural to urban centres in Nigeria, in search of employment opportunities. Cities such as Lagos, Kano, Kaduna, Port Harcourt, Enugu which are part of the nation's industrial hop, are cities of attraction with the large employment opportunities that exist in this urban centres.

**Inadequate Social and Infrastructural Facilities in Rural Areas:** Most typical rural areas in Nigeria lack basic social amenities such as good roads, pipe-borne water, electricity, telecommunication et cetera. This makes it boring to most youth who move to cities, first in search of job opportunities and also to enjoy the hustling and bustling associated with cities. For instance, Niger Delta youth have carried out peaceful demonstrations in Abuja many times for lack of good roads and bridges which are essentially necessary being close to the Atlantic Ocean and has many creeks.

**Trade:** Trade has become a major determinant and driver of both internal and international migration in Nigeria. The apparently large unemployed labour stock that cannot find employment in the formal sector of the economy, tend to find solace in trading, which is a form of self-employment and a survival strategy in the informal sector of the economy. Commercial migrants have gradually evolved in Nigeria, as a new face or configuration of migration in the country. This form of migration is essentially driven by the high energy of demand, caused by the immense needs of the burgeoning population within most urban centres in Nigeria: Local Government headquarters, State Capitals, the Federal Capital Abuja and the commercial capital of Lagos and Port Harcourt in Nigeria (Afolayan, et al., 2011). The Ibo in Nigeria ethnic group from south eastern part of Nigeria dominate

commercial migration in the country; their trading destinations in Nigeria include the major urban centres: Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, Enugu, Kaduna, Kano, Calabar and Jos, among many others.

### **Rural-Urban Migrants and Crime in Port Harcourt**

The disconnect between the people and their source of livelihood without provision for another makes them, especially the youths, idle and thus, are easily used or lured into crimes and violence as well as being used as political thugs by elites. Because they are mostly young people who have fewer responsibilities for families and careers, they are relatively easily mobilized for social and political conflicts. Having tasted “milk and honey” and do not have the opportunity again, the groups, re-group and engage in illegal activities such as oil bunkering, burglary, theft and the likes. They are exposed to the fact that money could be made in different ways including kidnapping for ransom. According to Wosu and Anele (2010, p.213) the youths engage themselves in all kinds of illegitimate activities for survival. Out of desperation, they got involved in smoking and sale of opium (Indian hem). Others are commercial sex, robbery, cultism and political thuggery during elections. A human rights report has it that in the year since 2003 elections, gang violence has steadily increased. Gangs have amassed revenue through involvement in illegal activities ranging from bunkering trade in stolen crude oil, bank robberies to kidnappings, among others. Their relationship with the elites has opened their eyes to the gap between them. The differential in economic growth rates, along with the widening gap between rich and poor, are producing dangerous fissures in many societies. As the masses of poor see their chances of escaping acute poverty diminish, they are likely to become increasingly resentful of those whose growing wealth is evident. This resentment is especially pronounced in the impoverished shanty towns and waterfronts. In these inhospitable surroundings, large numbers of people—especially among the growing legions of unemployed youths are being attracted to extremist political movements or to Street gangs





and drug trafficking syndicates. The presence of these youths in shanty towns or homes, points to the fact that the state structure is simply unable to cope with the demands of housing and feeding the growing population. The “survival of the fittest approach to life is therefore the option for them and the result is an increase in crime in relation to what used to be in the 1980s and 1990s. There has been tremendous increase in crimes over the period 2015 to 2019 while the security agents have taken measures to check or control the occurrences of others.

### **Crimes and their total occurrences for the years 2015-2019**

S/N	Type of Crime	Total Occurrence 2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
1	Assault	1,784	1764	1647	939	408
2	Grievous harm and wounding	224	152	113	102	96
3	Murder	76	76	57	42	46
4	Rape and indecent assault	99	73	47	21	20
5	Kidnapping	17	20	30	05	112
6	Armed robbery	138	145	122	89	*
7	Theft and stealing	1,824	1,395	1,361	916	*
8	Burglary, house and store breaking	202	134	94	108	*
9	Breach of public peace	261	243	214	*	*
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,625</b>	<b>4,002</b>	<b>3,687</b>	<b>2,222</b>	<b>682</b>

**Source:** Nigerian Police Force, Rivers State Command (2020)

From the figures in the table, crime rate was at its peak in 2015 with a total of 4,625 of the selected crimes. The decline in reported crime rate is as a result of the strategies employed by the security agents in tackling them. Growing population puts more strain on resources, and exacerbate conflicts over natural resources. So do a range of issues such as over-fishing, deforestation and loss of agricultural land to urban spread. The pursuit of human needs leads to activities that often affect the environment negatively thereby causing degradation-excavation, gas emission by industries during production of goods required by man. The undermining limit of natural corruption can measure up to both military and financial dangers in its capacity not exclusively to influence interest of states however the actual interest of people and the networks. This is because ecological damage can damage the physical base of states to a sufficient extent to threaten their ideas and institutions.

Oil bunkering is another key livelihood mechanism for migrant youths. In a press statement by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on 29 May, 2008 (that was Democracy Day), he opined that the crises in the Niger Delta region would continue because oil bunkering in the oceans and kidnappings are sources of livelihood that attract huge amount of money. The purport of this is that, the able-bodied youth migrants settle in the creeks and unleash attack on companies or corporate organizations and individuals in the urban city. Moreso, youths from these communities are being engaged by wealthy men and politicians in the city as me-guard, houseboys and maids. They engage in car wash and security job (gate man) in the urban centres. Our focus group discussion with migrants between the ages of 13-18 years revealed that youths of school age engage in hawking of pure water, mineral, groundnuts, and garden eggs. Some took to begging, pickpocket along the road and bus conductors in the urban city. These youths join the Fulani migrants as beggars along the roads in the city of Port Harcourt. However, they try to disguise or hide their identity. Some of them who are audacious open up and tell their story. What is more, wealthy persons in the urban city engage the youths from these communities as houseboy, gardener, and housemaids etc. Other activities are commercial sex, (sexual exploitation), robbery, cultism, political thuggery during elections which culminates in militancy in the Niger Delta. The election thuggery by involuntary migrant youths was manifested in the just concluded Local Government Chairmanship election in Rivers State.

Kidnapping is the most recent source of livelihood for the able bodied migrant youths. The increase in kidnapping Wosu and Anele 213 became more prevalent consequent upon the increase in communal conflicts, with its attendant consequence for involuntary movement. Our research findings showed that, when communal conflict in the Niger Delta had not taken a centre stage, the case of kidnapping (whether white or black men, old ore young) was strange. The emergence of communal conflicts and displacement of persons ushered in a new mode of





living or survival strategy by the involuntary youths from the communities.

Against this background, hostage taking, oil bunkering, all sorts of criminal activities commenced on a larger scale in the city of Port Harcourt. Life in the urban city became precarious, nasty, brutish and short. The state does not control or check the involuntary movement from rural to urban centre. Secondly, the state does not have the magic wand to stop communal conflicts. The influx of involuntary migrants to the urban city is seen as part of social dynamics. They become a group of species that must survive and contribute to the development of the state either positively or negatively, depending on the social forces prevalent at the time. Thus, they operate in the urban centres and their environs and escape to their hideouts in the creeks, slums (waterfronts), where they are hardly easily located or any form of their identity disclosed.

### Conclusion

Rural-urban migration globally is on the increase, as more and more people are either moving into the existing urban spaces and/or congregating into evolving population concentrations or new urban centres. Though rural-urban migration and natural increase are key determinants of urbanization, there are silent indirect factors that influence the process of urbanization and pull people into the urban space. These factors include: the quest for education, accessing health care and social conflict. Transport system and/or network is a major vehicle of which people move, in the process of relocating (pulled) between places in the populations desire for education, health care, and in relocating (pushed) when threatened by social conflict.

### Recommendations

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. There is need to check rural-urban migration by developing development policies that provide for equitable development between rural and urban centres. This would go a long way in reducing negative consequences of rural-

urban migration such as: poverty, crime, poor housing, and unemployment among the legion of challenges of urban migration, caused essentially by the uncontrolled rural-urban migration in Port Harcourt.

- ii. Therefore, this paper recommends even development of both urban and rural settlements. It is the youth (labour force) who mostly migrate to urban areas with all high expectations of a better life rural life is made comfortable, affordable and convenient, rural-urban migration and consequently too rapid urbanization as we experience in Port Harcourt will reduce and be properly managed.

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