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The Effect of Housing and Social Integration on the Well-Being of Rural Migrants from Elemebiri Community in Yenagoa.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effect of housing and social integration on the well-being of rural migrants from the Elemebiri Community in Yenagoa, with the aim of understanding how these factors influence their adaptation and quality of life. Adopting a cross-sectional research design first introduced by Ronald Fisher, the study captures a snapshot of migrant experiences at a single point in time. The research focuses on 52 Elemebiri indigenes who migrated to Yenagoa between 2014 and 2024, utilizing a census sampling technique due to the manageable population size. Data was collected through structured and semi-structured questionnaires, supplemented by secondary sources such as scholarly articles and government reports. Analysis was conducted using SPSS version 23.0, employing frequency tables and simple percentage calculations. Findings reveal that migration is predominantly driven by employment opportunities, with young, single males constituting the majority of migrants. While some have secured employment, many face challenges including unemployment, low income, inadequate housing, and limited social support networks. Notably, 100% of respondents reported dissatisfaction with their housing conditions, and 57.1% indicated difficulties in integrating socially and culturally into urban life. These findings underscore the pressing need for government-led initiatives. The study therefore recommends that job creation and vocational training programs be specifically tailored for rural migrants, and that affordable, safe housing schemes be developed through partnerships with private sector developers to improve the overall well-being and integration of rural-urban migrants.

Keywords: Employment opportunities, Social Integration, Rural-Urban Migration, Safe Affordable and Housing, Adaptation Strategies.

1. Introduction

The well-being of rural migrants has become a significant area of study in migration and urbanization discourse worldwide. Migration has long been associated with economic and social mobility, yet it presents a complex mix of opportunities and challenges for migrants. Across the world, rural-to-urban migration has become a defining feature of contemporary demographic shifts, driven by economic opportunities, environmental changes, and social aspirations (United Nations, 2022). Urban centers often promise better employment prospects, healthcare, and social mobility, attracting individuals from rural areas in search of improved livelihoods. However, the transition from rural to urban environments presents multiple challenges, including housing difficulties and the need for social integration, which directly impact migrants' overall well-being (Ager & Strang, 2008). In addition, studies have shown that housing conditions and social integration play a crucial role in determining the well-being of migrants (Castles et al., 2014). In developed countries, social policies often mitigate the adverse effects of migration, ensuring access to housing and social networks that enhance well-being. In contrast, developing nations, particularly in Africa, struggle with infrastructural deficiencies that exacerbate the difficulties migrants face (Adepoju, 2019). Within Nigeria, the rapid urbanization of cities such as Yenagoa has intensified the housing crisis, making it difficult for rural migrants to secure adequate shelter and integrate into urban life.

In Africa, rural-urban migration is a persistent trend, fueled by rapid urbanization and economic disparities between rural and urban areas (Awumbila, 2017). The continent's urban population is growing at an unprecedented rate, leading to increased pressure on housing infrastructure and social services. Migrants often settle in informal settlements, where they encounter inadequate housing conditions, social exclusion, and economic instability. These challenges influence their adaptation strategies, with varying degrees of success in integrating into urban societies. Understanding how migrants navigate these complexities is crucial for formulating policies that enhance their well-being.

In Nigeria, rural migration patterns are largely influenced by socio-economic factors, environmental concerns, and political instability (Okunlola et al., 2019). Cities like Yenagoa have witnessed a steady influx of rural migrants seeking better living conditions and employment opportunities. However, these migrants face significant challenges, particularly in accessing adequate housing and achieving social integration. The housing sector in Nigeria

struggles with issues such as affordability, inadequate infrastructure, and poor urban planning, which exacerbate the difficulties faced by rural migrants. Social integration remains a pressing concern as migrants often experience discrimination, cultural alienation, and limited access to essential services (Olayiwola & Adeleye, 2017).

The Elemebiri community, like many other rural settlements, is characterized by economic hardships, limited social amenities, and environmental vulnerabilities, prompting migration to urban areas such as Yenagoa. Migrants from Elemebiri often arrive in Yenagoa with high expectations but encounter multiple hurdles in housing and social adaptation. Their well-being is influenced by their ability to secure decent housing and integrate into the urban social fabric, which varies based on their socio-economic status, networks, and resilience strategies.

Well-being, encompasses physical, psychological, and economic stability. Migrants' well-being is closely linked to their ability to secure stable housing, integrate into their new environment, and develop coping mechanisms for urban challenges. Housing challenges, social integration, and adaptation strategies influences migrants' well-being. The interplay of these factors determines the overall success of migrants in transitioning to urban life.

Social integrationy, refers to the extent to which rural migrants establish social relationships and adapt to the cultural and economic systems of their host communities. Social integration influences access to employment, healthcare, and other essential services, thereby affecting overall well-being (Berry, 1997). The acculturation theory provides insight into how rural migrants from Elemebiri navigate new cultural environments, either adopting the host culture, maintaining their original identity, or finding a balance between both. Studies have shown that successful social integration enhances psychological and economic well-being, while failure to integrate can lead to marginalization and social exclusion (Portes & Zhou, 2012).

Housing challenges are another critical variable affecting the well-being of rural migrants. Housing is not just a basic need but a determinant of health, economic productivity, and social stability. In developing urban centers, migrants often reside in overcrowded and substandard housing, lacking basic amenities such as clean water and sanitation (UN-Habitat, 2020). The situation in Yenagoa mirrors this trend, as the influx of rural migrants has increased demand for affordable housing, leading to the proliferation of informal settlements with inadequate infrastructure. Poor housing conditions can contribute to stress, health issues, and overall diminished well-being (Olanrewaju & Omole, 2015).

Adaptation strategies, refer to the coping mechanisms rural migrants employ to mitigate the challenges associated with migration. These strategies may include reliance on social networks, engagement in informal economic activities, or participation in community associations to foster a sense of belonging (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). The transnationalism theory is relevant in explaining how migrants maintain ties with their place of origin while adapting to new environments. Many rural migrants sustain socio-economic and cultural links with their home communities, which provide both emotional and financial support, helping them to navigate urban life more effectively (Schiller et al., 1995).

The interrelationship among social integration, housing challenges, and adaptation strategies significantly determines the well-being of rural migrants. Social integration influences access to housing, as well-networked individuals are more likely to find better accommodation through informal support systems. Conversely, housing conditions can either facilitate or hinder social integration; migrants living in isolated or marginalized communities may struggle to interact with their host society. Adaptation strategies function as mediating factors, helping migrants adjust to both housing difficulties and social integration challenges, ultimately impacting their overall well-being (Gordon, 1964).

The motivation for this study stems from the increasing migration of individuals from Elemebiri to Yenagoa, driven by socio-economic factors such as employment opportunities, environmental challenges, and the search for better living conditions. However, the lack of comprehensive data on the well-being of these migrants, particularly in relation to housing and social integration, necessitates empirical investigation. While several studies have explored rural-urban migration in Nigeria, there remains a gap in understanding how these specific variables interact to shape migrant experiences in Yenagoa (Okafor, 2016).

Additionally, this study is motivated by the broader implications for urban planning and policy-making. Governments and policymakers require evidence-based insights to develop interventions that enhance the living conditions and social well-being of migrants. By examining the factors influencing the well-being of rural migrants, this study can contribute to the formulation of housing policies and social integration programs that promote inclusive urban development (Todaro & Smith, 2020).

Moreover, understanding the adaptation strategies employed by migrants can inform future interventions aimed at improving their resilience and sustainability in urban environments. The interplay between transnationalism and acculturation suggests that migrants do not passively assimilate into their new surroundings but actively engage in strategies that shape their socio-economic trajectories. By capturing these dynamics, this study will provide a nuanced perspective on how rural migrants from Elemebiri navigate the complexities of urban life in Yenagoa (Vertovec, 2004). This study is essential in advancing knowledge on migration and urbanization in Nigeria, aligning with global discussions on sustainable urban development and inclusive cities. Through an in-depth analysis of the experiences of Elemebiri migrants in Yenagoa, this study will generate insights that are not only relevant locally but also applicable to other urban centers facing similar migration-induced challenges (UNDP, 2019).

2. Materials and Method

Research Design

This research adopts a cross-sectional research design, a methodology first proposed by Ronald Fisher in the early 1900s. Fisher, a pioneering statistician and geneticist, introduced the cross-sectional design to collect data on a large number of individuals at a single point in time rather than tracking the same individuals over an extended period. This design has gained widespread adoption across various fields, including sociology, psychology, and public

health. Its primary advantage lies in its ability to provide a snapshot of a population's characteristics at a specific moment, thereby offering valuable insights for descriptive and analytical research.

Key characteristics of the cross-sectional research design include the collection of data at a single point in time, the use of a sample of individuals or groups, and the reliance on quantitative data, although qualitative elements may also be incorporated. Statistical methods are employed to analyze the collected data, ensuring a rigorous and systematic examination of trends and patterns. While cross-sectional research is instrumental in describing population characteristics, it does not establish causality. However, its findings can serve as a foundation for future research or inform targeted interventions.

Study Area

The study is conducted in Elemebiri Community, also known as Ofonibengha, a rural settlement nestled along the banks of the River Niger in Sagbama Local Government Area, Bayelsa State. This picturesque community shares boundaries with Utuochi in Rivers State to the east and North Delta State to the north. The name "Ofonibengha" originates from local folklore, which recounts a phenomenon where birds are unable to fly across the River Niger to and from Elemebiri. The community is approximately 57 kilometers from Yenagoa, the capital city of Bayelsa State, and is surrounded by other rural settlements, including Biseni in Yenagoa LGA to the south and Ekperiwari to the west. Elemebiri Community is home to around 10,000 residents, with farming, fishing, and trading being the predominant economic activities. Despite its rich cultural heritage and artisanal craftsmanship, the community faces infrastructural challenges, particularly in terms of road accessibility. The sole track road from Omoku/Otuochi in Rivers State is only navigable by heavy-wheeled vehicles and motorbikes during certain seasons, making boat transportation the primary mode of movement. The community comprises a heterogeneous population, including Anams, Igala, Isoko/Urhobo, and Akwa-Ibom ethnic groups, with the majority being Ijaw from the Kabowei kingdom. Economic activities such as commercial farming and fishing sustain the community, but the absence of industrial development has resulted in high unemployment and migration to Yenagoa.

Population of the Study

The population for this study comprises indigenes of Elemebiri Community who migrated to Yenagoa between 2014 and 2024. Based on demographic data from the National Population Commission (1991) and the National Bureau for Statistics (2017), Elemebiri had a population of 1,380 in 1991. Using a projected growth rate of 2.9% over 32 years, the estimated population of the community in 2023 is approximately 3,714. However, the focus of this study is the subset of Elemebiri indigenes who relocated to Yenagoa within the last decade. According to the community register from events held in March and October 2024, the total population of Elemebiri indigenes in Yenagoa is 716, with 52 individuals migrating within the specified period. Therefore, the study population is defined as 52 respondents.

Sampling Size and Technique

Given the relatively small size of the study population (52 individuals), the research adopts a census sampling technique, incorporating all 52 respondents into the study. This method ensures comprehensive coverage of the target group, providing a more accurate representation of the experiences of Elemebiri migrants in Yenagoa. The decision to include the entire population is guided by considerations of feasibility, resource constraints, and the need for detailed insights into rural-to-urban migration patterns.

The census sampling technique is historically linked to the English statistician William Petty, and it is ideal for studies where the entire population can feasibly be surveyed. By avoiding potential sampling biases and ensuring complete representation, this approach enhances the validity and reliability of the study's findings. Moreover, it allows for a holistic understanding of the socio-economic and cultural dynamics shaping the migration experiences of Elemebiri indigenes in Yenagoa.

Method of Data Collection

Data for this study was collected from both primary and secondary sources to ensure a well-rounded analysis. Primary data was obtained through structured and semi-structured questionnaires administered to the 52 respondents. These questionnaires was designed to capture demographic information, migration motivations, socio-economic conditions, and challenges faced by the migrants. The combination of structured and semi-structured questions allows for quantitative analysis while also accommodating qualitative insights that enrich the study. Secondary data was gotten from relevant textbooks, scholarly journals, newspapers, and government reports to contextualize the study within existing literature. This review will provide a theoretical framework and background information, enhancing the depth of analysis. By integrating both primary and secondary data sources, the research ensures a comprehensive exploration of migration trends and their implications.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected through the administered questionnaires was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0. The analysis will involve frequency distribution tables and simple percentage calculations to facilitate the interpretation of demographic and socio-economic data. Sorting and coding of questionnaire responses was meticulously performed to ensure accuracy and coherence in data processing.

Tables were constructed to present findings systematically, aiding in hypothesis testing and the derivation of meaningful conclusions. The analysis will culminate in the formulation of recommendations and insights that contribute to the understanding of rural-to-urban migration patterns. Ultimately, the study aims to provide a detailed assessment of the migration experience of Elemebiri indigenes, offering valuable information for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders in community development

3. Results and Discussions

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable (s)	F = 49	P = 100.0	CP = 100.0
Gender:			
Male	46	93.9	
Female	03	6.1	100.00
Age:			
18-29	38	77.6	77.6
30 -39	11	22.4	22.4
40- 49			
50 -59			
60 – above			100.00
Educational Qualification:			
No formal education			
Primary	03	6.1	6.1
Secondary	42	85.7	91.8
Tertiary	04	8.2	100.00
Marital status:			
Married	05	10.2	
Single	44	89.8	
Divorced			
Widow/Widower			100.00
Previous Migration Experience:			
I have never migrated	-		
I have migrated to other rural areas	06	12.2	12.2
I have migrated rural-urban areas	43	87.8	100.00
Motivation for Present Migration:			
For employment	49	100	100.00
To escape conflict	-		
To seek better health care	-		

To reunite with family/friends	-		100.00		
Duration of Migration:					
Less than 6 months	02	4.1	4.1		
6 – 12 months	10	20.4	24.5		
1 – 2 years	05	10.2	34.7		
3 – 5 years	07	14.3	49.0		
5 years and above	25	51.0	100.00		
Employment status:					
Unemployed	15	30.6	30.6		
Employed	34	69.4	100.00		
Language proficiency:					
I can speak/understand English	49	100	100.00		
I can't speak/understand English					
I can speak/understand little English			100.00		
Housing situation:					
I rent a house	13	26.5	26.5		
I live with family/friends	17	34.7	61.2		
I live in a temporary apartment	08	16.3	77.5		
I live in a homeless shelter	11	22.5	100.00		
Income level (₦):					
20,000 – 30,000	30	61.2	61.2		
31,000 – 40,000	14	8.2	69.4		
41,000 – 50,000	-	-			
50,000 and above			00.00 Nil	15	30.6
Adaptation to new environment:					
Feeling uncomfortable	28	57.1	57.1		
Feeling comfortable	21	42.9	100.00		

Source: Field Survey, January 2025

The data shows that the majority of migrants (93.9%) are male, with a predominant age group of 18-29 years (77.6%), indicating that migration is largely driven by young men seeking better economic opportunities in line with studies of Todaro & Smith, (2020). N The fact that 22.5% live in homeless shelters and 34.7% live with family or friends highlights the struggle for stable housing. Furthermore, the high percentage of single migrants (89.8%) aligns with existing research that suggests unmarried individuals are more likely to take migration risks (Castles et al., 2014)

The data further shows that; 69.4% of respondents are employed while 30.6% remain unemployed. This aligns with global migration studies that indicate employment as a major integration factor (IOM, 2022). The income distribution data highlights economic challenges; with most earning between ₦20,000-30,000, which is relatively low for urban living (UN-Habitat, 2021).

The study effectively highlights previous migration experiences and the primary motivation behind migration, which is employment (100%). This finding supports the push-pull theory of migration, where economic hardship in rural areas and better job opportunities in urban centers drive migration (Lee, 1966). Additionally, the fact that 87.8% of respondents have prior rural-urban migration experience suggests that migration is a common survival strategy for this community (Adepoju, 2017). However, Bakewell, (2010) asserts that other potential reasons for rural-urban migration, such as access to healthcare, education, or family reunification and conflict-related reasons.

Table 2: How do Migrants from Elemebiri Community form and maintain social networks and support system in Yenagoa?

Variable (s)	F = 49	P = 100.0	CP = 100.0
Rely on family members	15	30.6	30.6
Part of formal support network	04	8.2	38.8
Don't have a support network	19	38.8	77.6
Part of informal support network	11	22.4	100.00

Source: Field Survey, January 2025

Regarding social support networks, 38.8% of respondents lack support network. This is significant as social support is a key factor in migrant integration (Portes & Zhou, 2012). The study also identifies different types of support networks, including family-based (30.6%), formal (8.2%), and informal (22.4%) networks, contributing to a better understanding of social capital in migration (Bourdieu, 1986). Vertovec, (2019) asserted that other forms of support networks such as role of ethnic communities, religious groups, or government support programs in helping migrants integrate.

Table 3: What Challenges do Migrants from Elemebiri Community face in finding affordable and safe housing in Yenagoa?

Variable (s)	F = 49	P = 100.0	CP = 100.0
I'm satisfied with my current housing situation, both in terms of affordability and safety.	-		
I am dissatisfied with my current housing situation in terms of both affordability and safety.	49	100	100
I am satisfied with my current housing situation in terms of safety but not affordable.			
I am satisfied with my current housing situation in terms of affordability but not safety.			100.00

Source: Field Survey, January 2025

The study accurately depicts the housing challenges faced by migrants, with 100% expressing dissatisfaction with affordability and safety. These findings align with research on urban housing crises affecting low-income migrants (UN-Habitat, 2021)

Table 4: How do Migrants from Elemebiri Community adapt to and integrate into the social and cultural environment of Yenagoa?

Variable (s)	F = 49	P = 100.0	CP = 100.0
Been able to integrate smoothly	21	42.9	42.9
I have some difficulties in integrating.	28	57.1	100.00
Haven' t had much luck in integrating	-		
I' ve had some struggles with discrimination	-		

Source: Field Survey, January 2025

The table provides valuable insights into migrant integration, showing that 57.1% of respondents experience difficulties. This finding is consistent with studies on cultural adaptation challenges, such as language barriers, discrimination, and economic hardship (Berry, 1997). Furthermore, the 42.9% who integrate smoothly indicate that some migrants can adapt successfully despite obstacles.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight that migration from Elemebiri Community to Yenagoa is primarily driven by the search for employment opportunities, with young, single, and educated males constituting the majority of migrants. While many have successfully found employment, a significant portion remains unemployed, with low-income levels and precarious housing situations. Additionally, social integration poses a challenge, as many migrants lack strong support networks, contributing to difficulties in adapting to urban life. The study further reveals that all respondents are dissatisfied with their housing conditions in terms of affordability and safety, emphasizing the urgent need for intervention. The challenges of migration, particularly in employment, housing, and social integration, underscore the need for targeted policies and support mechanisms to enhance the well-being of migrants from Elemebiri Community.

Based on the findings, the study recommends the that the government and relevant stakeholders implement targeted job creation and vocational training programs specifically designed to support rural migrants. Additionally, there is a need for collaboration between the government and private developers to ensure the provision of affordable and secure housing options for these migrants. Furthermore, local authorities and non-governmental organizations should establish structured support systems and cultural integration initiatives to assist migrants in adapting more effectively to their new urban environment.

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