

URBANISM IN NIGERIA: HARNESSING THE POWER OF CITY GROWTH FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

As cities in the region experience rapid growth, this research investigates how cultural values and principles can be leveraged to promote sustainable urban development. Through a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data, this study identifies key opportunities for harnessing city growth to address pressing urban challenges such as housing, transportation, and environmental degradation. By integrating cultural perspectives with contemporary urban planning strategies, this research aims to contribute to the development of a unique and sustainable urbanism model that prioritizes community, equity, and environmental stewardship. The findings of this study have implications for urban policymakers, planners, and scholars seeking innovative solutions to the complex challenges facing rapidly urbanizing cities in Africa and beyond. This research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining primary and secondary sources. The primary sources will provide firsthand accounts and historical records of urban development, while the secondary sources will offer contextualization and complementary insights. The collected data will then be subjected to descriptive analysis to identify patterns and themes, and content analysis to examine the meaning and

significance of the data, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of Urbanism.

Key words: Urbanization, Development, Infrastructure Sustainable

Introduction

Whether a society is developed or emerging, urbanization is a universal trend. Sustainable urban development and growth necessitates an extensive range of environmental factors, including but not limited to socioeconomic status, political & physical environment, cultural norms, and demographics (Michaels *et al.*, 2012). Over the next few decades, urbanization is expected to rise, particularly across Africa. Most African societies lag beneath other developed societies when it comes to progress and advancement when contrasted with countries like the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, Spain, Canada, and France. However, as modernization continues to advance at a rapid pace, the stages of development in African societies are likely to evolve (Abubakar, 2017).

Urbanization is characterized by a rise in population accompanied by an expansion of industry and beneficial technological advancements. As a result of the movement of both manpower and capital to urban centers for manufacturing, urbanization commenced soon after the industrial revolution. The term "urbanization" is defined as the development and growth of human-made environments brought about by changes in the economic, social, and political spheres. When a greater number of individuals choose to make their homes in cities and suburbs, then the area can be said to be urbanized (see Farouk & Owusu, 2012; Tacoli & Vorley, 2015).

Industrialization, modernization, the availability of jobs, and social issues all play a role in making cities more appealing places to live. More jobs become available because of industrialization, which is defined as the proliferation of industries, most of which are in cities.

As a result, more individuals are leaving rural areas for cities in quest for better job prospects.

Good communication, improved infrastructure, and advanced technology are some of the many aspects of modernization. People in rural areas are pushed out of their homes and into cities as soon as modernization takes hold in the cities. Hence, paving the way for additional urbanization.

One of the main reasons people move to cities is to improve their social standing, access to quality education, and overall quality of life (Pawan, 2016).

To achieve human development goals in a way that doesn't compromise the capacity of natural systems to provide essential goods and services, **sustainable development** must be practiced. To ensure the longevity and progress of human civilization, sustainable development is defined by (Shaker, 2015) as initiatives that identify and pool existing social resources. Sustainable development, according to (Abubakar, 2017), is an essential component of any global growth plan or program. It paves the way for people to share information and make use of the environment's natural resources. It is a way of thinking about development and a paradigm for progress that advocates raising living conditions without putting people, plants, and animals in danger or adding to environmental problems like pollution (Retchless & Brewer, 2016).

Cities in Nigeria are among the world's fastest growing cities, placing the country among those with the greatest rates of urbanization. Not only is urbanization expanding at a breakneck pace in Nigeria, but the country's history provides a singular context for understanding its origins and characteristics (Ujoh & Ifatimehin, 2010). At the same time, because of poor management, the expansion has led to overcrowding on public transport networks and the exhaustion of already scarce resources, all of which have been a growing pain for city dwellers whose standard of living has been steadily declining.

The growing urban population in emerging nations like Nigeria poses a number of challenges, not the least of which is figuring out how to accommodate the migration of rural residents from the countryside while reducing negative social and economic impacts (Jiboye, 2011). Local and international institutions have received funding to address urbanization and sustainable development, but old problems like the misuse of general spaces, aversion of religious and disparities in ethnicity, the issue of territory, poverty in rural areas, and robbers, and the cruel destruction of agricultural produce by Fulani herder have returned. All of these are just a few of the reasons why people leave the countryside for the city, and the issues surrounding them pose serious risks to city dwellers (Ujoh & Ifatimehin, 2010).

The Yoruba people, an ethnic group from Southwestern Nigeria, have a rich cultural heritage and a long history of urbanization. Their cities, such as Ibadan, Lagos, and Ife, have been hubs of commerce, innovation, and cultural exchange for centuries. However, the rapid growth and development of these cities have posed significant challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, transportation congestion, and social inequality. This article explores the crucial role of infrastructure in connecting communities and promoting sustainable urban development in Yoruba cities.

Literature Review

Urbanization is more of a fast historical shift that is displacing mostly urban cultures than a newly emerging phenomena. The urbanization phase is expanding in both developed and developing nations. However, issues including slums, environmental degradation, inadequate hygiene, joblessness, and deprivation are linked to fast urbanization, especially in Nigerian cities. These incidents have become more common over the years, which are causing people to worry. Urbanization because of overpopulation, swift industrialization, unforeseen and disorganized physical development as result of ineffective policies for city administration and management, and a lack of adequate urban infrastructure, including

housing and a well-organized transportation system, are all factors that contribute to environmental degradation, according to various studies. Findings from the study call for effective environmental sustainability policies from the Nigerian government as well as the full and active participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in urban areas of the country (Muhammed *et al.*, 2015).

The current period of urbanization and structural issues on a worldwide scale has recently become an issue of concern. Long term development and effective city administration in growing nations like Nigeria are jeopardized by urban issues. These systemic urban problems have knock-on effects on the cultural, social, and economic development of a society. Topics covered in depth include sustainable development in Nigeria, the challenges posed by rapid urbanization, and effective policies for good governance. The study emphasized the importance of good governance in sustaining development and the necessity of strong policies and strategies to ensure the continued sustainability of Nigerian cities and the future development of their residents (Jiboye, 2011).

The necessity of Sustainable Housing Development (SHD) in city centers was examined in the study by (Ojoko *et al.*, 2016). The eleventh objective of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is this very initiative. Slum dwellers, who account for the majority of the world's poor, will have easier access to safe, inexpensive homes by the year 2030, according to the report. Now, Nigeria boasts the biggest economy, the quickest pace of urbanization, and the densest population in all of Africa. Without proper measures to address the subsequent implications, this development has led to fast population increase and massive rural-urban migration. As a result, squatter communities and urban slums have emerged. Their research indicated that important government players, rules and regulations, principles, and enough financing are crucial to the SHD plan's successful execution.

Based on a similar study by (Azu, 2018), the rapid urbanization is being driven by the ever-changing socio-political and economic landscape of our day, as well as the rising migratory patterns in Africa. Inadequate urban governance is a major cause of the growing number of problems associated with urban expansion, including economic, legal, and structural ones. Findings from the research pointed to a number of issues plaguing African urban governance. The results, which were based on secondary sources mostly, demonstrated that efficient local government, government at various levels, public/private partnerships, and elevated level of citizen engagement are essential for effective urban governance (Azu, 2018).

Consistent with the evaluations, some of the current urbanization and sustainable development challenges in Nigeria include religion and racial intolerance, geographical disputes and uncertainties, misuse of general amenities and disregard for impoverishment in remote areas and opportunities. In addition, unlike in industrialized nations, where government and citizen networks work hand in hand to sustain urbanization projects, the suggestions put a heavy emphasis on government and non-governmental assistance programs.

Challenges of Urbanization on Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Rural Poverty

Poverty in Yoruba land is much pronounced in suburban regions of the world compared to cities, and larger families are more likely to be poor than those without access to education, based on research by (NSIKAK & Udoh, 2013). Because of inadequate government subsidies, farmers and rural agricultural households suffer from severe poverty. This is because they have insufficient storage, limited access to markets, and inadequate social facilities including electricity, roads, health services, and water. It is noteworthy that the goals included in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 include ending extreme poverty, and ensuring all

people have access to adequate nutrition, healthcare, education, water and sanitation, clean energy at affordable prices, socially responsible employment, and economic prosperity. The agenda was developed through discussions involving 193 member states. To maintain development, one of the primary strategies for reaching those goals is to use the human development index.

According to the Human Development Report (2016), Nigeria ranks among the nations with a low HDI (see fig below). Although Nigeria has an abundance of physical, human, and environmental resources, poverty is recirculating and wreaking havoc in rural areas. Nevertheless, one can deduce that this could be one of the main causes of the country's huge migration to urban centers. For instance, the agricultural sector provides a living wage and food security for all members of society, even those living in cities. If its potential is fully realized, it has the potential to increase economic growth and create more jobs, especially for people living in rural areas.

Nigeria HDI report (1999-2014)

Year	HDI	Rank
1999	0.456	146
2000	0.439	151
2001	0.455	136
2002	0.466	148
2003	0.463	152
2004	0.466	151
2005	0.466	158
2006	0.448	159
2007/2008	0.470	158
2009	0.425	158
2010	0.423	142
2011	0.459	156
2012	NA	NA
2013	0.471	153
2014	0.504	152

Source: (see Fagbadebo & Ruffin, 2017)

It is interesting to note that the Human Development Index (HDI) assesses countries based on four key aspects of human development: life expectancy, educational attainment, per capita income, and economic liberty. However, Nigeria's Human Development Index

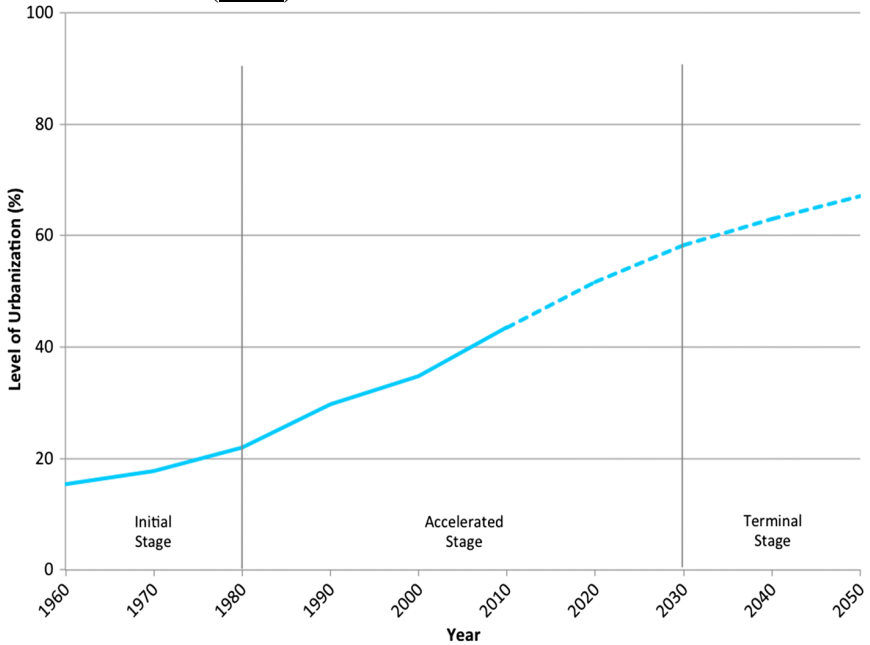
(HDI) score in 2016 ranked 152 out of 188, classifying the nation as having a Low Human Development (LHD) status (Fagbadebo & Ruffin, 2017; Farouk & Owusu, 2012). Based on the most recent data, Equatorial Guinea is ranked 135th, Gabon is ranked 109th, and Nigeria is ranked 139th. Unfortunately, these rankings place them behind their neighbouring countries Ghana and Zambia.

However, the report brought positive news for Nigeria as the Human Development Index (HDI) increased from 0.466 to 0.527, indicating a significant 13.1% improvement between 2005 and 2015 (Fagbadebo & Ruffin, 2017; Scobie et al., 2015). Between 2005 and 2014, Nigeria's Human Development Index (HDI) increased from 0.467 to 0.514, representing a growth of 10.1 percent. This progress signifies a three-point advancement compared to the previous level. Nigeria's (HDI) value for 2016 ranks it at 152 out of 188 countries, indicating that the country has a low level of human development. Nigeria is ranked lower than Ghana and Zambia in the current survey, with Ghana at position 139, Gabon at 109, and Equatorial Guinea at 135. The report indicated a favourable future for the country, as Nigeria's (HDI) rose from 0.466 to 0.527, reflecting a significant 13.1% gain over the past decade (2009-2020).

Between 2005 and 2014, Nigeria's (HDI) improved by three points, rising from 0.467 to 0.514. This is a 10.1% increase in value (Premium Times, n.d.; United Nation HDI Report, 2022).

Curve of Nigeria's Rapid Urban Transition

Nigeria's urbanization curve, 1960–2050. Source: Data is from the United Nations (2022)



Insecurity

The process of urbanization and social activities are often impeded by insecurity. The link between insecurity and inadequate development is far stronger than the link between peace and development, as pointed out by (Denney, 2013). Whenever there is conflict, underdevelopment is a common consequence. The success of sustainable development is hindered by a lack of protection for citizens' lives and properties. This discourages investment and involvement from domestic and international agencies, and it also limits citizens' willingness for economic growth that can bolster and supplement government policies and initiatives. Additionally, local populations affected by security instabilities are unable to benefit from development projects due to unresolved long-standing issues. Because of this, existing projects are impeded by unanticipated migrations and security challenges, and it is difficult to mobilize

members of such communities and areas to begin development owing to fear of hostility, all of which have a negative effect on the stage of urbanization that is happening in several regions presently (Ifeoma *et al.*, 2015).

Abuse of Public Facilities in Urban Areas

Economic, social, and administrative activity coexist physically in urban areas, as with other types of human settlements (United Nations, 2016). Many emerging nations experienced extraordinary rates of urbanization in the second part of the 20th century. In emerging nations, half of the population resides in cities. Significant repercussions for urban well-being, employment, and facility utilization, as well as periodic policy modifications, result from such demographic patterns. Though, inadequacy or malfunctioning infrastructure poses a further threat to the continuation of the current development, which in turn impacts people's access to safe housing, healthy living circumstances, and productive employment.

Maintaining progress relies heavily on the public's use of administrative offices, marketplaces, sports arenas, parking lots, and settlements. In some towns, as much as 30–40% of the population uses public services like the power grid, water mains, highways, and marketplaces (Fakere & Fadamiro, 2012). For people's daily lives to go on as usual, they must be able to buy, sell, and run their enterprises in a responsible manner. However, when these facilities are mistreated or exploited, it discourages the launch of further development initiatives by both public and private entities. Encroachments on open space for parking, pedestrian work, and garbage management sites are the most pressing of these issues. Road congestion, terrible traffic, and constant air pollution are all results of these encroachments, which also impact runoff drainage. Amenities and services provided by the public are operating in a disorganized fashion as a result of poorly executed projects, which triggers cities deterioration, impacts the aesthetic perception of

governmental facilities (Enoma & Idehen, 2018; Fakere & Fadamiro, 2012).

Religious and Ethnic Disparities

Nigeria has a religiously and ethnically diverse population, which makes it hard for her to choose leaders objectively. The choice with the selection of scientists & specialists to lead any development tasks have been determined by religious and ethnic affiliations, according to (Edikan, 2016). As a result, Nigerian culture is a melting pot of many ethnicities, socioeconomic classes, religious traditions, and geographical locations. Ethnicity and belief systems were the driving forces, coordinating channels, and instruments for resource allocation and negotiating agreements, according to (Ojo, 2016). Inadequate monitoring, projects being abandoned and the use of poor-quality or inferior supplies are catastrophic outcomes of these relationships.

Nigerians view their diversity in a negative light, while people in other foreign societies view it as an opportunity to leverage cultural variations for advancement. Despite ongoing modernizations and globalization, numerous efforts to harness these diversities for sustainable growth and development have failed. As a result, Nigerian society is struggling with a host of social, economic, and political issues, including corruption, tribalism, and a lack of patriotism among leaders. The ethnic element in Nigeria has persisted for some time and has even grown stronger since the 2019 election, when several appointments and contracts were made based on ethnic regions. The location and funding of regional and urban development projects are now evaluated according to religious and ethnic connections.

Conclusion

Conclusively, according to the research, there are many more difficult problems associated with urbanization than just corruption, urban deterioration, market congestion, overpopulation, unemployment, migration, ineffective waste management, transportation, substandard housing, and health issues. Another set of problems that urbanization in Nigeria must deal with is bias towards certain races diversity and religious groups, geographical disputes & anxieties, misuse of general services, rural poverty, and unrealized potential. For instance, federal housing allocations and contract awards have historically been influenced by religious and ethnic relations. Some of the elements that contribute to urban degradation include inadequate maintenance and misuse of facilities, both of which are brought about by these behaviors. No substantial progress will be made in Nigeria unless this type of ethnic and religious relations is appropriately handled by the federal constitution. Communities where farmers and herdsmen battle are another example. For this and other reasons, people in rural areas and farmers continue to flee to cities in pursuit of better living conditions and more employment opportunities. These irregular migrations typically don't contribute anything to the current development, but they have a significant impact on city dwellers in the form of market congestion, rising unemployment, prostitution, and even becoming emissaries for the initiation of bad activities in cities.

This study has tremendous potential for urbanization and sustainable development. It aims to improve project management and supervision, foster a maintenance culture attitude, raise awareness of the federal character system, combat corruption and mismanagement of project funds with firm and disciplinary measures, resuscitate agricultural employment opportunities, and ensure that development thrives by harmonizing common goals.

Recommendations

The following recommendations stem from the study's findings:

- As deliberate efforts are being made to build cities, quite a similar intention should be extended to countryside regions by providing for their necessities.
- Parliaments and the federal character system in Nigeria should actively and harmoniously endeavor to always counteract bias in appointments and the distribution of contracts for public projects.
- With the help of monthly stipends and security devices, local vigilantes can supplement the work of official security personnel; they should be registered and easily identifiable.
- The government and non-profits should do more to help the agricultural industry financially.
- To examine potential misuse of public spaces, the government should establish special task forces and committees.

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