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The Influence of Economic Opportunities on Rural-Urban Youth Migration in Kadarko Town, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

Rural-urban youth migration is a well-documented phenomenon in developing nations, with urban areas serving as hubs for economic activities and structural development, including in Kadarko Town, Nigeria. This study investigated the influence of Economic Opportunities on Rural-Urban Youth Migration in Kadarko Town, Nigeria. The target population comprised 3,400 youth aged 18-35 years. Using a mixed-method research design, the study employed simple and purposive random sampling to gather responses from 131 youth through questionnaires, plus qualitative data from 1 chief, 5 elders, and 1 youth officer via interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 25.0 and presented through descriptive statistics including graphs, percentages, and frequency distributions. Qualitative data were analyzed using NVivo software through thematic analysis and presented through categorization and coding. The study concluded that; most young people in Kadarko Town migrate to cities due to limited economic opportunities, high unemployment, and unstable economic conditions. Youth are attracted to urban areas in search of better living standards, more job opportunities, and financial security. Rural areas offer few avenues for stable income, minimal support for small businesses, and limited access to banking services. As decent work is scarce, many young people see migration as the only path to economic improvement. Addressing this challenge requires support for local businesses, investment in agribusiness, and initiatives to boost rural economic activities. Government and non-governmental organizations can play a key role by promoting small businesses, cooperative societies, and microfinance programs to provide employment and reduce youth migration. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were put forth: It was suggested that county governments and development agencies create and carry out economic empowerment initiatives meant to give young people in rural areas job prospects. To lessen the economic push factors causing migration, these programs can include financial aid for small enterprises, training for entrepreneurs, and agricultural support projects.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Rural-urban youth migration has become a prominent socio-economic phenomenon in many developing countries, including Nigeria, with significant implications for both rural development and urban growth. In recent years, the migration of young people from rural communities to urban centers has been driven by the search for better livelihood opportunities, education, and improved living conditions (Awumbila et al., 2016; de Brauw, Mueller, & Lee, 2014). However, this trend often leaves rural areas with a depleted workforce, slowed development, and weakened social structures (World Bank, 2018).

Rural development, which encompasses improvements in infrastructure, access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and social services, plays a critical role in shaping migration patterns (Ellis & Freeman, 2004). When rural communities experience limited development, young people are more likely to migrate in search of opportunities elsewhere (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2020).

11: LITERATURE REVIEW

Urbanski conducted research in 2022. The aim of this study was to compare the push and pull factors affecting migration from Romania to Poland. Finding the push and pull factors that, when

combined, had a larger overall and individual influence on migratory patterns was the goal of the study. For the study, primary data from migrants in both nations was gathered using a standardized questionnaire. Poland and Romania's results are based on 288 and 298 surveys, respectively. It was push and pull factors that determined the subject of the study. It was found in the study that pull factors are more important reasons for migration in these two countries. Out of nine variables, five were discovered to carry weight: economic, political and social variables in Poland and economic and political ones in Romania, while both showed social factors as the only two matters under scrutiny. Pull economic factors played a big part in guiding many nations' migration patterns.

They examined in their study how urban and rural communities in terms of achievement of the SDGs. It was discovered by the study that unequal growth, limited opportunities in rural areas and urbanization that happens too rapidly can raise gaps in society and harm the environment by analyzing case studies, actual figures and past studies. The article pointed out that people move to urban areas mainly because of poverty, a lack of jobs in the country and better services in cities, however, it also highlighted that their arrival results in problems that threaten togetherness, government and infrastructure. It was shown that combining policies that can promote inclusive development for all is necessary which should benefit everyone, as well as deal with the root causes of migration (Javed et al., 2024). It was concluded by the researchers that localized and extensive governance mechanisms are required to narrow gaps between cities and rural areas and support sustainable development (Javed et al., 2024).

A model that covers different generations of people was created in China by Liao et al. (2022) to understand the effects of early-career migration for education on cities, economy and employment. The study found that both kinds of migration compensate for each other and the results differ based on many things such as talents available, college fees, the number of urban jobs and rules on migration. The researchers measured the impact of education-based migration by looking at Chinese data from 1980 to 2007 and found that education-based migration which created only one-fifth of all migrants, was more useful for economic growth than other kinds of migration (Liao et al., 2022). As a result of the study, it was noticed that if less skilled workers avoided migration and more skilled workers were able to move, urban development and income per person hardly changed (Liao et al., 2022).

Walker and Mathebula (2020) looked at how students from rural areas on low incomes experience challenges and opportunities when they join colleges in big cities. The research, formed by interviewing 30 students who study in big cities, applied the theories of capabilities, functionings and types of capital to find out how they usually face unusual and frightening situations at school. Although the outcomes of students were not decided only by how rural or poor their areas were, they still affected students' well-being and ability to decide for themselves. It was suggested by the authors that colleges assist such students by being aware of their efforts and providing them with appropriate help (Walker & Mathebula, 2020). In the study, Walker and Mathebula point out that attention from schools to the issues rural students faced within urban schools is very significant (2020).

The residents of Kadarko Town have to live with depopulation, starvation, low development, poverty, ignorance, isolation and lots of health-related issues. According to Urbansky, the

financial difference between countryside and city is the key reason why some young people travel from rural areas to big cities. Besides, other factors in the economy and urban jobs encourage youth to move to towns and cities. Coinciding with the above, Abolga finds that prosperity opportunities are what largely attract young people to city areas. Mostly, decisions to migrate are based on the differences in income between rural and urban places. For this reason, a lot of youth in rural areas move to cities to try to raise their earnings and fill the gap between developed countries and those that are not developed. Many push and pull factors, for example, unemployment, low earnings and poverty, as well as employment chances, higher earnings and better living conditions, are part of the town's present economic situation. Ejikeme and colleagues (2018) maintain that migration of young people from rural areas to cities is one of the biggest problems in promoting Nigeria's socio economic growth. Therefore, Sennuga et al. (2023) argue that rural-urban youth migration has shown that fewer rural youth live in rural areas due to migration which has held back the growth of rural areas and negatively affected output in the region. Hence, some approaches or possibilities exist to prevent young people from migrating from rural to urban locations. Moreover, according to Ampadu-Ameyaw et al. (2020), ways to deal with youth unemployment in rural areas by making use of appropriate resources for new jobs should be designed and applied. So, in order to keep rural-urban youth from moving, rural development must be given proper attention.

III: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

For this study, a mixed-method approach was employed to gather and examine both quantitative and qualitative data to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem. For quantitative data, a descriptive study design was used and explanatory design for qualitative data. With this technique, the researcher was able to explain rural development from the view of the participants. Kothari (2022) states that a descriptive design shows an accurate picture of the situation by only collecting facts from the environment. In Maxwell's (2021) opinion, this type of design is the best for capturing, structuring, studying and understanding data.

The study looked into how economic issues affect migration by rural-urban youth. With the study's method, each individual was able to explain his or her ideas about rural development. Besides, this made the researcher notice common feelings and beliefs among participants and relate them to the cause of rural youth choosing to leave their homes for city life. Following the suggestion of Ahenkan et al (2022), it was useful to find out how rural development influences young people who migrate from rural to urban communities.

3.2 Study Site

Kadarko lies along the Makurdi–Lafia highway, making it accessible by road. It is approximately 30 to 40 kilometers north of Yelwata, a known settlement along the same route. Bounded by Yelwata South, Selkin Norman North, Gidan Dogo East and Giza West, Kadarko Town is a rural spot in the north central part of Nigeria. Kadarko Town presents a unique and relevant setting for this study due to its strategic location as a semi-rural settlement experiencing noticeable youth outmigration. In the town, farming plays a big role and is the main industry and it is also famous for its cultural traditions. Many residents in Africa grow yam, cassava, sorghum, millet and

maize in their small-scale commercial or household farms. Households raise cattle, goats, sheep, and poultry for food and profit, making livestock farming another common practice. The local economy also benefits from petty trading, artisanal crafts like blacksmithing and weaving, and a small amount of agro-processing.

Notwithstanding its economic potential, Kadarko Town has problems such as inadequate banking services, poor market connections, restricted access to contemporary farming equipment, and poor infrastructure. These problems impede economic expansion and are the main causes of young people's urban migration. Kadarko Town is a suitable and appropriate site for this study because of its rural setting and its understudied status in relation to youth migration and rural development. The importance of doing research in this field is further supported by the sizable youth population.

3.3 Study population, and Target population

The population of Kadarko Town, according to the last census in Nigeria, was 9,800 (NPC, 2023). The target population for this study was the youth between the ages of 18 and 35 years, which consisted of 3,400 youth (NPC, 2023) based on the national population council's last census in Nigeria.

3.4 Sample and Sample Techniques

Bekele et al., (2022) described sampling as the process of selecting a representative subset of the population. A simple random sampling technique was used for the study to select respondents (youths) from each location of Kadarko Town ward. Given the goals and research questions of the study, the purposive sampling procedures was used also to determine and choose the sample for the key informants, which was made up of chiefs, elders and local authorities.

The greatest variation sampling was utilized to collect the broadest range feasible with the discreet assistance of the local authorities on rural development from important informants from Kadarko Town, who satisfies the benchmark requirements. In order to establish the precise sample size for this study. Since each home in the rural area has an equal probability of being chosen, simple random sampling was employed to choose them. The researcher ultimately guaranteed that the sample is representative of the intended audience from the rural Kadarko Town.

Table 3.1: Sample Distribution by Category and Sampling Procedure

Category	Target population	Sample procedure	Actual sample size
Youths	3400	Simple random sampling	131
Chiefs	1	Purposive Sampling	1
Elders	5	Purposive Sampling	5
Government Youth officers	1	Purposive Sampling	1
Qualitative Data from interview schedule	(Chiefs, Elders & Government officer)	Purposive Sampling	7

The researcher applied Slovin's formula given a margin of error of 5% to arrive at the sample from 3,400 target population of youth as below;

Slovin's Formula is the following:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

From the information, $N = 3400$ (population size) and $e = 0.05$ (the margin of error)
 $n = \frac{3400}{1 + 3400(0.05)^2}$

$$= 130.9$$

$$= 131 \text{ Respondents}$$

The Sample size for Key informants was as a result of inclusion criteria for all 7 participants as shown in the table.

3.5 Tools of Data Collection

A tool used to collect data over a broad sample size is a questionnaire. (Tromp & Kombo, 2014). To save the researcher time and money, a large number of respondents received structured questionnaires. Because their answers to the questionnaires are always anonymous, respondents are honest when answering questions about contentious subjects. A semi-structured interview schedule is flexible and enables the researcher to gain comprehensive awareness of the problem at hand as well as in-depth information about the subject under investigation.

This study employed two main data collection tools: the Youth Questionnaire (Appendix A) and the Interview Schedule for Government Youth Officers, Chiefs, and Village Elders (Appendix B). The Youth Questionnaire was administered to youth respondents to collect quantitative data

on their socio-economic status, education, and migration patterns. Using questionnaires allows researchers to efficiently involve a lot of participants and obtain sincere answers because the identities of the respondents are protected (Tombo & Tromp, 2022).

The Interview Schedule made it possible to interview and collect important qualitative information from Government Youth Officers, Chiefs and Village Elders. During interviews, I understood in detail the issues that the youth face in employment, education, infrastructure, technology and migration. Because of this tool, the participants were able to talk about the issues they faced in detail (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

3.5.1 Pilot Study

There was a pilot study in Nasira Village and it was done with 10 participants: 6 of them were young people who completed the Youth Questionnaire and 4 key informants (a Government Youth Officer, Chief, Village Elder and a household member) took part in interviews using the Interview Schedule for Government Youth Officers, Chiefs and Village Elders (Appendix B). The pilot tested the clarity and reliability of the instruments.

The questionnaire was administered twice to youth respondents one week apart, following the test-retest method (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006), to assess consistency. Interview guides were evaluated for clarity and relevance through participant feedback. Necessary revisions were made to both tools to ensure validity and reliability before the main study.

3.6 Reliability and Validity

Reliability refers to the consistency of a research instrument in yielding stable and similar results over repeated trials (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). In this study, the reliability of the Youth Questionnaire was tested using the test-retest method, where the same respondents completed the questionnaire twice, with a one-week interval between administrations (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The results were compared to ensure consistency of responses. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to measure internal consistency; values above 0.7 were considered acceptable, above 0.8 good, and above 0.9 excellent (Gliem & Gliem, 2003).

Validity refers to the accuracy of a testing instrument when it measures the main concept (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To check that the tools used to collect data were valid, the information tools were looked at by the researcher's advisors and professionals in education. Based on what they said, important changes were made so that the tools met the targets set for the study. By pre testing before the pilot study, unclear or irrelevant questions were found and corrected which improved how valid the tools were.

These methods guaranteed that the data collection tools worked well and gave valid results when collecting data from people in Kadarko Town.

3.7 Data Analysis Procedures

Analysis of the quantitative data was done using SPSS 25.0, where graphs, percentages and frequency distributions gave an early report of the findings. For qualitative data, NVivo software was employed to perform textual formatting and interpretation, revealing underlying meanings through coding, categorizing, and thematic analysis.

The study considered every piece of qualitative information obtained through focus groups and interviews. To gain a comprehensive grasp of the participants' views of development, the researcher read and listened to the raw data multiple times. The researcher analyzed the written and tape-recorded material from focus groups and interviews. The non-numerical data was next interpreted by the researcher to find recurring themes, patterns, correlations, trends, and consistency in the data. After that, the researcher investigated, coded the information, and arranged the codes to provide insightful analytical units that illustrated the connections between various codes and themes. For a more thorough comprehension and more accurate categorization, the researcher analyzed the developing themes while considering the context and subtleties of the various data. Each objective was taken into consideration as the data is analyzed and refined.

Existing theories or pertinent literature was used to support the interpretations. To increase the validity and dependability of the analysis, the researcher triple checked all the qualitative information gathered from focus groups and interviews by contrasting it with information from other sources. The qualitative method of theme analysis, which the researcher employed when representing the data assisted in determining the relationship between the rural-development and rural-urban youth migration in Kadarko Town. Since the analysis of qualitative data is an iterative process that involves enhancing analytical methodologies, the researcher is aware of this and frequently goes back and reviews prior steps in the process anytime new problems or insights come up until the desired outcomes are obtained. In order for the theme analysis results to form the research narrative, it was interpreted in accordance with the study's objectives and research questions. In conclusion, the new and current findings were compared by the researcher. The researcher compiled a written report based on the entire process of data collecting and analysis, presented it to the public, and drew conclusions from the analysis and suggestions from the findings.

3.8 Ethical Considerations of the Study

By using ethical standards, it was possible to guarantee that participants' interests were protected during all contacts between researchers and participants. The participants in the study were clearly informed by the researcher about its aim and told that their freedom and dignity would be looked after.

As the investigation was carried out, all ethical rules regarding informed consent, respect for participants and their opinions, anonymity and confidentiality were maintained. The researcher collected both primary and secondary data with the help of skilled assistants, obeying national and authorities' rules and getting the participants' agreement. The researcher went over the participants' duties, the rules they had to follow and the freedoms they enjoyed while participating in the study. The data collection and its analysis were given to the participants. Lastly, the researcher promised to safeguard the subject and greatly respected what they thought and wanted. The researcher ensures that every law, rule and standard of ethics is followed by the research organization. Got the approval of the institutional or ethics review board before the study was started.

IV: RESULTS

5.1 The influence of economic opportunities on rural-urban youth migration

The initial goal was to find out the ways economic opportunities influence the migration of rural-urban youth in Kadarko Town. This objective considered the role economic possibilities had on the tendency of youth to leave their hometown. The study tried to discover if available jobs, funds and the chances of being successful in business played a role in the migration choice of youths. Participants were asked to express their opinions in the table by using the keys given below: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of Economic Opportunities

Statements	Responses	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev
I believe there are better job opportunities in urban areas compared to Kadarko Town	Frequency	47	39	19	5	3.16	0.85
	Percentage	42.7%	35.5%	17.3%	4.5%		
Lack of employment opportunities in Kadarko Town is a key factor driving migration	Frequency	59	33	14	4	3.34	0.79
	Percentage	53.6%	30.0%	12.7%	3.6%		
Youths migrate to cities due to economic instability in rural areas	Frequency	55	37	14	4	3.30	0.80
	Percentage	50.0%	33.6%	12.7%	3.6%		
Farming support programs would encourage me to stay in Kadarko Town	Frequency	37	51	15	7	3.08	0.87
	Percentage	33.6%	46.4%	13.6%	6.4%		
Providing more business opportunities could reduce rural-urban migration	Frequency	73	31	4	2	3.59	0.65
	Percentage	66.4%	28.2%	3.6%	1.8%		

The findings from Table 4.1 indicated strong support for the idea that economic opportunities significantly influence rural-urban migration patterns from Kadarko Town. A majority of respondents believed there were better job opportunities in urban areas, as 47 (42.7%) strongly agreed and 39 (35.5%) agreed, while fewer disagreed, with 19 (17.3%) disagreeing and only 5 (4.5%) strongly disagreeing. Regarding the lack of employment as a driver of migration, 59 (53.6%) strongly agreed and 33 (30.0%) agreed that it was a key factor, whereas 14 (12.7%) disagreed and 4 (3.6%) strongly disagreed.

Similarly, many respondents linked youth migration to economic instability in rural areas, with 55 (50.0%) strongly agreeing and 37 (33.6%) agreeing. A smaller portion, 14 (12.7%) disagreed and 4 (3.6%) strongly disagreed. When asked if farming support programs would encourage them to remain in Kadarko Town, 37 (33.6%) strongly agreed and 51 (46.4%) agreed, while 15 (13.6%) disagreed and 7 (6.4%) strongly disagreed, suggesting mixed but generally positive sentiment. Notably, the highest level of consensus was observed on the statement that providing more business opportunities could reduce rural-urban migration. Here, 73 (66.4%) strongly agreed and 31 (28.2%) agreed, with only 4 (3.6%) disagreeing and 2 (1.8%) strongly disagreeing. These results collectively underscore the perceived importance of enhancing local economic opportunities to mitigate migration pressures.

The findings of this study strongly align with recent research by Ogundimu and Adeleye (2021), who conducted a comprehensive study on rural-urban migration patterns in southwestern Nigeria. Their research, involving 850 respondents across five rural communities, found that 89% of youth cited lack of employment opportunities as the primary driver of migration, which closely mirrors our finding of 83.6%. However, their study reported a slightly higher percentage (92%) of respondents believing urban areas offered better job prospects compared to our 78.2%. This slight variation could be attributed to regional differences in economic development and proximity to major urban centers. Interestingly, Bakare and Olumide (2022) present contrasting findings in their study of rural youth in Ogun State, Nigeria. They found that only 65% of respondents viewed urban areas as having better employment opportunities, significantly lower than our findings. Their research suggests that targeted rural development programs implemented in Ogun State between 2019-2021 may have improved local economic conditions, thereby reducing the perceived urban advantage. This divergence highlights the importance of localized rural development interventions in addressing migration pressures.

Respondents in Kadarko Town highlighted the limited economic opportunities available to the youth. According to the Government Youth Officer, there are very few job opportunities for young people, and “most rely on subsistence farming, which is not always profitable” (Government Youth Officer, personal communication, May 2025). The Chief added that “apart from agriculture and petty trading, there are no major industries or businesses to absorb the youth” (Chief, personal communication, May 2025). Similarly, the Village Elder emphasized that many young people remain unemployed due to the absence of “factories, companies, or large markets to support business growth” (Village Elder, personal communication, May 2025).

Regarding the potential of agriculture and trade as sustainable livelihoods, respondents expressed mixed opinions. The Government Youth Officer observed that although agriculture holds promise, “lack of modern equipment and financial support discourages many youths from engaging in it” (Government Youth Officer, personal communication, May 2025). The Chief noted that farming is widespread, but it is perceived by many youths as unappealing “due to poor income and market access” (Chief, personal communication, May 2025). The Village Elder concurred, suggesting that “if the government provided support in terms of irrigation, fertilizers, and market linkages, farming could sustain more young people” (Village Elder, personal communication, May 2025).

Respondents also cited financial and infrastructural barriers that hinder youth from starting businesses or securing employment. The Government Youth Officer pointed out that “limited access to credit facilities and lack of business training prevent many from starting businesses” (Government Youth Officer, personal communication, May 2025). This coincides with what the Chief reported since he said “available financial support is missing and the economy is not strong enough to keep most companies running” (Chief, personal communication, May 2025). Furthermore, the Village Elder noted that infrastructure holds back the development of the economy (Village Elder, discussed with me, May 2025).

V: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

The aim of the study was to see how economic matters affected the migration of Kadarko Town’s young people from rural to urban areas. Here, researchers looked at youth migration and the role that availability of economic opportunities had on it. The evaluation was carried out to determine if young people’s migration was tied to jobs, benefits and feasibility of the companies they considered. Based on a variety of statements about economic opportunities in both rural and urban areas, respondents shared their opinions.

47 respondents (42.7%) highly agreed, 39 respondents (35.5%) agreed, 19 respondents (17.3%) disagreed, and 5 respondents (4.5%) strongly disagreed with the first statement, "I believe there are better job opportunities in urban areas compared to Kadarko Town." This demonstrated a significant belief that Kadarko Town did not offer as many work prospects as urban locations.

34 respondents (30.0%) agreed, 14 respondents (12.7%) disagreed, 4 respondents (3.6%) severely disagreed, and 59 respondents (53.6%) strongly agreed with the second statement, "Lack of employment opportunities in Kadarko Town is a key factor driving migration." These results demonstrated that one of the main causes of youth migration from rural to urban areas was a lack of employment opportunities.

55 respondents (50.0%) highly agreed, 37 respondents (33.6%) agreed, 14 respondents (12.7%) disagreed, and 4 respondents (3.6%) strongly disagreed with the third statement, "Youth migrate to cities due to economic instability in rural areas." According to the research, Kadarko Town's economic instability was a major factor in migration decisions.

37 respondents (33.6%) highly agreed, 51 respondents (46.4%) agreed, 15 respondents (13.6%) disagreed, and 7 respondents (6.4%) very disagreed with the fourth item, which asked if "Farming support programs would encourage me to stay in Kadarko Town." According to these results, interventions that assist agriculture may be able to keep more young people in rural areas.

Roughly, 36.4% of the people responded that they highly agree, another 28.2% said they agree, 3.6% disagreed and only 1.8% strongly disagreed with the assertion that better business opportunities could convince people to stay in rural areas. This explained that different ways of boosting the economy can greatly decrease the flow of youth to city areas.

All in all, it turned out that job and company options were the main factors influencing young peoples' decisions to go to Kadarko Town. Rural areas did not give steady economic chances which led to migration. Still such efforts as company investments and farming support can help prevent this trend.

5.2 Conclusion of the Research Study

The study concluded that; most young people in Kadarko Town migrate to cities due to limited economic opportunities, high unemployment, and unstable economic conditions. Youth are attracted to urban areas in search of better living standards, more job opportunities, and financial security. Rural areas offer few avenues for stable income, minimal support for small businesses, and limited access to banking services. As decent work is scarce, many young people see migration as the only path to economic improvement. Addressing this challenge requires support for local businesses, investment in agribusiness, and initiatives to boost rural economic activities. Government and non-governmental organizations can play a key role by promoting small businesses, cooperative societies, and microfinance programs to provide employment and reduce youth migration.

5.3 Recommendations of the Research Study

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were put forth: It was suggested that county governments and development agencies create and carry out economic empowerment initiatives meant to give young people in rural areas job prospects. To lessen the economic push factors causing migration, these programs can include financial aid for small enterprises, training for entrepreneurs, and agricultural support projects.

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