Investigating the Communication Strategies for Addressing the Advent of Population Growth for Effective Socio-Economic Progress in Abuja Municipal Area Council

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Abstract

Obviously, one of the major causes of rapid population growth in the rural areas in Nigeria is rural-urban migration. This study has the broad objectives to know the role communication plays in rural-urban migration, rapid population growth in Nigerian urban areas and the consiquences of the situations. Therefore, the study made use of oral interview approach of the qualitative methodology gather data for the study. Through this method a number of respondents were engaged within the context of the study, and findings from the study had it that communication has played some important roles in reporting the hazards of rural-urban migration and some of these roles according to a response from respondents includes; enlightening the rural populace about the hazards of migration, assisting in the development of rural communities and informing the government about the needs of the rural populace. The study concluded that the roles communication has played in migration will go a long way in solving some of the few problems of rural-urban migration in the country. The study recommended among other things that Government at all levels should endeavor to always take recommendations made by communication experts on rural-urban migration seriously by implementing them especially for the betterment of the rural populace which will, in turn, reduce rural-urban migration.

Key words: Investigating; Communication; Strategy; Population Socio-economic

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has witnessed an unprecedented and unplanned growth of its urban population over the ages. The UNDESA in ,Adebayo, A. (2016), for example, reveals that the percentage of mid-year population residing in urban areas has been increasing steadily since 1950. In the last 10 years, it has grown from 34.8% to 52% and is expected to reach 69.9% by the year 2050. The growth of cities in Nigeria, which is occasioned by both rural-urban migration and fertility, is another driver of insecurity. According to the International Organization for Migration in Adefolalu, A. A. (2010), 60% of internal migrants in Nigeria reside in urban areas. Job opportunities and social amenities make cities attractive and increases propensity of migration to these cities. But the rapid growth of urban population puts strains on available resources and makes job opportunities very scarce. Population Action International in Ajeagbu, O. (2016), succinctly argues that rapid urban growth leads to saturation of labour markets; alters the ethnic composition of the urban population and intensifies inter-ethnic competition; and stresses the existing social services and city budgets.

Urban population growth in Nigeria overstretches the limited social services and job opportunities. This in turn increases the rate of poverty, unemployment, idleness and social exclusion. These, coupled with diminished social bond and anonymity that characterized the urban areas, deepen the risk of insecurity. Aliyu, B. (2012), shows that insecurity of lives and property is one of the challenges

of urbanization Nigeria has been grappling with. Nigerian cities have become a fertile ground for proliferating neighborhood gangs. Homeless young adults form/join cults and violent gangs like the Awawa Boys/One Million Boys, who survive on looting of shops or mugging of ordinary people (Democratic Socialist Movement in Anyadike J.A., 2013). Several other studies have also shown that Nigerian cities have become an arena of street crimes (robbery, mugging, political violence, drug abuse, etc), with youth gangs holding sway. Olufemi (2011), for example, found different youth gangs in different cities: Yandaba in Kano; the Ofio Boys in Port Harcourt; Agaba in Cross River; Yan sara-suka (Bauchi); Yan Kalare (Gombe). He identified rural-urban migration as one of the factors responsible for the rise of these groups.

Apparently, Abuja seems to be one of the urban areas that have witnessed rapid population growth over the years. Historically, the city of Abuja was originally the south-western part of the ancient Habe (Hausa) kingdom of Zazzau (Zaria). It was populated for centuries by several semi-independent tribes. The largest of the tribes was Gbagyi (Gwari), followed by the Koro and a few other smaller tribes. Abuja is located in the centre of Nigeria, within the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Abuja is a planned city, and was built mainly in the 1980s. It officially became Nigeria's capital on 12 December 1991, replacing Lagos, though the latter remains the country's most populous city. At the 2006 census, the city of Abuja had a population of 776,298, making it one of the ten most populous cities in Nigeria. (WGEA, 2016).

The above fact was further strengthened that Abuja has witnessed a huge influx of people into the city; the growth has led to the emergence of satellite towns such as Karu Urban Area, Gwagwalada, Lugbe, Kuje and smaller settlements to which the planned city is sprawling. The unofficial metropolitan area of Abuja has a population of well over three million and comprises the fourth largest urban area in Nigeria, surpassed only by Lagos, Kano and Ibadan. (WGEA, 2016). This situation possibly has impacted negatively on the socio-economic progress of the city. It is based on the above backdrop that the research strives to investigate the viable communication strategies that can be used to address the aforementioned issues.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this research is to investigate the communication strategies that could be used to address issues of population growth in AMAC. However, objectives are:

i. To examine the factors that constitute rapid population growth in Abuja Municipal Area

ii. To find out the extent population growth has impacted negatively on the socio-economic progress of AMAC.

iii. To estimate the communication strategies for addressing the advent of population growth for effective security and socio-economic progress of Abuja Municipal Area Council

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions which the researcher used in carrying out the findings include:

i. What are the factors that constitutes population growth in Abuja Municipal Area Council?

ii. To what extent population growth has impacted negatively on the socio-economic progress of AMAC?

iii. What are the communication strategies available for addressing issues of population growth and insecurity in Abuja Municipal Area Council?

CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATION

The concept of communication can simply be defined as a process by which people exchange information, express their thoughts, feelings, ideas and views in discussion with other people using verbal or nonverbal expressions, signs and writing to convey message among themselves in the society. Okwor (2009) simply defines communication as a process and the activity of passing information from an individual to another person in the society. Fasel (2000) defines communication as the ongoing interchange among people of thoughts, ideas, opinions, impressions, information and data by speech, writing or signs. Interestingly, communication is an ongoing interchange process which involves expression of thoughts, views, ideas, opinions, information and data in human environment in order to influence people's action for an improved living condition in the society. The concept of communication can also be viewed as an exchange of information between the sender and the receiver in the society. Communication is very critical to community development in the participating communities in the society.

Schramm (1983) states that communication is a transaction where the communicator and receiver are active and information is exchanged. The sharing of information is inevitable in communication for effective service delivery in community development. Communication is very critical to community development in the participating communities in the society. Communication is, indeed, central to every human activity in community development process. In the views of Okwor (2009) communication is very central, because the person involved must endeavour to share his or her experience with target audience to explain the entire exercise. Without communication no information will be provided to relevant stakeholders as a guide for effective promotion of community development. This is

why Balit, S. (1996), rightly notes that communication in more elaborate terms is a process whereby people influence each other, create and maintain a basis of shared information and ideas which they use as a guide. Certainly, communication will always provide people with information, ideas, experiences and data that will guide them in their community development drive in the participating communities.

Communication Strategies

In a simple term, communication strategy is the scheme of planning on how to share information. Communication strategy is the choice of the most useful objectives of communication, and recognition of a particular brand and its strategy in terms of attitude.: (Adesanya:99**).** At the start, communication was limited to certain levels like writings and meetings. But modern technologies as well as a number of communication theories and practices have changed the whole concept` (Ekechukwu et al 2012. Now People need to make efforts on understanding how they share information through different strategies. Some of these communication strategies which includes: active listening, non-verbal communication, using appropriate language and tone, asking clarifying questions, and adapting communication style to the needs and preferences of the audience. Apart from the oral and writing strategies of communication, people now make use of technological means such as mass media approach otherwise known as broadcast media.

Population growth

Population Growth can be defined as the increase in the number of people in a given area. Population growth can be measured in a neighborhood, country, or even global level. Rapid human population growth has a variety of consequences. Population grows fastest in the world's poorest countries. High fertility rates have historically been strongly correlated with poverty, and high childhood mortality rates. Falling fertility rates are generally associated with improved standards of living, increased life expectancy, and lowered infant mortality. Over population and poverty have long been associated with increased death, and disease. 25 People tightly packed into unsanitary housing are inordinately vulnerable to natural disasters and health problems.

However, most of the world's 1.2 billion desperately poor people live in less developed countries (LDCs). Poverty exists even in MDCs. One in five Soviet citizens reportedly lives below the country's official poverty line. In the United States, 33 million people - -one in eight Americans are below the official poverty line. The rapid expansion of population size observed since the end of World War II in the world's poorest nations has been a cause of their poverty.

Poverty is a condition of chronic deprivation and need at the family level. 28 Poverty, is a major concern of humankind, because poverty everywhere reduces human beings to a low level of existence. Poor people lack access to enough land and income to meet basic needs. A lack of basic needs results in physical weak-ness and poor health. Poor health decreases the ability of the poor to work and put them deeper into poverty. Instead of allowing poverty to persist, it is important to limit our number be-cause in dense populations too many lack adequate food, water, shelter, education and employment. High fertility, which has been traditionally associated with prosperity, prestige, and security for the future, now jeopardizes chances for many to achieve health and security.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the course of work, the researcher adopted oral interview of qualitative methodology to carry out findings. This is a kind of research approach where researcher and respondents are involved in face-to-face communication or by means of technology like telephone or computer. In other words, In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation. It is a research instrument that seeks an in-depth account of personal experience and reflections, with sufficient time allowed for the narrators to give their story the fullness they desire. The content of oral history interviews is grounded in reflections on the past as opposed to commentary on purely contemporary events. This research tool needs the understanding of two parties, that is, the researcher and the respondents. The chosen areas include Garki, Nyanya, Wuse. The sample of the study consists of selected male and female who formed different classes of people; parents, youths, community leaders, media workers/communication experts, and security agencies in the within the selected areas. The results gotten were analysed using the qualitative style of analysis.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This study adopted oral interview of the quanlitative methodology gather and analyse its data. As such, the researcher engaged a number of respondents through oral interview approached in order to gather informations on the issues under the study through the following empirical questions:

i. What are factors responsible population growth in AMAC?

ii. To what extent population growth has impacted negatively on the socio-economic of AMAC?

iii. What are the communication strategies for curbing insecurity in AMAC?

Responses of a number of respondents from each of the study areas were captured in this section. On the

issues of the factors responsible for population growth, the researcher asked that, "**what are the factors responsible for population growth in AMAC?".** In respond to this question, a respondent in Nyanya area, Musa Aliu says that "yes, unemployment is one of the reasons my friends and I have moved to AMAC. There are no available jobs for us to do in our villages and we have dependants to take care of".

Another respondent who aired his vein on this issue in Nyanya, Mose Atawodi, notes that, "beside unemployment that have bedeviled the rural areas, there are no reasonable infrastructure amenities in the rural areas. The major available job in my area is farming. However, a lot of us decided to abandon our farms and come to the city because we have no good road, sources of water, reasonable market to sell our farm products and we have no hospital to go to whenever we fall sick".

In the same vein, a respondent in Wuse who contributed in given answer to this question, Joshua Ene says that,

> I am from Benue State. Honestly, we don't really have problems that can make one to travel out of our village to the city until lately. We have rich farm land and big market that serve the interest of my village and its neighborhood. People traveled from the east and other places to supply yam, garri and other farm products from our place to the city making our area to be comfortable financially. But recently, like some many other parts of the nation, insecurity has made our place a death trap; people can no longer go to farm because of the Fulani Herdsmen attacks. Even at home, we cannot sleep with both eyes closed. Thus, we chose to run to AMAC and other places for our dear lives.

Indeed, many other respondents provided other reasons for rapid growth of population in AMAC, but the above seems to be the opinions of majority of them, and their claims equally seems to be inline with that of some scholars like John, M (2013), Mary, L. (2018), Mohammad, M (2020), Ogochukwu (2021) and others who posited a number of factors are responsible for rural urban migration in Nigeria. To them, the factors range from infrastructural decay, lack of educational facilities, lack of water sources, natural disasters, unemployment and recently, insecurity.

In same vein, the researcher asked the second question, which says"**to what extent population growth has impacted negatively on the socio-economic activities in AMAC".** In respond to this question, the first respondent in Wuse, Mohammed Nasir, says that, "One of the problems associated with population growth in AMAC is traffic conjection. As a result of population growth, we are faced with problem of traffic conjection, most especially in morning while going to work and during the evening when people are returning from work. This situation has a great negative impact on the socio-economic activities in AMAC".

In similar vein, another respondent who attended to the first question in Wuse, Nana Kadizat Yusuf adds that, "rapid population growth in AMAC truly breads infrastructure decay. As people continue to move to AMAC, the infrastructures available suffer over useable and decay. Example is seen in the increase number of people using the roads, hospital, market, and even the educational facilities. These In a number of ways have impacted negatively on the socio-economic activities in AMAC".

More so, Samuel Ade who also aired his opinion on the second question in wuse, says that, "environmental pollution is a serious issue associated with influx of people into the city. AMAC's case has not been an exception, and this contributes alot to the socio-economic activities of the area".

Additionally, a respondent from Garki, Samuel Abedenegeo, argued on the second question that, "people movement from the rural areas to AMAC has increased cases of unemployment and traffic congestion in AMAC in the recent years. And as a result, insecurity has truly increased in AMAC in the recent times. Cases of kidnapping and armed robbery are heard here and there. One of the factors contributing to this ill is movement of people into AMAC. These people who thought they will find job to do in AMAC before coming are usually disappointed by the fact that there are no job to do in AMAC; thus, frustration and hunger will always lead them to crime".

However, it is important to note that the above opinions were closely related to some of the problems associated with rural urban migration positioned by different scholars like Umere, O. (2014), Uhunmwangho, V. (2023), Ebele, E (2015) among others who claimed that rural urban migration is associated with different challenges ranging from increase in crime wave, prostitution, environmental pollution and traffic congestion. This opinion is also related to the argument of Malthus Theory on the calamities of unchecked population growth in a particular area.

Moving from the above issues, the researcher asked another question on the list which says, **"What are communication strategies for curbing insecurity in AMAC?".** In respond to this question, many of the respondents agreed that a number of communication strategies have been employed over the years to address the issues, thus, several of them expressed their supports for the use of participatory communication in addressing the issue. For instance, a respondent in Nyanya, Samuel Abedenegoe, says that, "participatory communication has great potential to address the issues of population growth and insecurity in AMAC". Alexandra John in Wuse says that, "participatory communication is the best vehicle that can be used to address the problem". A respondent in Garki, Sonnia Abel, adds that, "although, other means of communication have been over years to curb issues such as this, but participatory communication should be

used in this regard". She went further to say that, "it is one of the communication channels that have been used over the years to communicate socio-economic, cultural and political issues". This opinion is inline with the arguments of participatory communication scholars like Mefalopulos and many others. Participatory development communication is the use of the mass media, traditional and interpersonal modes of communication to empower communities in their bid to discover solutions to their development problems and goals. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2018) defines the term 'participatory as the provision of opportunity for individual participation. It also defines 'communication as the process of conveying information from a sender to a receiver with the use of a medium in which the communicated information or message is understood the same way by both the sender and the receiver. Development on its part is defined by Oso (2002) as a term that came into widespread application after the Second World War to mean growth, industrialization, change, modernization and democracy.

The summary of these definitions is that participatory development communication is a process in which community members are brought in to contribute and share ideas about how to bring about development to their communities. Kheerajit and Flor (2013) describe it as a key process in the bringing together of stakeholders for cooperation in the task of addressing the problem of the environment and to work towards the enthronement of a sustainable social change away from individuals. While noting that it is a tool that enables stakeholders to work together towards producing a sustainable social change away from individual behaviour change in their communities, they remark that participatory development communication offers local community members the platform to discuss and address natural resource managements in their communities and to build an improved policy environment. Anaetoand Solo-Anaeto (2010) align with this observation in their definition. They assert that it as the process of seeking the active involvement and participation of community members and groups in development initiatives through strategic utilization of various communication strategies. Guy Bessette (2004, p.6) holds an identical view, as he argues that participatory development communication is a powerful tool to facilitate the development of putting people first in the promotion of community self-organization. He is of the opinion that the term should be analyzed within the context of 'facilitating the active involvement of different community groups, along with other stakeholders involved and the many development and research agents working with the community and decision makers. Bessette (2004, p.9) offers a definition of participatory communication as a planned activity, based on the one hand on participatory processes, and on the other hand on media and interpersonal communication, which facilitates a dialogue among different stakeholders, around a common development problem or goal, with the objective of developing and implementing a set of activities to contribute to its solution, or its realization, and which supports and accompanies this initiative. The notion of stakeholders here refers to active community members, local and regional authorities and sometimes the non-governmental agencies who work at community levels to seek to persuade the people towards behaviour change.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

In summary, it is obvious that rural urban migration is associated with several challenges. This work appraises the place of communication in addressing the problems for socio-economic transformation. The era of modernization and dependency advocated the diffusion model of communication development with an ultimate goal of behavior changes with a motive to persuade people to change their behavior by providing them with information i.e., change in knowledge, attitude and practice. Participatory communication has gained momentum from the 1990s after the paradigm shift of the development model from dependency to multiplicity, which questions the importance and relevancy of the unidirectional communication model in development activities. This approach emphasizes the cultural identity of local communities and the importance of democratization and participation at all levels. Through the extensive literature review, the steps of the participatory communication cycle were described in parallel to the project cycle for the development activities.

Population growth and insecurity are some of the major problems confronting many cities today. The problem of population growth and insecurity are in other words serious threat the urban areas in Nigeria. These problems on other hand have serious implications on the development of the Nigerian urban settings. Thus, participatory communication seems to be one of the viable tools that could be used to communicate the challenges for national stability and progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings made in this study, and their various implications, the following recommendations were made which if given due consideration, will make a positive change in AMAC and Nigeria at large. The recommendations are:

i. The participatory communication has been proven to be effective means of communication that can be used to communicate varieties of social issues. Thus, it should be employed to discourage rural urban migration.

ii. Nigerian Government at all levels- federal, state and

local should endeavour to develop the rural area making it attractive, safe and business lucrative place to stay in order to control rural urban migration.

iii. Nigerian Government should use different means to arrest the various security issues facing the country by improving unemployment, basic amenities especially in the rural areas,

iv. Rural roads or other transportation routes eg Railways, water transportation, should be built to facilitate the movement of agricultural products from these areas to the cities as that will go a long way in enhancing the lives of the rural dwellers thereby discouraging them from going to the urban areas.

v. Finally, this study covers some selected cities in AMAC, other researchers should carry out findings on the implications of rural urban migration covering a wider scope in other to investigate in the issues in other parts of Nigeria

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