

Population Growth, Urbanization, and Insecurity in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between population growth, urbanization, and insecurity in Cross River State, Nigeria, using quantitative data from a 27-item questionnaire administered in six purposively selected local government areas: Calabar South, Akpabuyo, Yakurr, Ikom, Obanlikwu, and Obudu. Drawing on the frustration-aggression and Boserupian hypotheses, the study posited that rapid population growth drives urbanization, maintaining certain pull factors over push factors. This leads to the expansion of geographic areas, resulting in conditions such as unemployment, inflation, high living costs, financial difficulties, unstable jobs, lack of capital, limited educational opportunities, inadequate health and sanitation, and housing and income inequality, all of which contribute to insecurity. The data were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings revealed a strong significant relationship between population growth, urbanization, and insecurity in Cross River State. The study concluded that insecurity is a reflection of a deep-seated crisis of development, fuelled by unchecked population growth and urbanization, which creates an environment conducive to poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, and inequality. It recommends the development and careful implementation of policies and programs that address the root causes of insecurity, with a strong political will for their implementation.

Keywords: *population growth, urbanization, and insecurity, community development, gender, poverty, women, rehabilitation, Nigeria*

Introduction

Nigeria is recognized as the most populous country in sub-Saharan Africa and the seventh most populous in the world, with an estimated population of over 198 million in 2018, a fertility rate of 5.46, and an annual population growth rate of 2.61 percent (NPC, 2013; WHO, 2017; WDA, 2017; UN, 2017; Eni, 2018). This makes Nigeria one of the fastest-growing populations globally, accounting for 2.57 percent of the total world population (WDA, 2017). Cross River State, with a projected population of over 3 million, has the highest fertility rate (5.4) compared to its neighboring state, Akwa Ibom (3.9) (NDHS, 2013; Ayara, Essia & Udah, 2013). The state has maintained a high fertility rate of 5.5 from 2003 to 2013 and an annual growth rate of 3 percent, according to NDHS (2013). The population of the state increased from 2.9 million in 2006 to an estimated 3.8 million in 2016 due to its annual exponential growth rate of 3.0 percent (WDA, 2017). The population of the state, like the national population, is considered "young," with more than half of the population under 25 years of age (CIA, 2017; Mbachu, & Alake, 2016; Ottong, Ering & Akpan, 2010). The steady and rapid population growth in the state, without a corresponding increase in physical and economic infrastructure to support and sustain this large population, exposes the state to challenges related to urbanization and insecurity (Mbachu & Alake, 2016; PRB, 2016; Ottong, Ering & Akpan, 2010; Cobham, & Ntombela, 2010). Rapid

population growth is partly responsible for the problem of urbanization, urbanization create highly unfavourable circumstances for socio-economic development, this situation exposes the vulnerable and the disadvantage population to a life of crime, consequently jeopardising the safety of life and property. Eni (2018); Anam et al (2024) argued that rapid population growth facilitate urbanization and create a situation where certain pull factors are retained above certain push factors. This result to continuous grow and expand of geographical coverage, which creates unfavourable conditions such as inadequate accommodation, insecurity, insufficient water supply, poor housing, unemployment, congestion, filth and general deterioration associated with urban centres as well as increased demand for key social services (Uzoh et al, 2023; Anam, et al, 2023).

Economically, urbanization is beneficial as it enables economies of scale, fostering industrial growth and development in a country when properly managed. However, from a sociological perspective, urbanization often leads to increased insecurity, as evidenced by higher crime rates in large cities and urbanized areas (Ladbrook, 1998; Malik, 2016). While urbanization itself does not directly cause insecurity, it is closely associated with several factors that contribute to rising insecurity in areas experiencing rapid population growth. These factors include unemployment, high living costs, financial instability, precarious employment, lack of capital, limited educational opportunities, inadequate healthcare and sanitation, and housing and income inequality (Uzoh et al., 2023; Anam et al., 2023). Although these determinants are related to urbanization or its consequences, the underlying cause of insecurity is often the process of urbanization itself (Malik, 2016; Anam et al., 2024). In recent times, the state of insecurity in Cross River State has become a major concern for both young and old. Scholars argue that the current insecurity is a manifestation of a deeply rooted and structurally entrenched developmental crisis, caused by unchecked population growth and urbanization. This creates an environment conducive to poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, and inequality (Ukwayi & Okpa, 2018; Anam et al., 2024). These issues lead to frustration, alienation, and social discontent, sparking violence and insecurity among the marginalized and deprived population (Ukwayi & Okpa, 2017; Uzoh et al., 2023; Anam et al., 2023). The security situation in Cross River State has become increasingly alarming, with a rising number of innocent people falling victim to criminal activities. The state has recently faced drastic and unprecedented security challenges, previously unknown to the region. These concerns range from kidnapping, ritual killings, assassinations, theft, rape, prostitution, murder, burglary, armed robbery, child abduction, and militancy. There has also been an increase in violence and lawlessness, including hostage-taking of prominent citizens, oil bunkering, arms insurgency, cultism, and other criminal activities (Uzoh et al., 2023; Anam et al., 2023).

Population growth, urbanization, and insecurity have sparked widespread concern and intense academic debate. Policymakers, researchers, and experts are actively proposing solutions to this national issue. Past research has suggested that well-managed population growth can boost economic development and improve citizen well-being (Ehrlich & Ehrlich, 1977; Cobham & Ntombela, 2010; Ottong, Ering, & Akpan, 2010; Eni & Ukpong, 2014; Ukwayi & Okpa, 2018; Eni, 2018; Ebingha, Eni & Okpa, 2019; Uzoh et al., 2023; Anam et al., 2023). However, the lack of empirical data intensifies the debate. This study aims to quantitatively explore the relationship between population growth, urbanization, and insecurity in Cross River state, Nigeria, hypothesizing no significant correlation among these factors.

Theoretical perspective

Frustration aggression theory

Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears (1939) proposed the frustration-aggression hypothesis, suggesting a strong connection between frustration and aggression. They posited that frustration fuels aggression and vice versa. According to the Yale group, frustration arises when an expected goal is obstructed, while aggression is a behavior aimed at harming the target. They further

argued that every instance of frustration generates an impulse towards aggression, and every act of aggression implies prior frustration. This theory is pertinent to the present study as it elucidates the relationship between the disillusionment, resentment, tension, anger, and frustration resulting from intense competition for scarce resources due to high population growth and urbanization. The prevailing state of insecurity can be seen as a manifestation of a profound and structurally ingrained developmental crisis, driven by uncontrolled population growth and urbanization. These factors create conditions conducive to poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, and inequality. Consequently, these issues lead to frustration and alienation, culminating in social unrest that ignites violence and insecurity among the marginalized and disenfranchised population.

The urban bias theory

The urban bias theory, formulated by Michael Lipton in 1977, concentrates on the issue of rural poverty in developing nations, particularly in relation to land reform and urban favoritism. Lipton pointed out that numerous developing countries tend to formulate and implement economic policies and programs that disproportionately benefit urban regions, often to the detriment of rural areas. This bias is often driven by the influence of urban-based elite groups and government interests. As a result, while urban areas receive more amenities and resources, the majority of a country's population resides in rural areas. This imbalance leads to migration from rural to urban areas (Stuart & Gareth, 2009). Essential facilities such as hospitals, schools, well-developed roads, libraries, and other government and semi-government infrastructures are predominantly located in urban areas. Urban bias is seen as a significant barrier to rural development because it fosters discriminatory policies that maintain and exacerbate disparities between urban and rural regions. This leads to the growth of urban areas at the expense of rural regions, creating stronger pull factors in urban areas compared to the push factors. This theory is pertinent to this study as it aids in understanding the issues and driving forces behind urbanization in Nigeria and other developing countries.

Materials and methods

The research was carried out in six local government areas within Cross River State, Nigeria, namely Calabar South, Akpabuyo, Yakurr, Ikom, Obanliku, and Obudu. Based on the 2006 National Population Commission data, the state had a population of 2,892,988, with household heads in the study area totalling 249,029. Due to the impracticality of studying the entire population, the sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula, as the population size was known and derived from the 2006 NPC data. The study employed stratified random sampling to select six local government areas from the state's eighteen. In each selected local government area, six council wards were randomly chosen, and proportional samples were randomly selected from each ward, resulting in a total of 400 households/respondents. The primary data collection tool was a 27-item questionnaire. Data analysis involved the use of tables, percentages, and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to investigate the relationships between population growth and various variables.

Ethical consideration guiding social science research were fully comply with vis a vis objectivity, confidentiality, non-maleficence to respondents, respect for respondents and cultural sensitivity.

Results

The demographic data of the respondents showed that 280 (70%) were males and 120 (30%) were females, indicating a higher male representation. In terms of age distribution, the largest group was those aged 41-45 years, with 123 respondents (30.75%). Educational levels varied, with 150 respondents (37.50%) having secondary education as the most common. Occupation-wise, students formed the largest group with 100 respondents (25%). Regarding religion, 290 respondents (73%) were Christians, making it the dominant religion. Income levels showed that

90 respondents (22.50%) earned between N200,000 to N300,000 annually, reflecting the economic situation. Lastly, family size data revealed that 250 respondents (62.50%) had 3-6 children, highlighting the continued high fertility rate in Nigeria, and specifically in Cross River State (CRS).

TABLE 1: Distribution of respondents on demographic data

| S/N | Items | No. of Respondents | Percentages |
|-----|------------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| 1. | Sex | | |
| | Male | 280 | 70.00 |
| | Female | 120 | 30.00 |
| | Total | 400 | 100.00 |
| 2. | Age (in Years) | | |
| | 25 years & below | 19 | 4.75 |
| | 26-30 years | 41 | 10.25 |
| | 31-35 years | 80 | 20.00 |
| | 36-40 years | 101 | 25.25 |
| | 41-45 years | 123 | 30.75 |
| | Over 45 years | 36 | 9.00 |
| | Total | 400 | 100.00 |
| 3. | Level of Education | | |
| | No formal education | 42 | 10.50 |
| | Primary education | 98 | 24.50 |
| | Secondary education | 150 | 37.50 |
| | Tertiary education | 110 | 27.50 |
| | Total | 400 | 100.00 |
| 4. | Occupation | | |
| | Civil servant | 98 | 24.50 |
| | Farmer | 64 | 16.84 |
| | Health worker | 38 | 9.50 |
| | Student | 100 | 25.00 |
| | Self employed | 26 | 6.50 |
| | Unemployed | 54 | 13.50 |
| | Others | 20 | 5.00 |
| | Total | 400 | 100.00 |
| 5. | Religion | | |
| | Christianity | 290 | 73.50 |
| | Islam | 10 | 3.50 |
| | Traditional | 62 | 16.50 |
| | Other | 38 | 10.50 |
| | Total | 400 | 100.00 |
| 6. | Income level per annum | | |
| | Below ₦100,000 | 35 | 8.75 |
| | ₦100,000 – ₦200,000 | 80 | 20.00 |
| | ₦200,000 – ₦300,000 | 90 | 22.50 |
| | ₦300,000 – ₦400,000 | 64 | 16.00 |
| | ₦400,000 – ₦500,000 | 61 | 15.25 |
| | Above ₦500,000 | 70 | 17.50 |
| | Total | 400 | 100.00 |
| 7. | Family size | | |
| | 1 – 3 | 70 | 17.50 |
| | 3 – 6 | 250 | 62.50 |
| | 6 – 9 | 75 | 18.75 |
| | 9 and above | 5 | 1.25 |
| | Total | 400 | 100.00 |

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Test of hypothesis

The hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between population growth, urbanization, and insecurity in Cross River State, Nigeria, was tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis. The findings, presented in Table 2, reveal a correlation coefficient of 0.973, indicating a very strong positive relationship between population growth, urbanization, and insecurity. The test result was significant at the 0.01 level, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Consequently, the alternate hypothesis, which posits a significant relationship between these variables in Cross River State, is accepted.

TABLE 2: Correlation result of relationship between population growth, urbanization and insecurity in Cross River State

| | | Population growth & urbanization | Insecurity |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------|
| Population growth & urbanization | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .973** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | Sum of Squares and Cross- products | 281.240 | 257.320 |
| | Covariance | .705 | .645 |
| | N | 400 | 400 |
| | Pearson Correlation | .973** | 1 |
| Insecurity | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | Sum of Squares and Cross- products | 257.320 | 248.760 |
| | Covariance | .645 | .623 |
| | N | 400 | 400 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Analysis

Discussion

The result of the study shows that there is a significant relationship between population growth, urbanization, and insecurity in Cross River State, Nigeria. This demonstrates the consistent link between population growth, urbanization, and insecurity. The findings of this study are consistent with findings of Ottong *et al.* (2010). They argued that although Cross River State is one of the least urbanized geo-cultural regions in Nigeria, the State is already faced with the problem of rapid population growth in some of the urban centres. Urban centres such as Calabar Municipality, Calabar South, Ugep, Ogoja, Ikom and Obudu are experiencing rapid population increase with the attendant problems of inadequate urban facilities and infrastructures to sustain large influx of people. Urbanization, defined as the proportion of the population living in towns and cities, is often seen as an indicator of societal development. However, urban centers in the State are struggling to cope with the challenges that accompany rapid population growth. These challenges include inadequate housing, congestion, unemployment, insecurity, and environmental degradation, all of which are direct consequences of the strain placed on urban facilities and infrastructure by increasing population density.

Research by Michael, Catrien, and Bijlereid (2007) highlighted that population growth and urbanization are common factors associated with rising insecurity across various nations. As cities become overcrowded and family structures are disrupted by modern work demands and economic pressures, crime rates tend to increase, irrespective of cultural or national differences. The United Nations (2003) reported that urbanization in developing countries is linked to increased juvenile involvement in criminal activities. This is attributed to the urban environment weakening primary social relationships and control, greater reliance on media over informal communication, and the misuse of modern technology. In the literature of public management,

scholar and professionals are beginning to argue for the deployment of advanced technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) to combat challenges caused by urbanisation and population growth. For instance, Agba, Agba & Obeten (2023), have argued that AI technologies have been deployed to tackle the challenges faced in public governance and management. They observed that AI has enormous potential in improving government performance in various areas, including policymaking, social service delivery, public security management, public financial management, intergovernmental relations, politics, information processing, and data management. Sanidad-Leones (2006) argued that urbanization exacerbates poverty, with urban dwellers facing challenges such as high living costs, unstable employment, limited educational opportunities, poor health and sanitation, and inadequate housing. To escape these hardships, many urban residents resort to criminal activities.

It is well-established that the urban poor face numerous issues, including high living costs, financial instability, precarious employment, lack of capital, limited education, poor health services, and inadequate housing. These combined deprivations contribute to the worsening security situation in urban areas. Crime rates are particularly high in impoverished neighborhoods with high population density, poor living conditions, and unemployment issues (Gerben & Bruinsma, 2007). Swahn and Hammig (2002) and Wireko-Brobby (2008) observed that the urban system, coupled with modernization, tends to amplify crime patterns.

Conclusion and recommendations

The study revealed the relationship between population growth, urbanization, and insecurity. It showed that exponential increase in population growth of the state, without a conforming physical and economic base to absorb and sustain this large population, exposes the state to the problem of urbanisation and insecurity. The study therefore concluded that rapid population growth facilitate urbanization and create a situation where certain pull factors are retained above certain push factors. This result to continuous grow and expand of geographical coverage, which creates unfavourable conditions such as unemployment, inflation, the high cost of living, and financial difficulties, unstable jobs, lack of capital, limited educational opportunities, inadequate health and sanitation, and inadequate housing and income inequality, which promotes insecurity in the state. In the light of this painstaking investigation, the study recommended the following:

- (i) The Federal Government in collaboration with policy makers should develop and carefully implement policies and programmes capable of addressing the fundamentals of insecurity in Nigeria. This includes population growth, urbanisation, poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, dearth of infrastructural facilities, uneven development, and injustice among others.
- (ii) It is time a collective security arrangement by the federal, state and local governments in Nigeria should be accessed, with a view of identifying those grey areas affecting effective synergy between these tree arms of government. It is also imperative to state that existing security committee should be strengthen at village, community, local, state, and federal levels with a renewed responsibility of providing sensitive security information for security agencies at their areas of operation. This will ultimately assist in identifying criminals, their sponsors, and hideouts in the country.
- (iii) Government and development partners should strive for balanced development, ensuring that rural areas are not neglected. By providing essential infrastructure and amenities such as housing, clean water, employment opportunities, and other developmental projects in rural regions, the allure of urban areas can be reduced, thus minimizing rural-urban migration. Additionally, there should be a concerted effort to implement practical strategies for controlling rapid population growth and urbanization. This could include family planning initiatives, educational programs,

and economic incentives that encourage sustainable development in both urban and rural settings.

- (iv) Government should pay attention to the human capital development of the country population. This will require the framing of the right policy framework and the mobilization of public resources through government agencies to provide training, soft skills acquisition to make people useful in the rural areas. Government agencies as the case with TETFund role in the human capital development in the university sector in Nigeria (Agba, et al, 2023). Such role can be replicated at the grassroots as a means of combating crime and insecurity.

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