

Influence of ICT in the Rural-Urban Migration in Owerri Zone of Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The Influence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the Rural-Urban Migration in rural areas of Owerri Senatorial Zone of Imo State is largely influenced by the youth awareness and use of Information and Communication Technologies and the employers cum higher institutions e-advert, which requires e-filling of forms. This study strives to find out how this e-culture has influenced migration pattern in this zone since the year 2009. The study has shown that many youths now migrate out of the communities through the use of Information and Communication Technologies. This has shown that ICT has high contribution in rural-urban migration, as revealed by the number of people from the 8 communities migrated since 2009. Recommendations were given how government agencies and its policies should help to check these youths influx in city centers of Nigeria.

Keywords: Southeastern Nigeria , developing world, youth migration.

Introduction

The advent of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) brought about a lot of changes in everyday living. The access and non-access to ICTs have significantly influenced our ability to acquire social resources, such as education, employment, financial support, political expression, and social position (Warschauer, 2003).

This trend has brought about it some school of thoughts. Many believe that access to ICT tools especially among youths has brought about movements in form of rural-urban migration and more worrisome international migration. This believe is based on the fact that access to information system tools such as the internet provides an unlimited information on every aspect of human endeavors-jobs, education, commerce, social and political systems of living thereby bringing a rapid deterioration of the rural economy leading to chronic poverty and food insecurity.

Another school of thought is of the view that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), appropriately adapted, help improve the livelihoods of poor individuals, families and communities in rural areas and increase their income opportunities, thereby improving their chances of escaping from persistent poverty (infoDev, 2008). This is believed to be panacea to

rural-urban migration in the developing world because migration is an economic survival strategy and rural-urban migration as the dominant economic migration pattern in developing countries is associated with push from rural restrictive poor economic environments and pulled to urban areas with economic opportunities.

It is against the backdrop of the foregoing school of thoughts that this paper is borne to establish actually if the access and non-access to ICTs have in any way influenced migration in the Owerri Senatorial Zone of Imo State especially as it concerns rural-urban migration.

Objectives

1. To ascertain the contribution of ICT in rural-urban migration among the youths
2. To know why the target audience now prefer soft copy to hard copy in filling of forms or any other transaction
3. To suggest ways to check rural-urban migration

Literature Review

ICT and socio-economic development of the society

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have transformed the socio-economic status of nations. Today's economy is measured on the availability and production of Information and referred to as knowledge economy. This present day economic status has potential to a fast economic development of a nation and thereby brings about high level of poverty reduction. Its greatest effect in businesses is the access to a wider global market through e-commerce (Achimugu et al, 2009). The areas of education, health, social policy, commerce and trade, government, agriculture, communications and science and technology all benefit from access powered by ICT. These resources are interlinked and synergetic; individuals can visit and exploit relevant information sources, which often point to additional sources of information and to knowledgeable individuals.

The correlation between information, communication and economic growth are well known, making the significance of networks apparent. Electronic networking is a powerful, rapid and inexpensive way to communicate and exchange information. When networks are available, developmental changes can be sporadic. Access to GSM and satellite TV networks also improves the effectiveness of the development of communities, comprising representative of international agencies, staff of non-governmental organization and others working locally and abroad.

Information and Economic Growth

Among the three strings of technological advance, IT is much more powerful than the others in deciding the magnitude and quality of economic production. Information, together with capital and labor, is a critical, essential production factor. It is a major contributor to labor productivity and total factor productivity. An increase in information content has significantly changed the concept of production, signifying the importance of timely information flows. Firms failing to

incorporate new information can be left behind in gaining productivity and competitiveness, given that the scope of the impact of new information technology is much broader than that of other technologies. While they impact on limited sectors, IT does so across the board. IT also significantly changes corporate behavior and organization structure, which should increase productivity (Brynjolfsson and Hitt, 2000). Many of the early studies on the role of information technology in productivity, which generally used economy or sector data, found little evidence of significance. See, for example, Roach (1987), Berndt and Morrison (1995), and Morrison (1996).

Since the mid-1990s, however, analyses at the firm level have begun to find positive effects of information technology on firms' productivity. Using data from over 300 large firms for 1988–1992, Brynjolfsson and Hitt (1995, 1996) and Lichtenberg (1995) found a clear, positive relationship between firm-level IT investment and multifactor productivity, despite a great deal of individual variation in firms' success with information technology. Many other studies also suggest that information technology contributed to substantial increases in output and productivity (Greenan and Mairesse, 1996; Kelly, 1994; Mukhopadhyay *et al.*, 1997).

Rural-Urban Migration

Migration is the crossing of the boundary of a political or administrative unit for a certain minimum period of time. It includes the movement of refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people as well as economic migrants.

This movement from the rural settlements to the urban centres is considered essential to achieving economic and social success. Young men who do not migrate are seen as 'lazy'. Destinations for rural-urban movement include local centres. Migrants engaging in menial occupations or in activities carrying social stigma, such as prostitution, often prefer distant destinations since this will decrease the possibility of their situation being known in their home village. Latent inter-ethnic conflict in Nigeria influences movement direction – for example, recent clashes between Hausa and Igbo people in Northern Nigeria – has been associated with waves of return migration of Igbos to the Southeast (Okali, Olawole and Okpara, 2001).

Return migration from the urban centres to the rural settlements is high. Most migrants tend to return to their home villages upon retirement, often leaving behind their grown-up children who will support them through remittances. However, the average age of returnee migrants is becoming lower, especially in those rural and peri-urban settlements, which offer non-farm employment opportunities. Another reason for return migration is the increasing competition in the urban labour markets.

Migration between rural settlements is primarily related to farming activities and therefore includes seasonal as well as long-term movement. Because migrants have restricted access to land ownership, kinship ties are a major regulator of rural to rural movement (Okali, Olawole and Okpara, 2002).

Study Area

The study area is located at latitude $6^{\circ} 56'E$ to $7^{\circ} 28'E$ and longitude $5^{\circ} 40'N$ to $5^{\circ} 10'N$. Owerri zone is one of the senatorial zones in Imo State of Nigeria. It is made up of 9 Local Government Areas, namely: Aboh-Mbaise, Ahiazu-Mbaise, Ezinihitte, Ngor-Okpala, Mbaitoli, Ikeduru, Owerri-West and Owerri-North, Owerri-Municipal (Municipal is the city center)

It lies within the low lands and scaps land of southeastern Nigeria and has over 150cm of rainfall per annum. Consequently, throughout the year (except January). The study area shows a relatively humidity between 60% and 85%.

The total population of the study areas is about Two Million, Nine Hundred and twenty-Six Thousand and Ninety-Three distributed as follows: Aboh-Mbaise-41,830, Ahiazu-Mbaise-36,606, Ezinihitte-35,221, Ikeduru-32,453, Mbaitoli-50,726, Ngor-Okpala-34,136, Owerri-North-37,048 and Owerri-West-24,673 (NPC, 2006).

Methodology

This study is based largely on primary data. Data were collected through questionnaire administration and oral interview. Key important questions were asked to target audience i.e. the youths of the study survey area. Questions to get the number of Information and Communication Centre (ICT) centers, how often do they use internet services, do they prefer hard copy or soft copy application forms? How many people they know that have migrated out of the village through the use of ICT either in filling application form or any other digital means etc. the questionnaire administration covered 8 villages (communities) in 8 local government areas in Owerri zone, Imo State. We administered 240 copies of questionnaire to the youth of the 8 study communities i.e. 30 copies per community, 206 copies of the questionnaire were returned. For the survey, the 8 study villages were picked through random sampling. The data we got were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Table 1. No of ICT Centres in these LGAs

Community	LGA	No of ICT Centers in the LGA
Nguru	Aboh-Mbaise	4
Nnarambia	Ahiazu-Mbaise	4
Oboama	Ezinihitte-Mbaise	1
Atta	Ikeduru	1
Umuneke	Ngor-Okpala	1
Emii	Owerri-North	4
Irete	Owerri-West	4
Mbieri	Mbaitoli	6
	Total	25

Table 2. Frequency of visit to the ICT Centres for result checking, filling of forms or other things

Community	LGA	People that visit for filling of forms, result checking	Visit for other things	Both	Total
Nguru	Aboh-Mbaise	10	5	10	25
Nnarambia	Ahiazu-Mbaise	12	6	9	27
Oboama	Ezinihitte-Mbaise	8	7	10	25
Atta	Ikeduru	6	3	11	20
Umuneke	Ngor-Okpala	7	4	13	24
Emii	Owerri-North	13	7	7	27
Irete	Owerri-West	10	4	15	29
Mbieri	Mbaitoli	9	4	16	29
	Total	75	40	91	206
	Percentage	36.4	19.4	44.2	100

Table 3. No. of people migrating into the city through ICT tools since 2009

Community	LGA	No. of people migrating through ICT tool for employment or education since 2009
Nguru	Aboh-Mbaise	280
Nnarambia	Ahiazu-Mbaise	260
Oboama	Ezinihitte-Mbaise	95
Atta	Ikeduru	105
Umuneke	Ngor-Okpala	80
Emii	Owerri-North	107
Irete	Owerri-West	117
Mbieri	Mbaitoli	300
	Total	1345

Results and Discussion

In presenting the data, the analysis was done with qualitative analysis to know the extent of Influence of ICT in Rural-Urban Migration in these areas. The result shown in Table 1 shows that the total number of the ICT centers in this zone is about 25 in number. Aboh Mbaise has 4,

Ahiazu has 4, Ezinihitte-Mbaise 1, Ikeduru 1, Ngor Okpala 1, Owerri North 4, Owerri West 4, Mbaitoli 6. This goes to show that even though ICT centres in 8 LGAs of Owerri zone is not enough compared with the population that make use of it based on the result from Table 2. Table 2 reveals how these target audience make use of the ICT centers, either to check their result especially those that are writing external body examinations like JAMB, WAEC and so on fill forms or other things that can help them migrate out of the area. The analysis shows that people that go to ICT to fill forms or check result only is about 36.4% of the total number surveyed. No of people that go for other things that help them migrate out of the area is about 19.4% of the survey. While 44.2% do both checking of result, filling of forms and other internet work in these communities surveyed, they result goes to show that target audience make use of the ICT mainly for things that will make them go out of the villages to either look for employment, or seek for admissions into higher education etc.

In table 3, when asked the people of Nguru, Aboh-Mbaise the number of people they know that have migrated to cities through information system tools since 2009 till date, the total number is 280 people. In Nnarambia, Ahiazu-Mbaise, 260, Oboama, Ezinihitte 95, Atta, Ikeduru, 105, Umuneke, Ngor Okpala, 80, Emii, Owerri North, 107, Irete, Owerri West, 117 and Mbieri, Mbaitoli 301. The total number is about 1345 people. The immigration level in this table 3 goes to back up the number of ICT centres in these 8 local government areas of the zone.

Recommendations

1. The outcome of the survey has shown that there should not be any division between the digital-haves and the digital-have-nots, since both have the same need i.e. filling of forms, searching for jobs, checking of results, and other things digitally. Policy makers should provide the rural areas good ICT centers, since they (rural dwellers) equally depend on it mainly for their daily transactions.
2. Having shown that ICT influences rural-urban migration, this survey will help enable the government to provide the necessary facilities to the rural people. In so doing, the ICT users will have no need to migrate out to cities again, thereby checking rural-urban migration.
3. Industries, social amenities and higher institution should be provided for the rural people since they are part of things that do the pull syndrome in rural-urban migration.

Conclusion

In rural areas of Owerri zone of Imo State Nigeria, ICT Centres have been playing a critical role in rural-urban migration of recent. Majority of the youths in this area of study are e-culture compliant that make them abandon the old ways of processing forms and filling applications among other things. If facilities that pull them out through the ICT are not provided like citing schools, industries, ICT Centers and other social amenities the war about curtailing rural-urban migration by government among able-bodies young men and women will not yield its required fruits, since many institutions and industries in recent times advertise their job vacancies and conduct most of their recruitment exercise as it concerns application, test and job placement through the internet.

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