

Determinants of Youth Rural-Urban Migration and Employment Outcomes in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigates the factors influencing youth rural–urban migration and employment results in Calabar metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria. A cluster sampling methodology integrating stratified random and purposive methods was employed to guarantee representativeness. The sample size of 400 respondents was calculated from a population of 238,803 youth migrants utilising the Taro Yamane formula, with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level. Data were gathered using structured questionnaires. Quantitative data were analysed utilising SPSS version 23, employing descriptive statistics and inferential methods such as chi-square tests, t-tests, and regression analysis. The results indicate that 67.5% of migrants were aged 20 to 29 years, with males comprising 52.5% and females 46.3%. Approximately 86.2% possessed at least a secondary education, with 46.2% holding university degrees. Nonetheless, 38.7% were unemployed, and 65.0% earned ₦50,000 or less per month, indicating economic precariousness. Migration predominantly occurred individually, with 65.0% of individuals relocating independently. The primary motivators comprised the pursuit of work (77.5%), improved living conditions (67.5%), access to educational options (61.3%), and inadequate rural infrastructure (52.5%). Results on employment indicate that a significant number of migrants are engaged in the informal sector, including street trading (25.0%) and construction (22.5%), whereas 21.3% attained regular employment. The study concludes that while migration to Calabar presents prospects for income enhancement, numerous youths continue to occupy precarious or informal employment with restricted economic mobility. The study advocates for the enhancement of rural development initiatives, the expansion of youth skill acquisition programmes, and the assistance of small enterprises to generate sustainable employment prospects and mitigate excessive rural–urban migration.

Keywords: Youth, Employment outcomes, Rural-urban migration, Informal sector, Calabar

Déterminants de la migration rurale-urbaine et de l'emploi des jeunes dans la métropole de Calabar (État de Cross River, Nigéria)

Résumé

Cette étude examine les facteurs influençant la migration rurale-urbaine des jeunes, ainsi que leurs résultats en matière d'emploi, dans la métropole de Calabar, dans l'État de Cross River (Nigéria). Une méthode d'échantillonnage par grappes, combinant un échantillonnage aléatoire stratifié et un échantillonnage raisonné, a été adoptée afin d'assurer la représentativité de l'échantillon. La taille de l'échantillon, fixée à 400 répondants, a été déterminée à partir d'une population de 238 803 jeunes migrants, selon la formule de Taro Yamane, avec une marge d'erreur de 5 % et un niveau de confiance de 95 %. Les données ont été recueillies à l'aide de questionnaires structurés. Les données quantitatives ont été analysées à l'aide du logiciel SPSS (version 23), en mobilisant des statistiques descriptives ainsi que des méthodes inférentielles telles que le test du χ^2 , le test t et l'analyse de régression. Les résultats montrent que 67,5 % des migrants étaient âgés de 20 à 29 ans, dont 52,5 % d'hommes et 46,3 % de femmes. Environ 86,2 % des répondants possédaient au moins un diplôme d'études secondaires, tandis que 46,2 % étaient titulaires d'un diplôme universitaire. Toutefois, 38,7 % étaient sans emploi et 65 % percevaient un revenu mensuel de 50 000 ₦ ou moins, ce qui traduit une situation de précarité économique. La migration s'effectuait majoritairement de manière individuelle, 65 % des répondants ayant migré de leur propre initiative. Les principales motivations identifiées sont la recherche d'un emploi (77,5 %), l'amélioration des conditions de vie (67,5 %), l'accès à l'éducation (61,3 %) et l'insuffisance des infrastructures rurales (52,5 %). En ce qui concerne l'emploi, les résultats indiquent qu'une proportion importante de migrants travaille dans le secteur informel, notamment dans le commerce ambulant (25 %) et le bâtiment (22,5 %), tandis que seulement 21,3 % occupent un emploi stable. L'étude conclut que, bien que la migration vers Calabar offre des perspectives d'amélioration des revenus, de nombreux jeunes restent confinés dans des emplois précaires ou informels, limitant ainsi leur mobilité économique. Elle préconise le renforcement des initiatives de développement rural, l'expansion des programmes d'acquisition de compétences destinés aux jeunes, ainsi que le soutien aux petites entreprises, afin de favoriser la création d'emplois durables et de freiner l'exode rural excessif.

Mots-clés : Jeunesse, emploi, exode rural, secteur informel, Calabar

INTRODUCTION

Rural-urban migration has emerged as a significant demographic and socioeconomic shift influencing the contemporary world. Worldwide, a growing population is migrating from rural areas to urban centres in pursuit of enhanced economic prospects, education, healthcare, and superior living conditions. The United Nations reports that over 56% of the global population resides in urban areas, with this figure anticipated to rise to almost 68% by 2050, signifying a consistent trend toward urbanisation (United Nations, 2023). A significant portion of this urban expansion is driven by internal migration, especially among youth, who are more inclined to move in search of improved job opportunities and better living conditions (World Bank, 2023). In Africa, rural–urban migration has intensified swiftly due to systemic disparities between rural and urban areas. Numerous rural areas across the continent face ongoing difficulties, including insufficient access to quality education, inadequate infrastructure, substandard healthcare facilities, and limited employment opportunities (World Bank, 2023). The African Development Bank reports that Africa's urban population is expanding more rapidly than any other global region, with urban dwellers projected to quadruple by 2050 (African Development Bank, 2022). The swift urban expansion is largely driven by youth migration, as young people relocate to cities in pursuit of better livelihoods and socioeconomic advancement. Nigeria exemplifies the overarching continental trends of rural–urban migration and youth mobility.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, has had significant population growth and urban development in recent decades (African Development Bank, 2022; World Bank, 2023). The National Bureau of Statistics reported that Nigeria's unemployment rate was 5.3% in the first quarter of 2024, with urban unemployment marginally above rural unemployment. Youth unemployment remains a substantial issue, as young individuals face greater challenges in obtaining permanent employment than their older counterparts (NBS, 2023). Reports reveal that over 90% of Nigeria's workforce is engaged in informal employment, frequently lacking job stability, consistent income, or social protection (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023; International Labour Organisation, 2023).

Numerous cities in Nigeria have become significant hubs for internal migration. Urban centres such as Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, and Calabar attract substantial numbers of young migrants due to their projected economic prospects and social amenities. Of particular interest, Calabar Metropolis has seen rapid urbanisation, partially driven by

rural-to-urban migration. This demographic transition affects local labour market dynamics, as rising young populations often face unemployment or underemployment due to skill mismatches or limited job opportunities (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2021). The city is recognised for its expanding commercial activity, tourism sector, and the presence of prominent educational institutions such as the University of Calabar, which enhance its attractiveness to young migrants seeking career and educational prospects.

Nevertheless, the growing influx of migrants into Calabar also presents significant socioeconomic issues. Accelerated population expansion can exert pressure on labour markets, infrastructure, housing, and social services. Studies indicate that when urban labour markets fail to adequately integrate arriving migrants, a significant number of young individuals get concentrated in informal or low-skilled work sectors (International Labour Organisation, 2023; World Bank, 2023). This scenario frequently results in heightened job competitiveness, wage constraints, and employment volatility among migrant communities. The concurrent exodus of young labourers from rural regions may lead to agricultural labour shortages and reduced rural productivity, thereby hindering equitable regional economic development (Okonjo-Iweala & Osafo-Kwaako, 2007).

Despite the increasing importance of youth migration to Calabar metropolis, there has been insufficient empirical focus on the precise factors motivating rural adolescents to relocate to the city and the employment outcomes they encounter post-migration. Existing studies have examined the socioeconomic implications of youth migration to urban areas. For instance, the International Labour Organisation (2023) and the World Bank (2023) reported that the rapid influx of young migrants into cities often leads to increased pressure on urban labour markets, housing, infrastructure, and social services. Similarly, Okonjo-Iweala and Osafo-Kwaako (2007) noted that youth out-migration from rural areas can reduce the agricultural labour force and negatively affect rural productivity and balanced regional development.

However, while these studies broadly examine the economic consequences of migration and labour market pressures, they pay limited attention to the specific factors influencing youths' migration decisions at the local level. There is insufficient empirical evidence on the determinants of rural-urban youth migration to Calabar. This knowledge gap highlights the need for a focused study that quantitatively examines the factors driving youth migration to the Calabar metropolis. This study

aims to examine the effects of rural-to-urban adolescent mobility on labour markets and employment outcomes in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to:

1. examine the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of rural-urban migrant youth in Calabar metropolis.
2. investigate the factors influencing rural-urban youth migration in the study area.
3. assess employment outcomes and labour market dynamics of migrant youth in the study area.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Area

Calabar is situated in the southeastern portion of Nigeria, in the nation's coastal area. It is located at around 4.95°N latitude and 8.34°E longitude. It functions as the capital of Cross River State and is situated along the Calabar River (Figure 1). The city is flanked to the south by the Atlantic Ocean and continues northward into the rainforest sections of Cross River State. Calabar exhibits a tropical climate marked by a pronounced wet and dry season. The city is situated in the equatorial zone, which is affected by the intertropical convergence zone (ITCZ), resulting in substantial year-round precipitation. The rainy season generally runs from March to November, with peak precipitation between June and September, whereas the dry season lasts from December to February. Calabar has an average annual precipitation of approximately 3,500 mm, rendering it one of the wettest cities in Nigeria. The temperature is reasonably steady, averaging between 25°C and 30°C year-round.

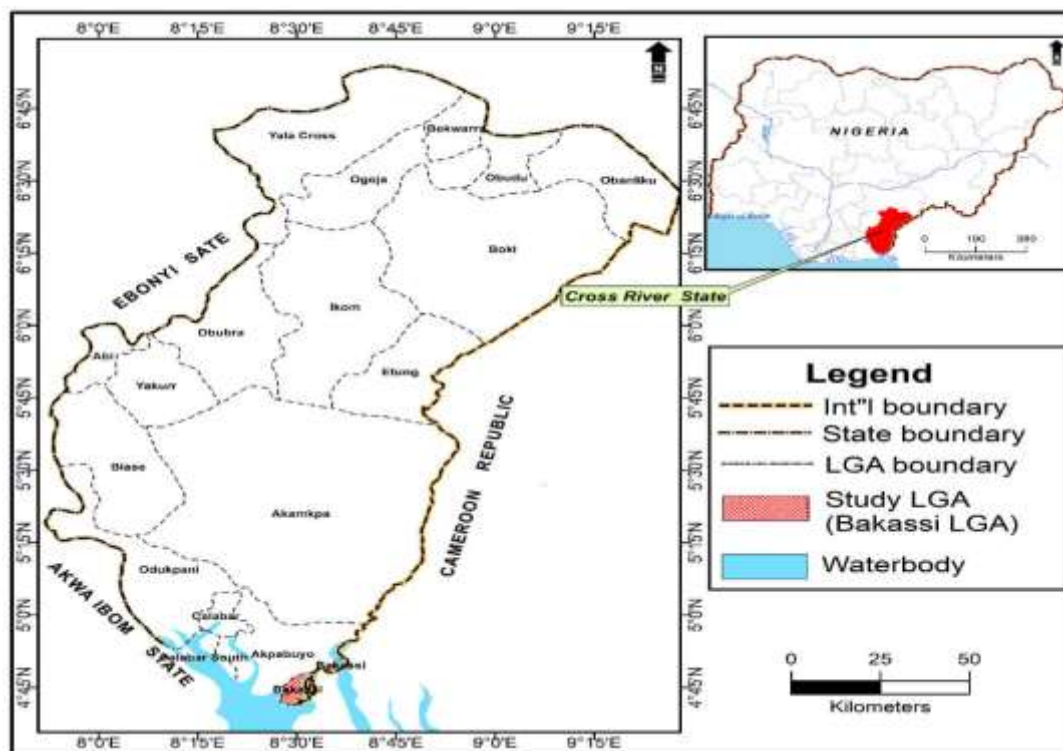


Figure 1: Map of Cross River State

Source: Cross River State Ministry of Lands and Urban Planning, 2026

The flora in and surrounding the city is distinguished by towering trees, hardwood varieties, and an assortment of plant species adapted to elevated precipitation and humidity. The drainage system in Calabar is chiefly affected by its nearness to the Atlantic Ocean and the existence of the Calabar River. The city's drainage system has multiple small rivers and streams that converge into the Calabar River. The topography of Calabar is predominantly flat, interspersed with occasional hilly areas. The city is situated on the coastal plain, with elevations varying from sea level to around 150 meters above sea level. The soils consist mostly of alluvial types, created by the deposition of silt and clay transported by river systems, alongside lateritic soils in the elevated regions. Calabar has a diverse population, with estimates indicating approximately 600,000 to 700,000 individuals, according to the 2023 census.

The population comprises diverse ethnic groups, with the Efik people as the largest group. Additional ethnic groupings comprise the Ibibio, Annang, and various minority populations throughout Nigeria. Calabar's economy is predominantly driven by

agriculture, commerce, and services. Agriculture is a crucial sector, prominently featuring the growth of crops such as cassava, yams, cocoyam, and oil palm. Calabar's industrial operations encompass cement manufacturing, food processing, and the exportation of agricultural commodities. Fishing is particularly crucial due to the area's proximity to the Calabar River and the Atlantic Ocean. The economy has expanded into sectors such as tourism, with historical attractions like the Calabar Museum and the annual Calabar Carnival drawing both domestic and foreign visitors.

The interplay between tourism and migration in Calabar is complex and varied. Tourism facilitates both temporary and permanent migration and serves as a conduit through which migration impacts the local economy and cultural landscape (Emeh & Akpan, 2019; Ademola, 2021). Conversely, migration patterns, especially internal migration, enhance the tourism business by fostering a more diversified labour force and cultural milieu. Notwithstanding these advancements, issues such as unemployment, poverty, and insufficient infrastructure persist for the local populace. To sustain the growth of both sectors, meticulous planning and policy execution are essential to address the economic and infrastructural requirements arising from these interconnected developments.

Methods

To guarantee data representativeness, cluster sampling, which integrates both probability and non-probability sampling techniques, was utilised. Initially, stratified random sampling was employed, categorising youth migrants into several strata based on variables such as gender, age, education, and occupation. A random sample was selected within each stratum to ensure diversity and balance across subgroups. The sample size was calculated using the Taro Yamane formula, considering a population size of 238,8031, a 5% margin of error, and a 95% confidence level. A sample size of roughly 400 was derived and used for the study. Consequently, a collection of 400 well-designed questionnaires was distributed to responders. Data collection involved administering 400 structured questionnaires to youth migrants to obtain quantitative data on migration patterns, employment status, income levels, and perceptions of economic opportunities in Calabar. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including government officials, labour market specialists, business proprietors, and community leaders, to gather qualitative data on the extensive economic ramifications of youth mobility.

The data gathered from respondents were imported into a database and analysed using statistical software, specifically the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)

version 23.0. Variables like age, education, employment status, income, and employment sector were classified for analysis. The survey data were evaluated for completeness, consistency, and accuracy. Missing data were addressed through imputation or case exclusion, depending on the nature and magnitude of the deficiencies.

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, simple percentages, means, medians, and standard deviations, were used to summarise the demographic characteristics of youth migrants, their work status, income levels, and employment outcomes. Inferential statistical methods such as chi-square tests, t-tests, and regression analysis were utilised to ascertain the links among youth migration, labour market results, and economic growth.

RESULTS

Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 presents demographic and socioeconomic attributes that provide critical contextual insights into the framework, motivations, and consequences of juvenile migration trends in the research region. The age distribution indicates that most respondents belong to the economically active young category. Specifically, 35.0% were aged 20-24 years, 32.5% were aged 25-29 years, 15.0% were aged 15-19 years, and 17.5% were aged 30-34 years. Males accounted for 52.5% of responses, females for 46.3%, and 1.2% opted not to identify their gender. Only 2.5% had no formal education, 11.3% completed basic education, 40.0% completed secondary education, and 46.2% completed university education. The employment status further substantiates this interpretation.

A notable percentage (38.7%) of respondents were unemployed, whilst 25.0% were self-employed, 21.3% held full-time positions, and 15.0% were worked part-time. Monthly income distribution indicates that 27.5% earned less than ₦20,000, while 37.5% earned between ₦20,001 and ₦50,000. Consequently, 65.0% of respondents earned ₦50,000 or less per month, indicating relatively low incomes. Only 12.5% received a monthly income exceeding ₦100,000. Concerning marital status, 62.5% of participants were single, 30.0% were married, 5.0% were divorced, and 2.5% were widowed. The data on pre-migration occupations indicate that 35.0% were students, 20.0% were employed, 17.5% were jobless, 12.5% were in apprenticeships, 7.5% were involved in agriculture, and 7.5% were engaged in other activities.

The data on migration types in Table 1 reinforce the finding that youth migration in Calabar is predominantly individualistic and opportunity-driven, with 65.0% migrating independently and 35.0% migrating with family. The data in Table 1 indicate that 67.5% of respondents were aged 20-29 years, suggesting that most young individuals polled were in early adulthood. Males comprised 52.5% of the total sample, slightly outnumbering females. Regarding employment, 38.7% were unemployed, while 25.0% were self-employed, indicating restricted access to conventional employment options. A significant percentage (37.5%) earned between ₦20,001 and ₦50,000 per month, indicating moderate earning levels. A predominant 62.5% were unmarried and 65.0% had travelled independently, primarily from educational (35.0%) or occupational (20.0%) contexts.

Table 1: Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of respondents (N = 400)

S/N	Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Age group	15–19	60	15.0
		20–24	140	35.0
		25–29	130	32.5
		30–34	70	17.5
		Total	400	100.0
2	Gender	Male	210	52.5
		Female	185	46.3
		Prefer not to say	5	1.2
		Total	400	100.0
3	Educational qualification	No formal education	10	2.5
		Primary	45	11.3
		Secondary	160	40.0
		Tertiary	185	46.2
		Total	400	100.0
4	Employment status	Employed full-time	85	21.3
		Employed part-time	60	15.0
		Self-employed	100	25.0
		Unemployed	155	38.7
		Total	400	100.0
5	Monthly income	Below ₦20,000	110	27.5
		₦20,001–₦50,000	150	37.5

S/N	Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
		₦ 50,001– ₦ 100,000	90	22.5
		Above ₦ 100,000	50	12.5
	Total		400	100.0
6	Marital status	Single	250	62.5
		Married	120	30.0
		Divorced	20	5.0
		Widowed	10	2.5
	Total		400	100.0
7	Migration type	Alone	260	65.0
		With family	140	35.0
	Total		400	100.0
8	Occupation before migration	Schooling	140	35.0
		Employed	80	20.0
		Apprenticeship	50	12.5
		Farming	30	7.5
		Unemployed	70	17.5
		Other	30	7.5
	Total		400	100.0

Factors Influencing Youth Migration and Employment Pattern in Calabar Metropolis

Table 2 indicates that the primary reason driving young migration from rural areas to Calabar metropolis is the pursuit of improved employment prospects (77.5%), suggesting that economic incentives are the predominant catalysts of rural-urban movement. This is followed by enhanced living conditions (67.5%) and educational prospects (61.3%), indicating that youths view the urban setting as offering superior well-being and avenues for self-improvement. Inadequate infrastructure in rural regions (52.5%) and social or peer influence (46.3%) were significant contributory factors, indicating that both push and pull forces combine to drive migration. Simultaneously, insufficient land or agricultural prospects (40%) and familial relocation (30%) exerted considerable influence, whereas conflict or insecurity (23.8%), social discrimination (13.8%), and access to health and social services (32.5%) were comparatively less significant factors. A few (8.8%) cited alternative causes like marriage, lifestyle alterations, and entrepreneurial pursuits. The data

suggest that economic and developmental differences between rural and urban regions are the primary catalysts for youth migration to Calabar Metropolis.

Table 2: Frequency and percentage distribution of factors influencing youth migration from rural areas to Calabar Metropolis

Reasons for Migration	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Search for better employment	310	77.5
Educational opportunities	245	61.3
Family relocation	120	30.0
Better living conditions	270	67.5
Conflict or insecurity	95	23.8
Lack of land or farming opportunities	160	40.0
Social discrimination	55	13.8
Peer or social influence	185	46.3
Poor infrastructure in the rural area	210	52.5
Access to health and social services	130	32.5
Other (specify)	35	8.8
Total (Multiple Responses)	1,815	—

(Multiple responses were allowed; hence, total frequency exceeds N = 400)

A multiple regression analysis was performed to investigate the impact of specific socio-economic determinants on youth migration from rural regions to Calabar metropolis. The independent variables encompassed the pursuit of improved employment, educational prospects, familial relocation, enhanced living conditions, conflict or insecurity, scarcity of land or agricultural opportunities, social discrimination, peer or societal influence, inadequate infrastructure in rural regions, and access to health and social services. Youth migration functioned as the dependent variable.

The regression analysis results in Table 3 indicated that the total regression model was statistically significant. The model yielded a multiple correlation coefficient of $R = 0.71$, signifying a robust association between the independent factors and youth migration. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.50, indicating that roughly 50% of the variation in youth migration to Calabar Metropolis is explained by the predictors in the model, while the remaining 50% may be attributable to other unexamined

factors. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.48 indicates that the model possesses substantial explanatory power, even after accounting for the number of predictors. The regression model's overall significance was validated by the F-statistic ($F(10, 389) = 38.62, p < .001$), indicating that the independent variables collectively exert a statistically significant influence on youth migration from rural regions to the Calabar metropolis.

Table 3: Model Summary

Statistic	Value
R	0.71
R^2	0.50
Adjusted R^2	0.48
F-value	38.62
p-value	< .001

The results on the individual contributions of the independent variables in Table 4 indicate that the pursuit of improved employment emerged as the most significant predictor of youth migration ($\beta = .38, t = 5.86, p < .001$). Improved living conditions had a substantial, statistically significant impact on migration ($\beta = .32, t = 5.30, p < .001$). Educational opportunities significantly influenced migration decisions ($\beta = .27, t = 4.51, p < .001$). The study indicated that inadequate infrastructure in rural regions strongly forecasted young migration ($\beta = .21, t = 4.07, p < .001$). The absence of land or agricultural opportunities was determined to significantly affect migration ($\beta = .19, t = 3.71, p < .001$). Peer or social influence exerted a statistically significant impact on migration ($\beta = .16, t = 3.32, p = .001$), violence or instability was determined to strongly affect youth migration ($\beta = .12, t = 2.68, p = .008$). Access to health and social services exerted a moderate although statistically significant influence on migration ($\beta = .10, t = 2.40, p = .017$), Family relocation exhibited a statistically significant albeit somewhat weak effect ($\beta = .09, t = 2.10, p = .036$), social discrimination did not exhibit a statistically significant effect on juvenile migration ($\beta = .05, t = 1.45, p = .148$).

Table 4: Summary of Multiple Regression Results

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p
Constant	0.52	0.11	—	4.73	.000
Better employment	0.41	0.07	.38	5.86	.000
Educational opportunities	0.29	0.06	.27	4.51	.000
Family relocation	0.11	0.05	.09	2.10	.036
Better living conditions	0.34	0.06	.32	5.30	.000
Conflict/insecurity	0.14	0.05	.12	2.68	.008

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p
Lack of land/farming	0.22	0.06	.19	3.71	.000
Social discrimination	0.06	0.04	.05	1.45	.148
Peer influence	0.18	0.05	.16	3.32	.001
Poor infrastructure	0.25	0.06	.21	4.07	.000
Health/social services	0.12	0.05	.10	2.40	.017

Table 5 indicates that migrant adolescents are disproportionately represented in street trading (25.0%) and construction (22.5%), sectors generally defined by low entry barriers, limited formal qualifications, and elevated informality. Also, 15.0% are engaged in the ICT sector, which is typically associated with higher skill requirements and better salary opportunities. Table 5 indicates that a predominant 40.0% of respondents engage in informal arrangements, however 21.3% possessed regular work. Contractual (22.5%) and daily salary (16.3%) structures further signify employment instability. A total of 75% of respondents indicate an enhancement in income, with 42.5% reporting a minor increase and 32.5% a substantial improvement (table 5). Nevertheless, 25% indicate no enhancement or a decrease in revenue.

Table 5: Sector Currently Working

Sector	Frequency	Percent
Construction	90	22.5
ICT	60	15.0
Hospitality	75	18.8
Street Trading	100	25.0
Others	75	18.8
Total	400	100.0
Work Arrangement	Frequency	Percent
Formal	85	21.3
Informal	160	40.0
Contract	90	22.5
Daily Wage	65	16.3
Total	400	100.0
Income change	Frequency	Percent
Yes, significantly	130	32.5
Yes, slightly	170	42.5
No change	70	17.5
Income decreased	30	7.5
Total	400	100.0

Employment Outcomes and Labour Market Dynamics

Table 6 presents findings on the work characteristics of migrant youth and the perceived impact of migration on incomes in the informal sector. Among 400 respondents, 46.3% claimed that migrant adolescents predominantly participate in unskilled jobs, whereas only 23.8% expressed predominance in skilled employment. Furthermore, 22.5% characterised their employment as mixed, encompassing both skilled and unskilled labour, while 7.5% expressed uncertainty. These statistics unequivocally illustrate that migrant youths are disproportionately represented in low-skilled employment. A significant percentage of respondents (45.0%) believe that youth migration has led to lower wages in the informal economy. Simultaneously, 25.0% indicated that earnings have stayed unchanged, 15.0% asserted that wages have risen, and 15.0% expressed uncertainty.

Table 6: Nature of Employment and its Effects on Wages

Employment type	Frequency	Percent
Mostly Skilled	95	23.8%
Mostly Unskilled	185	46.3%
Mixed	90	22.5%
Don't Know	30	7.5%
Total	400	100.0
Wage Effect		
Wages Decreased	180	45.0
Wages Same	100	25.0
Wages Increased	60	15.0
Not Sure	60	15.0
Total	400	100.0

Table 7 presents the findings about the perceived sufficiency of work possibilities and individual experiences of job rivalry. Among 400 respondents, 25.0% asserted that sufficient work opportunities exist to accommodate the influx of rural youth, a predominant 55.0% contended that job prospects are inadequate. Furthermore, 20.0% expressed uncertainty. A total of 77.6% of respondents indicated they encounter employment competition, with 36.3% reporting it regularly and 41.3% reporting it occasionally. Only 15.0% reported infrequent competition, while 7.5% reported no experience with competition whatsoever. Over three-quarters of respondents directly encounter competition in the labour market throughout their job search or inside their current settings. The elevated level of competition indicates that job prospects are inadequate to adequately accommodate the existing labour force.

Table 7: Perceived Adequacy of Jobs Opportunities and Personal Job Competition Experience

Perceived Adequacy of Jobs Opportunities	Frequency	Percent
Yes	100	25.0%
No	220	55.0%
Not Sure	80	20.0%
Total	400	100.0
Personal Job Competition Experience		
Frequently	145	36.3%
Occasionally	165	41.3%
Rarely	60	15.0%
Not at All	30	7.5%
Total	400	100.0

Among 400 respondents, 28.8% reported experiencing prejudice in employment access, whilst 57.5% stated they had not encountered discrimination. An additional 13.8% were uncertain if they had experienced discrimination. The statistics about heightened job competition are even more remarkable. A total of 77.5% of respondents either strongly agreed (35.0%) or agreed (42.5%) that the migration of rural youngsters had intensified employment rivalry in metropolitan regions. Only 22.5% expressed disagreement or severe disagreement.

DISCUSSION

The study analysed the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of youth migrating from rural areas into Calabar. The dominance of youth in the 20-29 age bracket indicates that migration in Calabar is mostly a phenomenon among young adults. The concentration of migrants aged 20–29 suggests a potential brain drain and loss of the labour force in their rural or origin communities, especially because many migrants hold tertiary education qualifications. The findings correspond with migration selectivity theory, which asserts that movement is predominantly observed among young adults owing to their enhanced adaptability, diminished familial obligations, and elevated desires for education and employment (Todaro & Smith, 2020).

The marginal male predominance suggests that migration in Calabar may continue to reflect conventional gender norms, in which males are typically expected to pursue economic opportunities beyond their native locale. The significant share of female migrants (46.3%) suggests a diminishing gender disparity in migration trends. This tendency aligns with the observations of Afolayan et al. (2008), who noted a rising feminisation of migration in Nigeria, especially among young individuals pursuing educational and service-sector career prospects.

The respondents had a comparatively elevated level of educational attainment. The significant percentage of tertiary-educated respondents indicates that migration in Calabar encompasses not only the uneducated or poorly educated but also a considerable contingent of skilled and semi-skilled youth. This finding aligns with human capital theory, which posits that persons with higher education are more inclined to migrate due to the expectation of superior returns on their abilities in alternative locations (Sjaastad, 1962).

The high unemployment rate among participants underscores the influence of economic push factors in motivating migration. The push-pull framework (Lee, 1966) posits that elevated unemployment and restricted job prospects in origin regions function as significant push drivers. These findings highlight the economic vulnerability of numerous teenage migrants and support the assertion that migration decisions are predominantly shaped by income disparities and the pursuit of improved living conditions (Todaro & Smith, 2020).

The prevalence of single respondents aligns with the youthful demographic composition and reinforces the life-cycle theory of migration, which posits that unmarried individuals exhibit greater mobility due to reduced household obligations (White & Lindstrom, 2005). The substantial proportion previously involved in education indicates that educational transitions significantly influence migration choices.

The prevalence of solo migration suggests that young migration in Calabar is predominantly an individual strategy rather than a household transfer process. The ramifications of elevated solitary movement necessitate the establishment of specialised support systems for urban youngsters, including housing, job assistance, and vocational training. Due to their single status and economic vulnerability, many migrants may encounter social marginalisation or exploitation in the absence of sufficient support systems. This corresponds with research from other Nigerian

metropolitan areas, where youth frequently migrate autonomously for school, apprenticeships, or jobs before possibly providing support to family members (Afolayan et al., 2008).

A majority of respondents (86.2%) had completed at least secondary school, indicating a comparatively educated youth demographic. The findings illustrate a young, educated, yet economically limited population with considerable potential for labour market participation and societal advancement.

The regression results in Table 3 show that the overall model is statistically significant in explaining youth migration to Calabar. The multiple correlation coefficient ($R = 0.71$) indicates a strong positive relationship between the set of independent variables and youth migration, suggesting that the predictors collectively have a substantial association with the dependent variable. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.50$) shows that approximately 50% of the variation in youth migration is explained by the predictors included in the regression model. This indicates a moderate-to-strong explanatory capacity of the model, while the remaining 50% of the variation may be due to other variables not included in the analysis. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.48, which accounts for the number of predictors in the model, remains close to the R^2 value, suggesting that the model maintains good explanatory power without substantial inflation due to the number of variables. Furthermore, the overall significance of the regression model is confirmed by the F-statistic ($F(10, 389) = 38.62, p < .001$). The very small p-value indicates that the predictors jointly contribute significantly to explaining youth migration, meaning the model provides a statistically reliable explanation of the dependent variable. Overall, the results suggest that the set of independent variables included in the model collectively and significantly predicts youth migration.

According to the individual variables in Table 4, the pursuit of improved employment emerged as the most significant predictor of youth migration ($\beta = .38, t = 5.86, p < .001$). This suggests that heightened employment-related motivations considerably elevate the probability of youth migration to urban centres. This finding aligns with the descriptive statistics, indicating that 77.5% of respondents recognised employment possibilities as a primary motivation for migration.

Improved living conditions had a substantial, statistically significant impact on migration ($\beta = .32, t = 5.30, p < .001$). This indicates that the anticipation of enhanced housing, urban facilities, and overall quality of life substantially drives rural

adolescents to migrate to Calabar. Educational opportunities significantly influenced migration decisions ($\beta = .27$, $t = 4.51$, $p < .001$), suggesting that access to higher educational institutions in Calabar is a primary attraction for rural youth.

The study indicated that inadequate infrastructure in rural regions strongly forecasted young migration ($\beta = .21$, $t = 4.07$, $p < .001$). This indicates that insufficient rural infrastructure, including substandard road networks, inconsistent electrical supplies, and restricted communication facilities, significantly influences migration choices. Moreover, the absence of land or agricultural opportunities was determined to significantly affect migration ($\beta = .19$, $t = 3.71$, $p < .001$), indicating that restricted farming prospects in rural regions compel youth to pursue alternative livelihoods in urban areas.

Peer or social influence exerted a statistically significant impact on migration ($\beta = .16$, $t = 3.32$, $p = .001$), suggesting that social networks and the experiences of friends or relatives who have previously migrated influence migration decisions. Similarly, violence or instability was determined to strongly affect youth migration ($\beta = .12$, $t = 2.68$, $p = .008$), indicating that safety apprehensions in rural regions drive young individuals toward urban locales.

Access to health and social services exerted a moderate, though statistically significant, influence on migration ($\beta = .10$, $t = 2.40$, $p = .017$), suggesting that improved healthcare and social welfare services in metropolitan regions serve as supplementary incentives for migration. Family relocation exhibited a statistically significant, albeit somewhat weak, effect ($\beta = .09$, $t = 2.10$, $p = .036$), suggesting that migration decisions are occasionally influenced by household mobility trends.

Nonetheless, social discrimination did not exhibit a statistically significant effect on juvenile migration ($\beta = .05$, $t = 1.45$, $p = .148$). This indicates that discrimination is not a primary factor influencing migration among the youth in the research area, in contrast to economic and infrastructural considerations.

The findings demonstrate that economic and development-related factors are the primary predictors of youth migration from rural regions to Calabar Metropolis. The significant impact of employment prospects and improved living conditions indicates that migration decisions among rural adolescents are primarily driven by aspirations to improve their economic prospects and quality of life. These findings corroborate the push-pull hypothesis of migration, which posits that adverse conditions in rural

regions (push factors) and appealing prospects in urban locales (pull factors) collectively shape movement behaviour. The statistical significance of educational opportunities underscores the role of metropolitan centres as primary educational hubs. A multitude of young individuals relocate to pursue university education and professional training opportunities that are frequently lacking in rural areas.

The substantial impact of inadequate rural infrastructure corroborates that developmental gaps between rural and urban regions considerably influence migratory trends. In rural villages lacking vital services such as adequate roads, energy, healthcare, and communication networks, young individuals are more inclined to migrate to urban areas where these services are readily accessible. The results of this study align with previous research on rural-urban migration, including Todaro's (1969) findings, which indicate that anticipated employment prospects in urban regions substantially influence migration choices in developing nations.

The employment patterns of migrant youth indicate occupational segmentation in Calabar's urban labour market. Migrant youth tend to congregate in labour-intensive, low-capital industries characterised by modest entry restrictions. This concentration may indicate insufficient educational qualifications, absence of professional networks, and limited access to formal employment opportunities. This discovery closely aligns with the dual-sector model proposed by Harris and Todaro (1970), which posits that migrants often work in low-wage urban informal sectors while awaiting official employment opportunities. This model illustrates employment instability and susceptibility. Informal and daily pay arrangements generally lack social protection, pension plans, health insurance, and legal protections. A significant prevalence of precarious employment may subject migrant youth to economic volatility. The findings align with the Harris-Todaro (1970) model, which elucidates migration despite elevated urban unemployment owing to anticipated income disparities. This indicates that migration remains economically viable for most individuals. The prevalence of "slight improvement" signifies minimal advancements rather than significant economic mobility. These findings align with the New Economics of Labour Migration (Stark & Bloom, 1985), which views migration as a strategy for diversifying household risk. Fox and Thomas (2016) similarly discovered that income mobility among African youth migrants tends to be incremental rather than significant.

The prevalence of unskilled work indicates occupational regression and restricted upward mobility in the urban labour market. The low percentage in predominantly skilled occupations (23.8%) indicates constrained assimilation into higher-

productivity segments of the economy. These findings closely align with the dual labour market theory proposed by Harris and Todaro (1970), which posits that migrants are frequently integrated into low-wage urban sectors while awaiting limited formal employment opportunities. Migrants, despite their aspirations for higher incomes, often find themselves in informal or low-skilled employment due to systemic limitations in the metropolitan economy.

The finding that nearly 50% of respondents report wage reductions indicates significant labour supply pressures in informal marketplaces. This finding aligns with classical labour market theory, which posits that a rise in labour supply, with demand remaining constant, typically applies downward pressure on wages. Borjas (2003) contends that immigration or labour influxes can depress wages in sectors heavily populated by migrants, especially within low-skilled labour markets. The prevalence of largely unskilled work (46.3%) alongside reported income reductions (45.0%) indicates a self-perpetuating cycle: migrant youth are concentrated in low-skill industries, and the increase in labour supply within these sectors exerts downward pressure on wages. This tendency may constrain the enduring economic advantages of migration.

It is noteworthy that 15.0% of respondents reported pay increases, potentially indicative of sector-specific expansion or heightened economic activity driven by migration. The findings underscore multiple concerns about the broader ramifications. Initially, sustained engagement in unskilled labour may lead to the underutilisation of human capital, hence constraining national productivity growth. Secondly, wage suppression in the informal sector may intensify urban poverty and inequality. Third, extended tenure in low-skill, low-wage positions may hinder skill development and diminish long-term career advancement for migrant kids.

The findings indicate that over 50% of respondents recognise a systemic deficiency in work prospects due to the expanding labour supply. The prevalence of the "No" response suggests that urban labour markets may be experiencing constrained job growth relative to the level of youth migration. The 20.0% who were uncertain may represent those with unstable employment circumstances or those who recognise sectoral fluctuations in opportunities. While most individuals reported no direct prejudice, the roughly thirty percent who experienced exclusion is significant and cannot be disregarded. In labour market research, this number indicates not merely individual occurrences but also the presence of structural or systemic obstacles affecting a considerable minority of migrating adolescents. The comparatively

elevated "not sure" replies may suggest nuanced or indirect manifestations of discrimination. These tendencies align with findings from the International Labour Organisation (2022), which indicate that migrant adolescents in emerging economies often encounter hidden barriers to securing formal employment, despite the absence of overt discrimination.

Most migrant adolescents find the labour market to be saturated and intensely competitive. The significant proportion of respondents who hold this perception implies that competition is not only theoretical but also a tangible reality in the job-seeking process. The simultaneous presence of perceived competition and documented discrimination indicates two interconnected dynamics within the labour market. Initially, heightened rural–urban migration augments the labour supply, exacerbating competition for the few employment opportunities.

Secondly, in this competitive landscape, certain migrant groups may face additional obstacles to securing employment. Although competition affects most migrants, prejudice may disproportionately affect a specific subset, exacerbating inequality. The findings align with recent worldwide evidence from The World Bank (2023), indicating that when metropolitan economies lack adequate absorptive capacity for arriving migrants, labour market constraints escalate, frequently resulting in the proliferation of informal employment and social unrest

CONCLUSION

The demographic and socioeconomic attributes of respondents reveal that youth migration in Calabar is primarily driven by young, unmarried, reasonably educated individuals with limited career prospects and low incomes. Migration serves as both a survival tactic and a means of social growth. These findings correspond with existing migration theories and other empirical investigations, while also emphasising emergent phenomena, such as the rising participation of females. Policymakers must consequently tackle structural unemployment, improve young people's skill development, and strengthen urban planning systems to effectively manage the socio-economic effects of the youth movement.

The results indicate that youth migration correlates with considerable labour market strain. Although not all migrant kids encounter discrimination, a significant minority does, and a predominant majority perceive heightened employment rivalry. These findings corroborate traditional migration theory (Harris & Todaro, 1970) and modern

labour market assessments (Borjas, 2003; International Labour Organisation, 2022; World Bank, 2023), emphasising that migration can concurrently generate economic opportunities and exacerbate structural employment issues. The findings indicate that migrant adolescents predominantly hold unskilled positions and that many believe migration exacerbates wage reductions in the informal economy. These results corroborate the dual labour market model of Harris and Todaro (1970) and are consistent with empirical evidence from Borjas (2003), the International Labour Organisation (2022), and the World Bank (2023). Although migration might provide employment opportunities, structural limitations in urban labour markets seem to restrict skill utilisation and depress earnings in the informal sector, so hindering the economic transformative potential of youth migration.

The findings reveal a distinct awareness of inadequate employment prospects and of prevalent personal experiences of job competition among migrant youth. Although migration may provide individual economic prospects, its aggregate impact seems to burden the urban labour market, heighten competition, and limit the potential for sustainable job growth. These findings corroborate classical migration theory (Harris & Todaro, 1970) and are consistent with recent empirical studies on labour market dynamics (Borjas, 2003; International Labour Organisation, 2022; World Bank, 2023).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommended advancing rural development programs based on its findings. The government must prioritise rural development by enhancing infrastructure, healthcare, education, and economic possibilities in rural areas. Investments in rural industry and agriculture can mitigate the economic gaps that compel young individuals to migrate to metropolitan regions. The initiation of Youth Employment and Skill Development Programmes to promote skills acquisition and vocational training among unemployed youths. This approach can equip youth with practical, market-relevant competencies. Such initiatives will enhance their employability and facilitate access to higher-paying positions in both rural and urban labour markets.

Young entrepreneurs should receive financial assistance, business training, and access to finance to promote self-employment. Advocating for small enterprises can enhance job prospects and reduce reliance on limited formal-sector employment. Calabar's local authorities should enact policies to enhance formal job options and regulate the

informal sector, thereby improving working conditions and income stability for migrant workers.

There is a necessity for equitable regional development policies. Policymakers ought to implement cohesive regional development policies that foster equitable economic growth in both rural and urban regions. Mitigating regional disparities will facilitate the regulation of migration patterns and promote more sustainable urban development. Government agencies ought to enhance the collection and monitoring of migration statistics to gain a clearer understanding of migration trends and their effects on employment and urban development. Dependable data will underpin evidence-based policy development and strategic planning.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest in this study, nor is there any between the authors.

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