

EFFECT OF RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION OF YOUTHS ON AGRICULTURAL LABOUR SUPPLY IN UMUAHIA NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ABIA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Effect of rural-urban migration of youths on agricultural labour supply in Umuahia north local government area of Abia State, Nigeria was examined. Data for the study were collected from 100 respondents selected from three the three wards in the area. Data analysis was by use of frequencies, percentages and chi-square statistic. The study found that employment and education were the major reasons for rural-urban migration. It was also found that the migration affected various agricultural activities seriously. The study found that with the absence of youths in the area, agriculture labour force is continually costly and this has a negative effect on agricultural production.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is predominantly an agricultural economy. Prior to the discovery of petroleum in commercial quantities agricultural sector was contributing between 70 and 80% of the total value of the country's export. About 75% of the population in Nigeria live in the rural areas and obtain their livelihood from agriculture. But ironically, this sector has not been too well in the past few years. For example, in 1965, agricultural exports accounted for as much as 76% of the Nigerian foreign exchange earnings, 43% in 1970 while the contribution fell to about 6%, 29% and 14% in 1976, 1989 and 1992 respectively (CBN Annual Report 1996).

A lot of factors have contributed to the poor performance of the agricultural sector, but one of the major factors is the movement of

active labour force from the rural to urban areas. With the mass migration of youth from the rural to urban areas, only few youths are left behind. Consequently the cost of labour has been on the increase. With this trend, most farmers have found it increasingly difficult to afford the high cost of labour. Even when some can afford it, labour is readily not available because many youths have migrated to cities and most of those left behind may not be interested in agricultural activities.

Since more youths migrate into the urban areas to earn better standards of living, many aged people are left to accomplish most tasks associated with farming. There is no doubt that added responsibilities will reduce the productive capacity of the aged ones who already do not have the desired energy to do most farm activities. Nwogu (1999) noted that out migration of youths had led to increased participation of older men and women in agricultural production. The supply of labour in the view of Sada (1980) is usually a function of the size of the population, the structure of the population, the preparation of the population entering the labour market and the number of hours which an individual actually work. This is why this study seeks to determine the following among other issues:

1. identify the personal characteristics of respondents
2. determine the socio-economic implications of rural-urban migration in the study area.
3. determine the effect of rural-urban migration of youths on agricultural labour supply/farm activities.

Hypothesis: there is no significant relationship between the number of household migrants and labour availability in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out in Umuahia North local government area of Abia State, Nigeria. From the three wards in the area (Umuahia urban, Ohuhu and Ibeku), ten villages were randomly selected. From

the ten villages a random sampling technique was also used to select ten household heads giving a total of 100 respondents involved in the study. Data analysis was by use of frequencies, percentages and chi-square statistic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Personal characteristics of respondents (n=100)

Variables	Categories	frequency	percentage
<i>Gender</i>	Male	59	59
	Female	41	41
<i>Age</i>	31-40	15	15
	41-50	29	29
	51 and above	56	56
<i>Marital status</i>	Married	61	61
	Divorced	8	8
	Widowed	31	31
<i>Education</i>	No formal educ	57	57
	FSLC	27	27
	WASC	13	13
	OND/HND/BSc	3	3
<i>Type of Farming</i>	Full time	72	72
	Part time	28	28
<i>Farming Experience</i>	1-3 years	10	10
	4-6 years	28	28
	7 years and above	62	62

Table 1 shows that most of the respondents (59%) were males while 41% were females. Majority of the respondents (56%) fell within the age range of 50-61 years above, only 15% were below 40 years. This means that majority of the household heads were advanced in age. From the table 61% of the respondents were married while 31% were widowed. Majority of the respondents were predominantly illiterates as 57% of them had no formal education. However, 27% attained first

school leaving certificate. Only 3% of the respondents had higher diploma or degree.

Table 2: Reasons for migration

<i>Reasons</i>	<i>frequency</i>	<i>percent</i>
Employment	41	41
Further education	36	36
Marriage	15	15
Leisure	8	8

From table 2 it can be observed that 41% of the respondents indicated employment as the reason for migrating out of their community, 36% indicated further education as the reason, 15% indicated marriage, while only 8% indicated leisure.

Table 3: Effect of migration on farm activities

Variables	No effect	Little effect	Moderate effect	High effect
Clearing/bush burning	9	18	17	58
Ridging	9	6	14	71
Planting	9	7	39	45
Weeding	12	14	17	57
Staking	6	29	29	36
Harvesting	7	26	23	44
Transporting	22	10	20	48
Marketing	27	10	25	35

Table 3 presents the effect of migration on farm activities. From the table, 58% of the respondents indicated that the migration highly affect clearing and bush burning activities, 71% indicated that it highly affected ridging, 45% noted that it affected planting activities, 57%

indicated that it highly affected weeding. Other areas that respondents indicated that migration affected farm activities highly include: staking (36%), harvesting (44%), transporting (48%), and marketing (35%). This obviously suggests that farm operations have been highly affected by absence of household members at different levels. In this regard, Nwosu (1980) observed that the greatest problem affecting patterns of agricultural and industrial production was that of low production which is heightened, among other things by the deserting of farming by a large section of the Nigerian population who have taken to other non-agricultural occupations in the urban areas. It was therefore concluded that the consequence of rural-urban migration is increasing labour shortage.

Table 4: Chi square analysis showing relationship between number of household migrants and labour availability

Variables	Males	Females	X^2 cal	Df	X^2 tab
Hired labour	105	103	0.178*	2	0.103
Communal labour	40	41			
Family labour	45	49			

* Significant at 0.05 level

From Table 4, it can be observed that the calculated X^2 is 0.178 while the tabulated X^2 is 0.103. This means that since the calculated X^2 is greater than the tabulated X^2 , the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between the household migrants and labour availability in the study area. This means that with the absence of youths in the area, agriculture labour force is continually costly and this has a negative effect on agricultural production. This finding conforms with that of Ikporukpo (1994) which showed that migration or drift to urban areas affects the economic and social life of both the rural

sources and the urban destinations. This dual impact has been stated by Federal Government of Nigeria (1981) thus "Nigeria has in recent years experienced a very rapid rate of rural-urban migration. The adverse effects of this development as agricultural production and urban environment are quite glaring. Agriculture is suffering from an acute shortage of labour making it difficult to expand the area under cultivation while in the towns and cities the supply of social and infrastructure facilities like housing, water, health services have come under severe pressure.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study showed that many youths have migrated out of the study area. This has serious implication for agricultural production since most of the work that would have been done by the youths are now left for the adults to do. The farmers in the study area are involved in agriculture. This is an enormous task and the additional burden of transferred tasks especially will only increase their problems. This study therefore recommends that

There is the need to intensify and develop small scale industries which are capable of generating employment in rural areas so that rural-urban migration can be reduced. It is also necessary to enhance rural infrastructure so that the rural youths would have less serious reason to drift to urban areas at the expense of the rural areas.

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