Nexus between Youth Perception of Rural Infrastructure and Migration, Crime, and Insecurity in Odo-Otin, Osun State

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the often-overlooked connection between youth perceptions of rural infrastructure and the growing trend of rural-urban migration, which contributes to rising insecurity in Nigeria. While dominant narratives frequently depict rural areas as completely lacking basic amenities, this research focuses on Odo-Otin Local Government Area in Osun State, where infrastructural facilities such as roads, schools, electricity, and healthcare centres do exist. However, these facilities are often perceived by young people as inadequate, poorly maintained, or irrelevant to their aspirations and future goals. As a result, many youths migrate from these rural settings to urban centres in search of better socio-economic opportunities. This migration not only drains rural areas of their productive population but also places added pressure on urban resources. In many cases, migrating youth face marginalization, unemployment, and exclusion, which can push some into criminal activities. This dynamic contributes to rising insecurity in both urban and rural communities. The study adopts a qualitative descriptive design and relies on secondary data sources, including government reports, scholarly articles, and development documents. Through thematic analysis, the research investigates how youth perceptions of rural infrastructure shape migration behaviour and insecurity, drawing on available demographic and psychographic data to understand youth motivations and responses.

Keyword: Migration, Crime, Insecurity, Rural Infrastructure, Rural-Urban Migration

Introduction

Rural-urban migration is a key issue in development studies, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. In Nigeria, young people often leave rural areas like Odo-Otin LGA seeking employment, education, and better social amenities (Adewale, 2005; Olayiwola & Adeleye, 2005). Although rural infrastructure such as schools, health centres, roads, and electricity exist in Odo-Otin, they are often underutilized, deteriorated, or misaligned with youth aspirations. This drives youth migration, leading to rural depopulation and increased urban pressure. Many migrants face economic hardship and limited opportunities, sometimes turning to crime such as cybercrime, robbery, and gang violence (Ikwuyatum, 2016; Olaniyan & Okeke-Uzodike, 2015). This creates insecurity in both rural and urban areas.

While studies often focus on push and pull factors, few examine how youth perceive rural infrastructure's unattractiveness not just its absence as a reason for migration and urban crime (Onokerhoraye, 1995). Despite existing facilities in Odo-Otin, many youths still migrate, suggesting that amenities are seen as outdated or irrelevant. This results in underutilized infrastructure and urban population pressures that worsen insecurity.

This creates a cycle of insecurity: rural areas lose population and social cohesion, while cities face rising youth crime. This issue is underexplored, particularly in Odo-Otin. Understanding how dissatisfaction with rural infrastructure influences migration and crime can inform youth-focused rural development to reduce insecurity. The study addresses four questions: youth perceptions of rural infrastructure in Odo-Otin; how unattractive infrastructure drives migration; the link between migration and youth crime; and how rural infrastructure can be improved to curb migration and insecurity.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative descriptive design and secondary data to examine how youth in Odo-Otin LGA perceive rural infrastructure and how these views influence migration, crime, and insecurity. Through thematic analysis of peer-reviewed literature and official government reports, it also considers demographic and psychographic data to understand youth motivations and attitudes.

Justification for Research Methodology

A qualitative descriptive design is suitable for this study as it offers clear insight into youth perceptions of rural infrastructure and their link to migration, crime, and insecurity. Using secondary data ensures a cost-effective, comprehensive approach, while thematic analysis and available demographic and psychographic data deepen understanding.

Conceptual Review

Rural-urban migration refers to the movement of people from rural areas to urban centres, typically driven by the search for better economic opportunities, education, and social amenities (Adepoju, 2000). In the Nigerian context, this phenomenon is especially pronounced among youth, who represent a significant portion of the migrating population (Oladipo, 2015). While traditional studies often focus on the absence of infrastructure in rural areas as a push factor, emerging scholarship emphasizes the *quality* and *relevance* of existing rural infrastructure as critical determinants of migration decisions (Adeoye & Okunola, 2018).

Infrastructural facilities such as schools, health centres, roads, and electricity are considered essential to rural development (World Bank, 2018). However, infrastructure that fails to meet youth expectations or align with their aspirations may be perceived as unattractive or inadequate, thereby pushing them toward urban migration (Onokerhoraye, 1995). This perception may stem from factors including poor maintenance, lack of modern technology, and insufficient support services that do not cater to youth needs.

Insecurity, especially youth-driven crime in urban areas, has been linked to rural-urban migration as unemployed or underemployed migrants may resort to illicit activities to survive (Ikwuyatum, 2016). The complex relationship between migration, infrastructure, and insecurity thus requires nuanced analysis, particularly focusing on how rural infrastructural inadequacies indirectly exacerbate urban insecurity by fueling youth migration.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Push-Pull Theory of Migration (Lee, 1966), which explains migration decisions as a result of push factors (negative conditions in the origin area) and pull factors (attractive conditions in the destination). The theory is relevant as it highlights how perceived shortcomings such as unattractive rural infrastructure push youth away from their communities, while perceived opportunities in urban areas pull them toward cities.

Additionally, Strain Theory (Merton, 1938) is useful in understanding how structural barriers, such as limited access to quality rural infrastructure and economic opportunities, generate social strain among youth. This strain may lead to deviant behavior, including crime, when legitimate means to achieve social goals are blocked. In this context, youth migrating to urban areas with unmet aspirations may face marginalization and consequently participate in criminal activities, exacerbating urban insecurity. Combining these theories provides a framework to explore the socio-economic and psychological processes influencing youth migration and their subsequent involvement in insecurity.

Case Study: Odo Otin Local Government Area (LGA), Osun State
Overview of the LGA
Odo Otin is one of thirty Local Government Areas in Osun State, located deep of Nigeria's southwestern area. Within its mostly agrarian economy, the LGA population primarily engages in farming and other related agricultural practices. Odo Otin's population was estimated at 134,110 in the 2006 Nigerian census, with a land area of approximately 294 square kilometers. By 2022, the population was anticipated to be around 171,500, with a density of 661.1 people per square kilometer and an annual growth rate of 1.5 percent. The administrative headquarters of the LGA are bizarrely located at Okuku, an important semi-urban town surrounded by rural countryside. The LGA includes a variety of Yoruba sub-ethnic cliques, as well as some minority settler folk from other parts of Nigeria.

The socio-political framework exemplifies dualism, with official institutions and traditional authority figures like as Obas and Baales playing important roles. Odo Otin is administratively divided into many wards and other unusual political units. Elected council officials provide public services at the local level with a high degree of autonomy and, unsurprisingly, bureaucratic red tape. Council suffers serious structural limits, as do many other Nigerian LGAs that are clearly under significant strain in numerous capacities. It heavily relies on state government funding, significantly limiting financial autonomy and impeding the ability to address serious local security issues.

The LGA is organized into three Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs), which are further subdivided into towns and villages. Major towns include Okuku, Oyan, and Inisa, while important rural communities include Igbaye, Oore, Ijabe, Konta, Asi, Asabe, Agbeyi, Ila-Odo, Elesin-Funfun, Ekusa, Iyeku, Ikosin, Faji, Opete, and Okua.

Youth Perception of Rural Infrastructure
Across Nigeria, youth consistently report feeling alienated from rural development agendas. In LGAs like Mbaitoli (Imo State), Bida (Niger State), and Ogbomosho North (Oyo State), youth perceive existing infrastructure as outdated and insufficient for modern living. They yearn for digital connectivity, co-working spaces, and opportunities to participate in the global economyneeds that rural areas have failed to meet.

Osabohien et al. (2020) argue that infrastructure must be not only present but also relevant to the aspirations of the population. Public schools lacking computers, health centres without drugs, and roads without maintenance represent a structural failure to keep pace with the needs of Nigeria's largest demographic: its youth.

This perspective aligns with Lee's (1966) Push-Pull Theory of migration, which explains how such disparities serve as "push" factors from rural areas and "pull" factors to urban centres. The migration of youth is thus not merely a response to poverty but a rational and aspirational pursuit of environments where they feel seen, supported, and equipped to succeed.

Migration as Both Ambition and Escape
Youth migration from rural areas across Nigeria must be understood as both a form of escape and ambition. The material deprivations poor roads, lack of water, deficient schools are compounded by symbolic exclusions. Urban life, often glamorized on social media, offers a narrative of modernity and success that rural areas struggle to match. Vocational training centres, even when present, often fail to resonate with contemporary youth. In areas like Ogori/Magongo (Kogi State) and Okigwe South (Imo State), these centres focus on trades such as tailoring or welding, which youth may perceive as economically stagnant or socially limiting. Meanwhile, urban centres offer access to mentors, professional networks, and digital platforms that align with their ambitions.

Moreover, societal expectations reinforce this migration. As observed by Adebayo (2021), in many Nigerian cultures, a young person is expected to "make it" in the city and send money back home. Remaining in the village can be seen as a failure, regardless of actual contribution to community development.

Unfortunately, many youth discover that the cities are not the promised lands. Unemployment, housing crises, and insecurity are rampant in urban slums where many rural migrants end up. The mismatch between expectation and reality often leads to frustration and increases the likelihood of engagement in illicit activities. The unattractiveness of rural infrastructure is a national issue that cuts across ethnic, regional, and economic lines in Nigeria. Whether in Odo-Otin, Gwer West, or Kachia, rural communities face infrastructural decay, policy neglect, and a widening gap between youth expectations and developmental realities.

Insecurity as a Consequence of Rural-Urban Migration in Nigeria
Rural-urban migration, a widespread phenomenon across Nigeria, has significant implications for national security. Its effects are not confined to either the urban centres that receive migrants or the rural communities they leave behind; rather, insecurity becomes a shared burden across both ends of the migratory process.

Urban Insecurity: The Burden of Influx
Urban areas such as Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, and Ibadan experience intense pressure due to the continual inflow of youth migrants from underdeveloped rural LGAs. These migrants often arrive without adequate skills, education, or social safety nets, making it difficult for them to integrate into formal economic systems. As observed in Lagos Mainland and Eti-Osa LGAs, this competition for limited jobs, housing, and services creates urban slums and fosters disillusionment among young migrants (Ikwuyatum, 2016). When legitimate means of livelihood are inaccessible, some youth are drawn into criminal networks engaging in cultism, internet fraud, armed robbery, or drug trafficking.

Merton's Strain Theory (1957) aptly explains this process: societal goals like wealth and success are emphasized, but when access to legitimate means (education, employment) is blocked, individuals innovate through illegitimate paths. This theory is validated by findings from Olaniyan and Okeke-Uzodike (2015), which show that youth unemployment in urban Nigeria is a significant predictor of participation in gang-related violence.
A concrete case is the rise in cult clashes and area boy activities in Mushin and Agege LGAs of Lagos State, which have been linked to youth migrants from Osun, Ekiti, and Kwara States (Oyeniyi, 2017). Without social integration or economic absorption, migration becomes a catalyst for urban criminality.

Rural Insecurity: The Cost of Exodus
Conversely, the communities left behind in rural Nigeria also suffer from insecurity, albeit of a different kind. When young people leave in large numbers as seen in rural LGAs like Kaura in Kaduna State, Bursari in Yobe, or Esan North-East in Edo State there is a noticeable depletion of the labour force, especially in agriculture. This decline weakens local economies, fosters dependency, and reduces community resilience.

In Benue and Nasarawa States, for instance, the migration of young farmers has contributed to the abandonment of farmlands, which are then occupied by herders, triggering violent farmer-herder conflicts (International Crisis Group, 2017). Insecurity in these contexts emerges from land disputes, food scarcity, and lack of communal defense structures, which traditionally relied on the youth population.

Moreover, youth migration distorts intergenerational leadership and social cohesion. In places like Michika LGA in Adamawa State, the absence of young leaders has left elders unable to effectively manage conflict, making communities more vulnerable to extremist recruitment and local banditry (Adelekan &Asiyanbi, 2021).

A Dual Crisis Requiring Integrated Solutions
Rural-urban migration thus creates a dual insecurity loop: urban centres become sites of frustration and violence, while rural areas fall into economic stagnation and social vulnerability. This dynamic underscore the urgent need for infrastructural development in rural Nigeria not merely to retain youth but to enhance national security. A study by Eze et al. (2023) concludes that rural LGAs with better infrastructure roads, electricity, schools, and healthcare experience lower rates of youth migration and insecurity. For instance, in Ifedore LGA of Ondo State, where the local government invested in youth training centers and farm mechanization, there was a noticeable drop in youth out-migration between 2020 and 2023 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024).

Discussion of Findings
Demographic and Psychographic Characteristics of Youth in Odo-Otin LGA
According to Alarima (2018), youth rural-urban migration in Odo-Otin local government is mainly driven by the lack of social amenities, better job opportunities, improved living standards, and access to education unavailable in rural areas. The gap between rural and urban access to basic facilities like electricity, water, education, and healthcare fuels this movement. In his study, 240 respondents, mostly males aged 16–25 with an average family size of 7.5, largely hold secondary education and are predominantly single. Push factors include poor electricity (97.5%), bad roads (97.5%), lack of jobs (95.1%), and underdevelopment (96.3%). Pull factors are better opportunities (98.8%), higher wages (95.1%), improved living conditions, schools, and healthcare in cities. Most respondents (68.8%) prefer not to stay in rural areas. The main effects of youth migration on rural communities include population decline (97.5%), underdevelopment (88.8%), child labour, loss of manpower, reduced agriculture, and weakened family ties. These results underscore the significant demographic and socio-economic challenges faced by rural areas. The findings from Alarima (2018), does not only reveal the demographic and socio-economic traits of the youths but also reflect their psychographic characteristics, their attitudes, values, motivations, and lifestyle preferences. The strong desire to migrate highlights a mindset focused on self-improvement, ambition, and a quest for better quality of life. The dissatisfaction with rural amenities and eagerness to pursue education and employment opportunities show that these youths value progress, economic stability, and social mobility. Their unwillingness to remain in rural areas suggests a preference for environments offering modern infrastructure, social engagement, and personal growth. Additionally, the emphasis on improved living conditions and services in urban areas points to a collective aspiration for comfort, security, and access to opportunities, shaping their decision-making and migration behavior.

Rural Infrastructure and Youth Migration in Odo-Otin Local Government Area
The infrastructural landscape of Odo-Otin LGA in Osun State highlights a broader rural development crisis in Nigeria: local infrastructure fails to meet youth aspirations. Poor roads, schools, hospitals, utilities, and digital services make rural life unattractive, driving youth migration to cities and worsening rural depopulation, economic decline, and insecurity (Nigeria voice 2018).

Transport infrastructure is a major issue, with unpaved, deteriorating roads limiting access to markets, education, and healthcare. Despite projects like the Ila-Odo, Osogbo, Ijebu Igbo highway (Osun State Government, 2025), feeder roads remain neglected, restricting youth economic participation (Adesanya, 2024). Schools face overcrowding, outdated facilities, and teacher shortages, reducing skills and pushing youth toward urban education (Olufemi & Akinola, 2023). Healthcare clinics are understaffed and ill-equipped, discouraging local settlement (New Telegraph, 2025).Utilities like electricity and internet are unreliable or absent, disrupting learning and business, and isolating youth from the digital economy (Eze et al., 2023). These deficits cause steady youth exodus to cities such as Osogbo, Ibadan, and Lagos, resulting in a "brain drain" that lowers agricultural output and rural incomes while increasing insecurity (Nwankwo & Okeke, 2020).

Programs like the Imole Youth Corps offer vocational training and jobs (Osun State Government, 2025) but remain temporary fixes. Sustainable youth retention requires comprehensive infrastructure development across

education, healthcare, transport, utilities, and digital access. Effective implementation in Odo-Otin could model a reversal of rural-urban migration for Nigeria's rural LGAs.(Osun Defender 2023)

Consequences of Youth Migration: Rising Insecurity and Social Challenges in Urban Centers
Rural infrastructure gaps in Odo-Otin LGA, Osun State like poor education, healthcare, electricity, roads, and recreation drive youth migration and insecurity (Alarima 2018). These deficits limit opportunities and increase youth involvement in crime (Osun State Security Report, 2024). Many youths move to cities like Lagos, but overcrowding and unemployment fuel urban insecurity and deviance (Adebayo & Adeoye, 2021).Rural areas lose young people, weakening communities and creating security vacuums (Alarima 2018). To stop this cycle, rural infrastructure must improve alongside urban support for migrants. Odo-Otin could lead as a model for reducing migration and boosting security through youth-focused development.

Odo-Otin as a Model for Youth-Centered Rural Innovation
Odo-Otin LGA, with its stable environment and agricultural heritage, has strong potential as a youth-centered rural transformation pilot. Development should focus beyond basic amenities on aspirations and innovation through solar-powered tech hubs, youth-led agri-preneur cooperatives, smart agriculture centres, and digital learning academies to boost local economies, reduce migration, and promote peace.

Rural infrastructure must include digital learning tools, career guidance, youth wellness centres (mental health, reproductive health, telemedicine), and recreational spaces like sports complexes, libraries, recording studios, and arts hubs. Enhancing vocational and agricultural training with innovation and digital skills will create opportunities and lower migration. Policies should support youth land access, rural enterprise contests, mentorship by returnee migrants, and private sector partnerships for market access and funding. Youth involvement in planning builds community ownership, resilience, and sustainability

Data systems are needed to track migration, assess youth aspirations, and monitor development. Better transport and digital connectivity will strengthen rural-urban ties and access to opportunities without permanent migration. This study shows rural infrastructure aligned with youth aspirations serves development and security. Reimagining schools, health centres, and agricultural offices as smart hubs, wellness spaces, and agro-tech labs can make Odo-Otin a model to curb migration and foster balanced national growth.

Conclusion
This study examined the link between rural infrastructure, youth migration, and insecurity in Odo-Otin LGA, Osun State. Although basic infrastructure exists, youth find it insufficient, outdated, and misaligned with their needs, driving them to cities for better opportunities and modern lifestyles. This migration creates dual insecurity: urban areas face rising youth crime, while rural areas suffer depopulation, economic decline, and weakened social structures.

The issue is not just lack of infrastructure but its inadequacy to meet youths' evolving expectations in a digital age. Poor educational, healthcare, and cultural facilities alienate rural youth, pushing them toward urban challenges like unemployment and crime.

Insecurity from migration burdens both urban and rural areas, as cities struggle to integrate migrant youth who may turn to crime, while rural communities lose vital human capital, lowering agricultural productivity and social cohesion. This cycle shows that rural infrastructure development is key not only for growth but also for crime prevention and social stability.

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