



**PEOPLE AND PRODUCTIVITY: THE IMPACT OF YOUTHFUL
POPULATION ON URBANISATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN
NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Population matters in every society, in every region of the world. Scores of academic literature have discussed the population's impact on urbanisation and on economic growth; less is written on youthful population and its impact on urbanisation and development. This paper examines these variables. It primarily focuses on them because, for one thing, youth dominates the universe. A whopping 1.8 billion youth (between the ages of 10 and 24) are alive today. For another, young people are the 'shapers' and 'leaders' of the global future; therefore, they matter to this subject. The paper argues that because youth are mostly fresh and fertile and because they are the dominant inhabitants across the Nigerian cities; they are, compared to other population demography like ageing population, for example, more likely to facilitate urbanisation and development in the country. We establish our findings using secondary data analysis. Data were drawn from credible, independent sources such as the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Bank. We found out that despite the tumultuous political and socio-economic challenges that is thwarting the young Nigerians, a large percentage of them are productive and their efforts are a contributing factor for urban growth and the nation's development. That entails that if the Nigeria's government wants to realise both its current and future socio-economic development, youth should be part of its everyday agenda.

Keywords: *Population, Youthful population, Urbanisation, Development, Nigeria, Society*

Introduction

What is the one essential element that induces urbanisation? It is population. Before a city or state develops – grow in size, provides quality health care, stable power, housing and job opportunities to its inhabitants – it needs more people to make that happen for ‘no country has ever reached middle income status without a significant population shift into cities’ (Annez and Buckley, 2014 p. 1). Numerous scholars have extensively written on the concepts of population and urbanisation and development, the bulk of which have uncovered population’s impact on economic development (Birdsall, 2001; Bloom and Canning, 2001; Eastwood and Lipton, 2001, Adewole and Olarewaju, 2012; Dyson, 2010) and on urbanisation (Poston and Bouvier, 2010; Sharma, 2010; Annez and Buckley, 2014; McGranahan and Satterthwaite, 2014). Despite the widespread attention paid to the predominantly negative impacts of population, few scholars have investigated youthful population’s impact on urbanisation and development.

Do young people contribute to the development of urban areas, or rather; are they confounded in municipalities, adding more pressure to city’s infrastructure as urban challenges increase? The paper aims at finding answers to this question, as it could help shed light on another potential outcome of population and an additional determinant of urbanisation and development. The paper argues that because youth are mostly fresh and fertile and because they are the dominant inhabitants across Nigerian cities; they are, compared to other population demography, more likely to facilitate urbanisation and development in the country. Youth, mostly between the ages of 15 and 24 years of age (United Nation, 2014), are ambitious and energetic, less burdened, have a lot of goals and are determined to go the extra miles to achieve them.

Youth in Africa are also troubled. They lack clean water to stay healthy, enough jobs to earn a living, adequate infrastructure to build their dreams. In Nigeria, young people are pouring into cities in search of these necessities, and that makes the country’s metropolitan areas more congested and disorganised, making the young people, therein, less productive than their peers in the First World countries. However, there are few youth – available in urban areas in the

country – who are educated and productive and are struggling to improve the socio-economic conditions of themselves and their society.

But what is/are the rationale behind the choice of these concepts? There are about 1.8 billion youth out of the 7.3 billion world's population. That is up from 721 million people (aged 10 to 24) in 1950, when the world's population totalled 2.5 billion (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2014) thus this is definitely not something to ignore. Again, a large portion of this population lies in the developing countries, mostly in Africa. In Nigeria, the story is the same. Youthful population is not only on the rise, but 'working-age population,' (adults ages 15 to 64), is expected to grow by 2 percent by 2050 (WEF, 2014). It also matters to discuss youthful population because they are ever-increasing and 'becoming older, resulting into fewer children than previous generations' (Ashford, 2007 p. 2). And if this trends continues, Clifton (2007: 3-4) contends that 'it will result to a bulge in the working-age population thus leading to what is known as 'demographic dividend'' [enough availability of economic resources as a result of higher labour force and less dependent population]. It is within this context that this paper is situated.

The paper used secondary data analysis as its methodology. Data were drawn from highly authoritative and independent sources such as: The Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Reference Bureau (PRB) and World Bank. The paper is organised into five sections including the introduction. Section two defines youthful population. After a handful review of different definitions from different perspectives, the section rationalises Nugent's comprehensible classification of 'youth transitioning' theory. Section three justifies the assumption of youthful population and productivity in Nigeria. Section four discusses the positive impact of young population on urbanisation and development in Nigeria. Section five concludes the paper by presenting ways in which youthful population can be nurtured in urban areas and empowered to contribute more to the growth and development of Nigerian cities.

Defining Youthful Population

Because of the fluid nature of the term, there is no any universal, unanimous, single definition of youth. Therefore, we are going to review handful definitions of the concept in this section. The United Nations Educational and

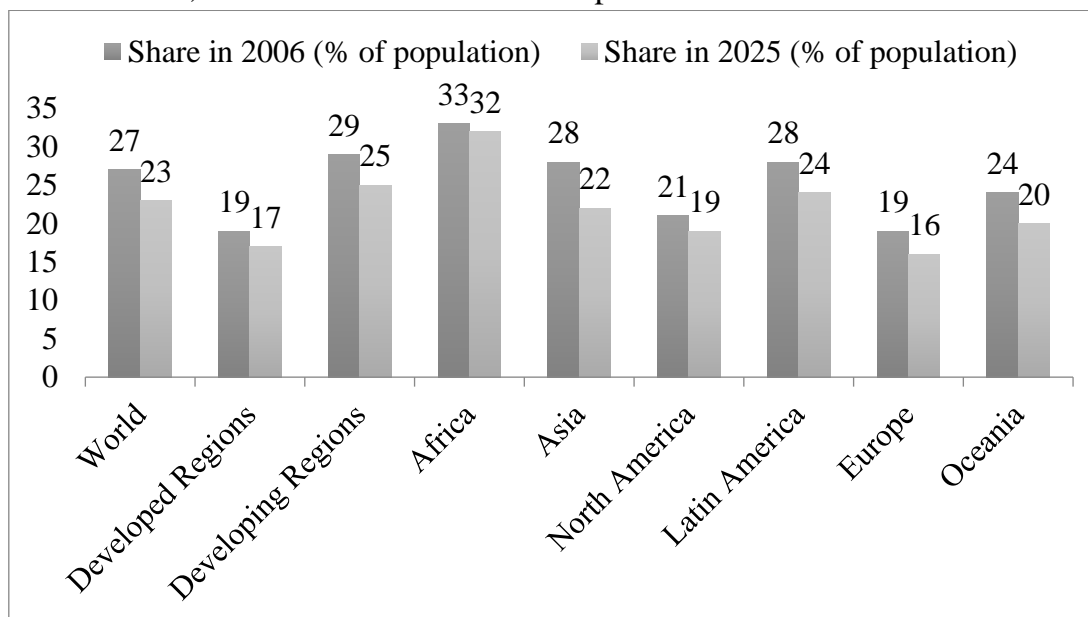
Scientific Organisation (UNESCO) defined the term ‘youth’ as a stage where an individual shifts from being under someone’s care (child) to being independent of themselves (adult). Although this definition did not provide detail age category of youth demography, it nonetheless explains the term as a phase of responsibility in a person’s lifetime. However, the United Nation (UN), for statistical consistency across regions, defined ‘youth’ as ‘those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years’ (UN, as culled from ‘Learning to Live Together,’ 2014). On the other hand, the African Youth Charter (AYC) defined youth as ‘every person between the ages of 15 and 35 years.’

As can be seen from these definitions, even the age category of youth demography is discordant within the literature. Conversely, Nugent (2006) offers the rationale behind the differences:

Youth entails the category of people between ages 10 and 24. This covers a wide range of experiences and transitions that includes an early phase (between ages 10 and 14), a middle phase (between 15 and 20), and a later phase (between 21 and 24). Young people in all three age groups face major events that affect their future well-being. At the younger end of the age spectrum, youth are still children in many respects. By the time they reach the middle phase, youth are transitioning from puberty to maturity. This group can be considered adolescents. By the time a person finishes this stage of life, they have set in motion many of the events that will determine their life path. Finally, youth ages 21 through 24 are also young adults. They are still discovering their interests and talents and making commitments—to work, to a spouse, and often to becoming a parent. All of these phases form the experience of being a youth. (p. 2).

This detail definition outlined three stages of youth transitioning – early phase, middle and later phase. Having clarified the term ‘youth,’ youthful population can as well be defined as the population of independent, adult people who are not only self-reliant but in full control of their own destiny. Though there is no fixed age category, the common age group of youth are ages 10 and 24 and they are mostly concentrated in the developing countries where ‘poverty is the most

prevalent, access to critical health care and schooling is the lowest, conflict and violence are the most frequent and life is the hardest’ (UNFPA, 2014). What is interesting to this thesis, notwithstanding the youth age category, is that young population is rising throughout the world. In 2006, youth – age 10-24 in developed regions – had a total of 19 percent share of population; they had the largest share in developing regions at 29 percent (Ashford et al., 2006). To illustrate this, it is essential to show a comprehensive data of our discussion:

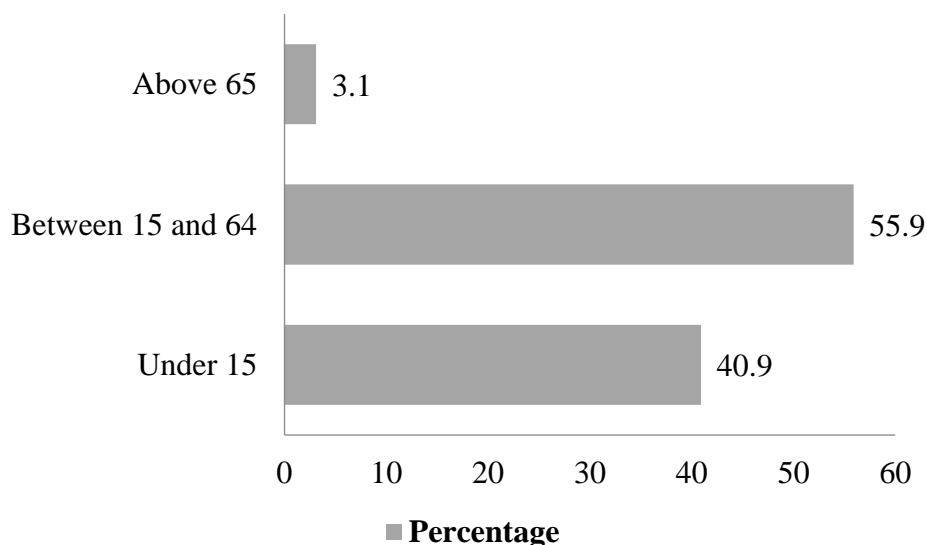


Source: Ashford, D. Clifton, and T. Kaneda. (2006). *The World’s Youth 2006. Population Reference Bureau.*

As shown in the above data, a larger percentage of the world’s youth concentrates in underdeveloped world, particularly in African. As it happens, the figures, while they seem promising, the Third World nations need to work harder to realise the dividend of their surging young population. Not only because the rise of young people – in some of these countries – is outpacing the growth of the economy, but because youth are the engine that shapes and leads the future of this world. In Nigeria, for example, working-age population is expected to rise by 2 percent by 2050 (WEF, 2014). The most important thing, however, is not the surging figures, but whether the percentage of young men and women in the country are productive enough to usher new development in the country.

Youthful Population and Productivity in Nigeria

The relationship between youthful population and productivity is barely discussed in population and urbanisation and development literature, though it is crucial. To prove our thesis, this section will first establish the assumption that youthful population exist in Nigeria and then prove that they are productive. As of June 13, 2016, Nigeria's population stood at 186, 762, 252 (UNDP, 2016), which puts the country as the 7th on the world's population ranking (World Population Review, 2016). Almost all the population of Nigeria is young: 75, 584, 144 are under 15 years old; 103, 288, 668 are between 15 and 64 years old and only 5, 762, 467 persons are above 64 years old (UN, Statistics Division, 2016).



Source: UNDP, 2016

The above figures match another statistics conducted by the UNDP earlier this year, estimating the average age of the Nigerian population. ‘The median age in Nigeria is 18 years and 48.1 % of the population is urban – 91,668,667 people in 2016 (UNDP, 2016). But the main question is whether the population is productive or not. In reality, Nigerian population in general and especially its young population are under stern political and socio-economic hardships. Thousands of people are dying from malaria related diseases (about 1, 608 in 2011 alone) (NBS, 2012). Education sector is at its knees (low-untrained teachers teach in schools resulting to poor, unemployable youth) (ibid, 2012).

Unemployment rate, according to the latest count from the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2012) is at 23.9 per cent; and 60 per cent of its population are youths, translating to 64 million Nigeria youths without jobs (ibid, 2012).

Corruption is also high; politicians huddled around the hot National Cake in Abuja feeding fat with any public treasury funds they could lay their hands on, including the money meant to fight the risen insurgency bedevilling the nation. As politicians keep siphoning the public treasury, the country's infrastructures keep shrinking, leaving the country – and the bulk of its young citizens – bleak and bleeding. However, the Nigeria's age dependency ratio provides some hope. The country's current total dependency ratio (ratio of population aged 0-14 and 65+ per 100 population 15-64) is 78.8% (UN, 2016) and it is comparable to the working population. And while the level of unemployment rate is high, Nigerian youths are struggling to work harder and help themselves, breaking from corporate Nigeria to creating their own businesses and stay alive.

In states like Lagos and Kano, for example, young graduates are creating their businesses – out of necessity – and that not only help them earn a means of livelihood, it also help them recruit others to work for them hence reducing the level of unemployment in the country. The Federal Government realized the entrepreneurial spirit embedded in the genes of young Nigerians and, it has recently started to double its support to help encourage the young-minded Nigerian entrepreneurs. Take the Jonathan's YouWin! programme, for example. The programme, which was kick-started in 2011, attracted more than 23, 000 young Nigerians (both aspiring and existing entrepreneurs). Of the 1, 841 group of semi-finalist, 1, 300 winners were selected and giving almost US\$50, 000 each (equivalent to NGN10 million). McKenzie (2015: 2) conducted an experimental study about the programme and found out that:

Winning this competition has large positive impacts on both applicants looking to start new firms as well as those aiming to expand existing firms. Three years after applying, new firm applicant winners were 37 percentage points more likely than the control group to be operating a business and 23 percentage points more likely to have a firm with 10 or more workers, while existing firm winners were 20 percentage points more likely to have survived, and 21 percentage points more likely to

have a firm with 10 or more workers. Together, the 1,200 winners are estimated to have generated 7,000 more jobs than the control group, are innovating more and are earning higher sales and profits.

This could not have happen if the youth population is not as higher and productive as they currently are in the country. And if the proportionate of these youths continue to rise (which is expected) and the government’s support endure, Nigerian youths will keep their efforts of building new ventures and investing more of their energy to nation-building.

Youthful Population as Boon to Urbanisation and Development in Nigeria

This section sets to reinforce our thesis that youth demography takes the largest parentage in Nigerian cities and that they spur development in the cities of their residence. According to the UN report (2015), the percentage of the general population of Nigerian people who resides in urban areas in year 2000 was 43.3%, 54.8 in 2015 and by 2025, it will amount to 61.6%. Data collected from the NBS (2012) also showed a greater concentration of young Nigerians in major Nigerian cities.

State(s) Youth Population (ages 18-35)

<i>Lagos</i>	3, 287, 969
<i>Kano</i>	2, 956, 745
<i>Kaduna</i>	2, 467, 312
<i>Rivers</i>	2, 368, 051
<i>Borno</i>	1, 470, 127
<i>FCT</i>	843, 352

Source: NBS, 2012

But why do many youth concentrates in urban areas in Nigeria? Urbanisation scholars attribute a number of factors to that. First is the socio-economic factor. They observed that life without basic, quality infrastructure is unbearable. People need clean water better homes, roads and hospital to live and survive efficiently. Unfortunately, these things are not available in most rural areas; therefore, youth migrate to urban centres to access these services and live more

efficient life (McCatty, 2004; Nwanna, 2004; Adewale, 2005; Olijimi, 2009). Governmental policies influence people to migrate to cities as well, especially the younger ones. In most instances, government invest more in building cities to the detriment of rural areas. Todaro (1997), McCatty (2004) and Nwakeze (2004) argued that most governmental policies favour urban cities than rural areas. This can be seen in the ‘constant’ and ‘purposeful’ creation of employment and educational opportunities in urban areas, compared to the rural areas. The result is rural-urban migration.

Another reason for the concentration of youth in urban areas can be explained in terms of ‘spontaneity.’ Some people may decide to migrate because their rural economy is disrupted. Such spontaneous decision could be as a result of natural catastrophe such as flood, drought, landslide erosion earthquake, political instability, infertile soil, war outbreak and other adversities (Adewale, 2005; Morrissey, 2008). When young people move to cities, they will gain more knowledge and education as well as enter into new relationships that is quite different from the belief, sentiments and ‘stupidity’ they left behind in their traditional rural societies (Marx, 1848). These new life and exposure usually help them share ideas with one another, build businesses and contribute immensely to the needs and the development of their societies.

Conclusion

This article is an important addition to the population and urbanisation and development literature. While a number of studies have written extensively on these concepts, only few have discussed the impact of youthful population on urbanisation and development variables. The researcher focuses on youthful population because they are the major population demography in almost every part of the world. Even though Nigeria, as a country, is overwhelmed with corruption, leadership deficit and economic crises that have adversely affected its young population; the paper showed that, compared to ageing population; for instance, youthful population proved to accelerate urbanisation and development in the country. And if the Federal Government doubles its supports to young people, it will create young army that build new, robust, more developed, better Nigeria.

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