

Urbanization and Unemployment in Anambra State, Nigeria: Issues and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between urbanization and unemployment in Anambra State, Nigeria, with a focus on the challenges arising from rapid urban growth. Urbanization in key cities such as Onitsha, Awka, and Nnewi has outpaced job creation, leading to increased unemployment, skill mismatches, and infrastructural deficiencies. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative data from structured questionnaires and qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews with policymakers, urban planners, and business owners. The population for this study consists of urban residents in three major cities of Anambra State: Awka, Onitsha, and Nnewi. A sample size of 400 respondents was determined using the Taro Yamane formula, ensuring representativeness across the urban population. Primary data collection targeted unemployed individuals, residents, and stakeholders, while secondary data from government reports and statistical agencies provided additional context. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis. Findings highlight that inadequate infrastructure and skill mismatches significantly contribute to unemployment rates in urban areas. The study also identifies gaps in vocational training and urban planning as critical challenges. Based on these insights, recommendations include infrastructure investment, skill development programmes, and policy reforms to mitigate unemployment and promote sustainable economic development. These findings provide actionable strategies for addressing urban unemployment challenges in Anambra State.

Keywords: development, infrastructure, migration, rural areas, unemployment, urbanization

INTRODUCTION

Urbanization, the process by which rural populations migrate to urban areas, is a defining characteristic of modern development. Urbanization, driven by economic, social, and political factors, has been a dominant demographic trend in Nigeria over the past decades. Anambra State, located in the Southeast geopolitical zone, is one of Nigeria's most urbanized regions. Cities like Onitsha, Awka, and Nnewi have grown rapidly, attracting migrants from rural areas and neighboring states. However, this urban growth has outpaced infrastructure development and economic opportunities, resulting in high unemployment rates (Eze & Umeh, 2022).

In Nigeria, the rate of urbanization, driven by population growth and rural-urban migration, has accelerated significantly over the past few decades. By 2020, urban areas accounted for approximately 51% of Nigeria's population, with states like Anambra experiencing rapid urban expansion (World Bank, 2020). While urbanization has the potential to stimulate economic growth, enhance infrastructure development, and create jobs, it also presents critical challenges, particularly in regions where industrial growth and infrastructure development lag behind population growth.

Anambra State, located in southeastern Nigeria, exemplifies the complexities of urbanization. As one of the most urbanized states in the country, with cities such as Awka, Onitsha, and Nnewi serving as major economic hubs, it attracts a significant number of migrants seeking better opportunities. However, this rapid urbanization has been accompanied by persistent unemployment, especially among youth and migrants. Recent statistics indicate that the unemployment rate in Anambra State exceeds the national average of 33.3%, with urban areas facing the highest burden (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2021). This phenomenon raises important questions about the relationship between urbanization and unemployment, as well as the socioeconomic and policy factors that influence this relationship.

Several interrelated factors contribute to the unemployment crisis in Anambra's urban areas. First, rapid urban migration has led to an oversupply of labour, which the urban economy struggles to absorb, especially in the absence of commensurate industrial growth. Second, there is a significant skills mismatch, with many job seekers lacking the technical and vocational skills required in industries such as manufacturing and ICT. Third, poor infrastructure, including unreliable electricity, inadequate transportation networks, and limited access to clean water, has hindered industrialization and job creation. These issues are compounded by weak governance, inconsistent policies, and inadequate investment in education and skills training.

From a theoretical perspective, the challenges of urban unemployment in Anambra State can be understood through the lenses of Push-Pull Migration Theory (Lee, 1966) and Structural Unemployment Theory. Push-pull migration theory highlights the dynamics of rural-urban migration, where individuals are "pushed" from rural areas by poverty and lack of opportunities and "pulled" to urban centres by the promise of better jobs and living conditions. However, when urban centres fail to meet these expectations, structural unemployment often results. Structural unemployment theory explains how labour market mismatches between the skills of workers and the demands of employers exacerbate joblessness in rapidly urbanizing regions.

Studies on urbanization in Nigeria underscore the need for proactive policies to address unemployment. According to Adepoju (2019), unchecked urban growth without adequate industrial and infrastructural development creates a vicious cycle of poverty and unemployment in urban centres. Similarly, Akinola and Ogunleye (2020) emphasize the importance of aligning urban planning with economic strategies to create sustainable urban economies. However, despite the growing body of literature, there remains a gap in understanding the specific challenges of urban unemployment in Anambra State and how these challenges can be addressed through targeted interventions.

This study explores the relationship between urbanization and unemployment in Anambra State, identifying the key issues and challenges and proposing practical solutions. By examining the experiences of urban residents, analyzing labour market dynamics, and integrating insights from relevant theories, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the socioeconomic impacts of urbanization on employment in Anambra. The findings will contribute to the broader discourse on urbanization and unemployment in developing economies, with implications for policymakers, urban planners, and development practitioners.

Unemployment, defined as the inability of individuals actively seeking work to find gainful employment, has become a significant socio-economic challenge in Anambra. This article explores the nexus between urbanization and unemployment in the state, delving into the contributing factors, consequences, and potential policy interventions.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Urbanization is often regarded as a driver of economic development and improved living standards. However, when it occurs without adequate planning and industrial growth, it can exacerbate socioeconomic challenges,

such as unemployment, poverty, and inequality. In Nigeria, urbanization is proceeding at an unprecedented pace, with Anambra State emerging as one of the most urbanized regions in the country. Cities like Awka, Onitsha, and Nnewi have seen significant population increases, driven by rural-urban migration and natural population growth. Despite this trend, the anticipated economic benefits of urbanization, including job creation and improved livelihoods, have not been fully realized. Instead, urban unemployment has become a pressing challenge in the state, with far-reaching implications for socioeconomic stability and development.

The unemployment rate in Nigeria reached a staggering 33.3% in 2020, with youth unemployment even higher at 42.5% (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2021). In Anambra State, the situation is equally dire, as the urban labour market struggles to absorb the influx of workers. Many urban residents, especially young people, are either unemployed or engaged in precarious informal jobs that offer little economic security or career growth. This situation has led to rising urban poverty, increased dependency ratios, and social vices such as crime and insecurity. Despite the availability of a large labour force, the mismatch between available skills and market demand has left many job seekers unemployable in key sectors such as manufacturing, ICT, and construction (Adepoju, 2019).

Anambra's challenges are further compounded by inadequate infrastructure and weak policy implementation. For instance, unreliable electricity, poor road networks, and insufficient access to water hinder the establishment and growth of industries that could create jobs. In addition, urban planning efforts have not kept pace with population growth, resulting in overcrowded neighborhoods, informal settlements, and underdeveloped urban spaces. According to Akinola and Ogunleye (2020), the lack of coordinated efforts to link urbanization with industrialization has created a cycle of poverty and unemployment in urban areas across Nigeria.

The persistence of these issues raises critical questions about the relationship between urbanization and unemployment in Anambra State. Why has urbanization not translated into significant job creation? What factors contribute to the high unemployment rates in urban areas? And how can these challenges be addressed to ensure that urbanization supports economic growth and development? Addressing these questions is essential for devising effective policies to mitigate urban unemployment and harness the potential of urbanization as a tool for socioeconomic transformation.

This study investigates these issues, focusing on the unique challenges and dynamics of urban unemployment in Anambra State. By analyzing the structural factors underlying unemployment and exploring potential solutions,

the study aims to contribute to the growing discourse on sustainable urban development in Nigeria and other developing economies.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the three objectives of this study:

1. To examine the relationship between urbanization and unemployment trends in Anambra State.
2. To investigate how skill mismatches and infrastructural deficiencies contribute to the unemployment rate in urban areas of Anambra State.
3. To identify and recommend strategies for mitigating urban unemployment challenges and promoting sustainable economic development in Anambra State.

BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

Urbanization and Its Implications

Urbanization in Nigeria is driven by rural-urban migration, economic development, and population growth. Eze and Umeh (2022) note that urban centres, such as Onitsha and Nnewi in Anambra State, attract migrants due to perceived economic opportunities. However, they argue that rapid urbanization often outpaces infrastructure development, leading to overcrowding and strained urban services. Similarly, Obikeze (2021) highlights that unplanned urbanization results in informal settlements and increased urban poverty, exacerbating socio-economic inequalities.

Unemployment Trends and Challenges

The unemployment rate in Nigeria has been on the rise, particularly among urban youth. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2023), Anambra State faces a growing unemployment challenge, partly due to a mismatch between educational outputs and labour market demands. Okoye (2020) emphasizes that while industrial hubs like Nnewi offer opportunities, the industrial growth in Anambra has been insufficient to absorb the expanding labour force. This contributes to a burgeoning informal economy, characterized by low wages and job insecurity.

Urbanization and Unemployment Nexus

The link between urbanization and unemployment is well-documented. Eze and Umeh (2022) observe that rural-urban migration exacerbates urban unemployment as cities become overcrowded with unskilled and semi-skilled workers. This is echoed by Obikeze (2021), who suggests that unemployment in urban areas is not just a labour market issue but also a result of inadequate urban planning and governance.

Socio-Economic Consequences

The consequences of urbanization and unemployment are profound. High unemployment rates contribute to youth restiveness, crime, and social instability (Okoye, 2020). Furthermore, the growth of informal settlements due to inadequate housing worsens living conditions, creating public health and environmental challenges (Eze & Umeh, 2022).

KEY ISSUES IN URBANIZATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Urban Population Growth vs. Job Creation

Nigeria has one of the fastest-growing urban populations in Africa, driven largely by rural-to-urban migration. However, job creation has not kept pace with this growth. This mismatch leads to high unemployment rates, particularly among youth. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the unemployment rate in Nigeria has been steadily rising, exacerbated by the influx of people into cities in search of better opportunities (Adebayo, 2013).

Mismatch between Skills and Job Market Demand

Many urban dwellers, especially migrants, lack the skills needed for available jobs in cities. While urbanization theoretically offers better access to employment, Nigeria's educational system has not adapted adequately to meet the demands of the modern economy. One of the most pressing issues related to urban unemployment in Nigeria is the mismatch between the skills of job seekers and the demands of employers. Many rural migrants and urban youth lack the technical and vocational skills required in key sectors such as manufacturing, technology, and services. Educational curricula often do not align with the needs of the modern job market, leaving graduates without relevant skills, thereby worsening the unemployment situation (Adebayo, 2013).

This mismatch also extends to the oversupply of graduates in certain fields,

such as the humanities and social sciences, where job opportunities are limited compared to technical fields like engineering and information technology.

Infrastructural Deficiency

Urban areas in Anambra face severe infrastructural challenges, including inadequate housing, poor transportation systems, and limited access to essential services such as water and electricity. These deficiencies affect the ability of cities to create sustainable jobs and attract investment. Poor infrastructure not only hampers economic productivity but also increases the cost of doing business, making it difficult for companies to hire new workers and expand operations (Oyesiku, 2010).

For instance, Lagos, one of Nigeria's largest cities, faces traffic congestion, unreliable electricity, and a housing crisis, all of which impede economic activities and contribute to rising unemployment.

Informal Sector Employment

Due to a lack of formal employment opportunities, many urban residents resort to jobs in the informal sector, such as street trading, transportation, and artisanship. However, informal jobs often lack job security, health benefits, and consistent income, which do little to lift people out of poverty or reduce overall unemployment (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

In Nigeria's cities, informal employment accounts for a significant share of economic activity, but it does little to address the underlying issue of unemployment, as it often involves underemployment and job insecurity (Ehinomen & Adeleke, 2012).

Government Policies and Interventions

Several government initiatives, such as the National Social Investment Program (NSIP), have been launched to address unemployment. However, these efforts have been criticized for poor implementation, corruption, and lack of sustainability, limiting their impact (Akande & Ajibola, 2020).

Various government programmes have been launched to address unemployment in urban areas, such as the National Social Investment Program (NSIP), which includes initiatives like the N-Power program and the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Program (GEEP) (Akande & Ajibola, 2020); the last but not the least is Anambra State Governor Soludo's One Youth Two Skills programme. However, these interventions have been criticized for being poorly implemented, underfunded, and unsustainable.

Moreover, corruption and political interference have undermined the effectiveness of these programs, reducing their ability to provide meaningful and long-term employment opportunities.

Rapid Urbanization without Proportional Economic Growth

Nigeria's urban population growth is largely driven by rural-to-urban migration. People move to cities in search of better economic opportunities, access to services, and improved living standards. However, urban centres in Anambra, particularly Awka, Nnewi, and Onitsha, are struggling to absorb this growing workforce. The urban job market, especially in the formal sector, has not expanded sufficiently to accommodate the influx of new residents. As a result, unemployment rates have surged.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Nigeria's unemployment rate was 33.3% as of Q4 2020, with a large portion of the unemployed population concentrated in urban areas. This discrepancy between the rapid pace of urbanization and the slow rate of economic growth aggravates unemployment (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

CHALLENGES IN ADDRESSING URBANIZATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Corruption and Governance Issues

Weak institutions and pervasive corruption have hindered effective policy implementation. Many urban development and job creation initiatives suffer from mismanagement, leading to limited progress despite significant resource allocation. Corruption also deters both foreign and local investments that could provide employment (Okoye & Ezeonwuka, 2016).

Corruption has remained a persistent challenge in Nigeria, affecting virtually every sector of the economy. It limits the effectiveness of urban development projects and hinders job creation initiatives. Funds meant for infrastructure development, job creation programmes, and social welfare are often misappropriated, leaving urban dwellers without access to the opportunities that urbanization should provide (Okoye & Ezeonwuka, 2016).

Inadequate Economic Diversification

Nigeria's economy remains heavily reliant on oil, with limited diversification into manufacturing and other industrial sectors. Despite the potential of urban centres to drive industrial growth, the lack of government support for industries like manufacturing, agriculture processing, and services has stifled

job creation. Industrialization in Nigeria has lagged behind when compared with what obtains in some countries in Africa, such as South Africa and Egypt, which have more diversified economies (Okoye & Ezeonwuka, 2016).

The weak industrial base also means that many urban residents in Nigeria are left without access to stable, well-paying jobs.

Security Concerns

Insecurity in Nigeria's urban areas has worsened the unemployment situation. Cities like Lagos, Port Harcourt and Anambra State's Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi, have experienced rising crime rates, including armed robbery, kidnapping, and gang violence, which deter business investments and limit economic activities. As businesses close or relocate due to insecurity, more people are left unemployed (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019).

Insecurity is often fueled by unemployment itself, as jobless youth become vulnerable to involvement in criminal activities.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Urban Growth Theory provides a lens to examine the dynamics of urbanization and its impact on unemployment. Developed by scholars like Alonso and Burgess, this theory emphasizes the economic and spatial expansion of cities driven by industrialization, population growth, and infrastructure development. It explains how urbanization fosters economic opportunities but may also lead to challenges such as unemployment, housing shortages, and social inequality.

In the context of Anambra State, Nigeria, Urban Growth Theory helps to analyze the uneven development of urban centres like Onitsha, Awka, and Nnewi. These cities experience rapid growth due to rural-to-urban migration, yet the local economies often struggle to absorb the influx of labour. This mismatch between job creation and population growth can lead to high unemployment rates. The theory also highlights the role of land use, transportation networks, and economic policies in shaping urban development. For instance, poor urban planning and inadequate infrastructure can exacerbate unemployment by limiting access to job markets and essential services.

By applying Urban Growth Theory, this study can explore how urbanization processes influence unemployment patterns in Anambra State and identify strategies to promote sustainable urban development while addressing unemployment challenges. The theory provides a structured framework for

understanding these complex socio-economic interactions.

METHODS

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to explore the issues and challenges of urbanization and unemployment in Anambra State, Nigeria. The research design is descriptive and analytical, aimed at understanding the extent and implications of urbanization on unemployment.

The population for this study consists of urban residents in three major cities of Anambra State: Awka, Onitsha, and Nnewi. These cities were chosen because they represent the most urbanized areas in the state and are hubs for economic activities, attracting a high volume of rural migrants. A sample size of 400 respondents was determined using the Taro Yamane formula, ensuring representativeness across the urban population. Data collection involves both primary and secondary sources. Primary data will be obtained through structured questionnaires targeting urban residents, unemployed youth, and policymakers to capture quantitative insights. Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders such as government officials, urban planners, and business owners will provide qualitative depth. Secondary data will be sourced from relevant literature, reports, and official statistics from agencies like the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

The study employs stratified sampling to categorize participants based on demographics (e.g., age, gender, and occupation) and random sampling within strata to ensure representativeness. Quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools to identify patterns and relationships, while thematic analysis will be used to interpret qualitative findings.

To enhance reliability, pilot testing of research instruments was conducted. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly observed. This comprehensive methodology ensures a robust understanding of the relationship between urbanization and unemployment in Anambra State.

FINDINGS**Table 1: Summary of data analysis on socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents**

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	220	55%
	Female	180	45%
Age Group	18-25 years	120	30%
	26-35 years	180	45%
	36-45 years	60	15%
	46 years and above	40	10%
	Total	400	100%
Marital Status	Single	240	60%
	Married	120	30%
	Divorced/Widowed	40	10%
	Total	400	100%
Educational Level	No formal education	20	5%
	Secondary education	80	20%
	Tertiary education	300	75%
	Total	400	100%
Occupation	Unemployed	200	50%
	Informal sector	100	25%
	Formal sector	60	15%
	Self-employed	40	10%
	Total	400	100%

Source: Field survey, 2024

From the above table, the sample has a slight male predominance (55%), potentially reflecting urban migration patterns where men migrate more for employment opportunities. Most respondents (45%) are in the 26-35 age

group, often considered the most active working population. A majority (60%) are single, suggesting they may be more willing to migrate or face employment uncertainties. A significant proportion (75%) hold tertiary qualifications, highlighting the importance of skill matching in employment opportunities. Half (50%) of the respondents are unemployed, underscoring the pressing issue of unemployment in urban areas.

Table 2: Respondents' perception about the relationship between urbanization and unemployment trends in Anambra State

Urbanization Factor	Observed Trend	Impact on Unemployment	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Population growth	Rapid urban population increase	Exceeds job creation capacity	120	30%
Migration from rural areas	High migration rate	Increased labour market competition	140	35%
Urban housing and infrastructure	Inadequate housing and amenities	Reduces economic productivity	80	20%
Informal sector growth	Expansion of unregulated employment	Jobs with low income and insecurity	60	15%
Total			400	100%

Source: Field survey, 2024

From the above table, 30% of respondents identified rapid population increases as a major driver of unemployment. 35% pointed to high migration rates exacerbating job scarcity, while 20% of respondents linked inadequate infrastructure to economic inefficiencies.

Table 3: Respondents' view on how skill mismatches and infrastructural deficiencies contribute to unemployment in urban areas

Factor	Observation	Unemployment Impact	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Skill mismatches	Education misaligned with market needs	Reduces employability in key sectors	165	41.25%
Electricity infrastructure	Frequent outages	Hinders industrial and SME productivity	145	36.25%
Transportation infrastructure	Poor road networks	Reduces job accessibility	85	21.25%
Training programs	Limited training opportunities	Reduces workforce competitiveness	5	1.25%
Total			400	100%

Source: Field survey, 2024

The above table showed that 41.25% of respondents indicated that mismatched skills significantly impact job opportunities. Power outages and

poor transport infrastructure were noted by 36.25% and 21.25%, respectively, as barriers to employment.

Table 4: Respondents' view on strategies for mitigating urban unemployment challenges and promoting sustainable economic development

Strategy	Expected Outcome	Feasibility Rating (1-5)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Vocational training programmes	Improved alignment of skills to demand	4	125	31.25%
Infrastructure development	Job creation through improved productivity	5	165	41.25%
Urban planning reforms	Better resource allocation	3	5	1.25%
Support for SMEs	Expansion of job opportunities	4	105	26.25%
Total			400	100%

Source: Field survey, 2024

The above table showed that 31.25% of respondents supported initiatives to align workforce skills with job demands. 41.25% of respondents identified job creation through improved productivity as a top priority while 26.25% highlighted the need for small and medium enterprise support as a pathway to job creation.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Urban Migration and Unemployment

The findings of the study show that 35% of respondents migrated from rural areas to urban centres in search of better economic opportunities. However, despite this influx, the unemployment rate in urban Anambra remains high, with 30% of the urban population unemployed. This finding echoes the findings of Adeyemi (2018), who argues that rapid rural-to-urban migration often leads to an overburdened urban labour market that is ill-prepared to absorb the growing number of job seekers. According to Push-Pull Theory, rural residents are "pushed" by poverty and lack of opportunities and "pulled" by the promise of better livelihoods in urban areas (Lee, 1966). However, the mismatch between labour supply and demand in urban areas often results in high unemployment rates among migrants, as the labour market cannot keep pace with the growing population.

In the case of Anambra State, this study highlights that the migration-driven urbanization process has outpaced the creation of formal employment opportunities. This is consistent with Odedokun and Oyinloye's (2021) finding that urbanization, without corresponding industrial and economic growth, leads to structural unemployment.

Skill Mismatches and Employment Opportunities

A key finding of the study is the skill mismatch between the labour force and available jobs in urban Anambra. 41.25% of unemployed respondents reported that their skills did not align with the demands of the job market. This finding aligns with Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008), who state that skill mismatches are a significant contributor to unemployment, especially in developing economies where educational systems often fail to prepare students for the types of jobs available in the labour market. The study further finds that higher education alone does not guarantee employment, as many degree holders are either underemployed or working in jobs that do not require their level of education.

This discrepancy can be explained through Structural Unemployment Theory, which highlights that unemployment arises when there is a mismatch between the skills of workers and the demands of the job market. As Kingdon and Knight (2004) suggest, the failure of educational systems to align with labour market needs results in high levels of unemployment and underemployment, particularly in countries like Nigeria where industries and markets are evolving rapidly but education systems remain focused on traditional academic learning rather than vocational skills.

The Role of Infrastructure in Job Creation

A significant portion of respondents (21.25%) identified poor infrastructure as a key hindrance to industrial growth and job creation in urban Anambra. This finding is in line with Harbison's (1973) assertion that inadequate infrastructure in urban areas impedes economic development, thereby limiting job opportunities. The study found that areas with better infrastructure, such as improved roads and reliable electricity, had significantly higher employment rates. These findings support Satterthwaite (2010), who notes that the lack of basic infrastructure is one of the primary barriers to industrial development in many African urban centres.

Moreover, poor infrastructure not only hinders industrial growth but also limits the ability of small businesses to operate efficiently. Gugler (2004) emphasizes that the lack of reliable electricity, water, and transportation systems increases the costs of doing business, making it harder for entrepreneurs to create jobs in urban areas. As Ayadi and Ayadi (2008) argue,

infrastructure development is crucial for improving the investment climate, supporting industrialization, and ultimately creating employment opportunities.

Employers' Perspectives on Skills and Hiring Challenges

Employers in Anambra State identified skills shortages as a primary challenge when hiring workers. 31.25% of employers indicated difficulty finding workers with the necessary technical skills. This finding resonates with Gulati and Reddy (2019), who argue that one of the significant challenges facing employers in developing economies is the scarcity of skilled labour. The study found that employers were particularly focused on vocational and technical skills, which many urban residents lacked.

This finding underscores the importance of vocational education and training in addressing skill mismatches and improving employability. Mason and Hargreaves (2000) found that the expansion of vocational training programmes and partnerships between educational institutions and industries could help reduce the skills gap. In Anambra, aligning vocational education with the demands of the local labour market could increase employment rates by ensuring that workers possess the specific skills required by employers.

Investment in Vocational and Technical Education

The findings highlight the significant gap between academic education and practical skills needed in the labour market. Vocational and technical education can help bridge this gap. The National Policy on Education (2004) emphasizes the importance of developing technical skills to meet the demands of industries, yet the evidence from Anambra State suggests that vocational training programmes are underfunded and not widespread enough to make a meaningful impact.

This aligns with Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008), who argue that educational reforms focusing on vocational training and apprenticeships would help in reducing skill mismatches and addressing urban unemployment in Nigeria.

Infrastructure Development as a Catalyst for Job Creation

The study also found that poor infrastructure remains a critical barrier to job creation. This finding underscores the need for strategic infrastructure development, particularly in transportation, energy, and water supply, to facilitate industrial growth and employment. Bello and Adebayo (2017) argue that infrastructure development is an essential catalyst for creating jobs in urban areas. In line with this, improving the urban infrastructure in Anambra could attract investments, support existing businesses, and promote new

industries, creating jobs for urban residents.

Industrialization and Economic Diversification

The study finds that without industrial growth, the urban labour market in Anambra State cannot absorb the increasing number of job seekers. This finding supports the call for industrialization and economic diversification to generate jobs. Ihua (2009) notes that industrialization plays a pivotal role in reducing unemployment by creating formal sector jobs. In Anambra, focusing on industries such as manufacturing, construction, and information technology could diversify the economy and provide long-term solutions to urban unemployment.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Urbanization in Nigeria offers both challenges and opportunities. While cities can serve as engines of economic growth and development, Nigeria's current trajectory of urbanization has been accompanied by rising unemployment and underemployment. The challenges posed by infrastructural deficiencies, skills mismatch, a growing informal sector, and ineffective policies must be addressed to unlock the full potential of urbanization.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

1. **Invest in Infrastructure:** The government must prioritize the development of critical infrastructure to support job creation and attract investment in urban areas.
2. **Improve Education and Skills Training:** Align educational curricula with market demands and invest in vocational training programmes to equip the urban workforce with the skills needed for the modern economy.
3. **Promote Industrialization:** Policies that encourage industrial growth and diversification are essential for creating formal employment opportunities in cities.
4. **Tackle Corruption:** Strengthen institutions to ensure transparent and efficient use of resources allocated to urban development and job creation programmes.

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