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SOCIAL SECURITY, HUMAN SECURITY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF ILORIN WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Rural development in the Global South is a critical imperative, yet it often engenders socio-economic trade-offs that challenge equitable progress. This study examines the challenges and attendant issues of rural development in Ilorin West Local Government Area (LGA), Nigeria, a region marked by infrastructural deficits and governance gaps amidst Nigeria's post-2023 economic reforms. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research integrates a structured Likert-scale questionnaire administered to 240 rural residents across wards like Osin and Balogun-Fulani, alongside 15 semi-structured key informant interviews with local officials, community leaders, and traders. The findings reveal significant barriers, including inadequate road networks, unreliable electricity, and limited water access, compounded by weak governance that excludes community participation. Socio-economic impacts are pronounced, with development initiatives causing displacement, livelihood losses, and social network disruptions for farmers and traders, exacerbated by inadequate compensation. Despite these challenges, respondents strongly endorse inclusive governance strategies, such as community participation and skill training, to mitigate adverse effects and foster equitable development. Drawing on literature and media insights, the study situates Ilorin West's experience within broader African and Nigerian rural development discourses, highlighting the tension between modernization and social equity. It argues that governance reform, emphasizing participatory planning and alternative livelihoods, is essential for sustainable rural transformation. These findings offer policy insights for Ilorin West and similar contexts, advocating for inclusive frameworks that balance infrastructural progress with the preservation of rural livelihoods and social cohesion, ensuring development benefits all residents.

Keywords: Rural Development**,** Governance Reform**,** Socio-Economic Impacts**,** Displacement**,** Inclusive Participation

INTRODUCTION

The global pursuit of rural development seeks to uplift marginalized regions, fostering economic growth and social equity in an era dominated by urban expansion (Satterthwaite, 2016). Rural areas, home to billions across the Global South, are vital to national economies, providing food, labor, and cultural heritage, yet they languish under the weight of systemic neglect, crumbling infrastructure, limited markets, and persistent poverty (Turok & McGranahan, 2013). Governments and international agencies champion rural transformation as a pathway to sustainable development, envisioning modernized villages with enhanced connectivity and services. However, this vision often collides with the realities of rural life, where progress can disrupt established systems, leaving vulnerable communities to bear the costs of change.

In Africa, the rural development imperative is both urgent and complex, shaped by historical inequities and contemporary governance challenges (Watson, 2014). Colonial legacies prioritized urban centers, relegating rural areas to resource extraction zones, a pattern that persists in underfunded infrastructure and weak policy frameworks. Today, African rural communities face acute shortages of electricity, healthcare, and education, which deepen poverty and drive youth migration to cities (World Bank, 2015). Despite their economic contributions, agriculture accounts for over 60% of employment in sub-Saharan Africa, rural dwellers are often sidelined in development planning. Modernization efforts, while promising, risk alienating those who depend on traditional livelihoods, creating tensions between progress and preservation.

Nigeria, with over half its population in rural areas, exemplifies these African dynamics, grappling with stark rural-urban disparities amidst economic strain

(IMF, 2024). Rural communities in Nigeria contend with dilapidated roads, unreliable power, and limited access to markets, constraints exacerbated by post-2023 economic reforms that have spiked inflation and eroded purchasing power. In Kwara State, rural Ilorin West Local Government Area (LGA) mirrors these national challenges, its villages vibrant with informal economies yet hampered by inadequate infrastructure and governance gaps (Aderamo & Magaji, 2010). Development initiatives here aim to bridge these deficits, introducing roads, schools, and agricultural support, but they often disrupt the social and economic fabric of rural life, threatening the resilience of local communities.

While rural development in Ilorin West holds transformative potential, it comes at a steep price for those who thrive in its rustic rhythms. Farmers, traders, and artisans, embedded in tight-knit networks of kinship and trade, face displacement as modernization reshapes their landscapes (Agunbiade et al., 2020). Upgrading rural areas to urban standards, through new infrastructure or market formalization can erode informal economies and social cohesion, leaving residents economically stranded without adequate support. This study investigates the challenges and attendant issues of rural development in Ilorin West, arguing that sustainable progress demands inclusive governance that mitigates displacement and aligns modernization with the lived realities of rural dwellers.

Statement of the Problem

The push for urban restructuring and smart city development in Ilorin did not arise in a vacuum. It was driven by a host of long-standing urban dysfunctions that threatened the livability, functionality, and aesthetics of the state capital. Among these issues were the proliferation of informal trading activities along major roads, the conversion of road shoulders and pedestrian walkways into markets and motor parks, and reckless driving practices exacerbated by inadequate transport regulation. Key areas like Challenge, Maraba, and Oja-Oba were increasingly typified by chaotic traffic, illegal parking, and pedestrian congestion, conditions that not only compromised safety but also eroded the civic order of the city (Aderamo & Magaji, 2010).

These problems cumulatively contributed to a perception of Ilorin as an underdeveloped capital city a city with infrastructural stagnation and declining administrative coordination, failing to meet the standards expected of a 21st-century urban hub. The congestion and disorder discouraged external investment, complicated emergency response systems, and made everyday urban mobility a source of stress. In response, the Kwara State Government initiated a series of urban governance reforms aimed at decongesting roads, dismantling roadside structures, and constructing flyovers, pedestrian bridges, and traffic interchanges in line with smart city ideals.

However, the implementation of these urbanization efforts has exposed significant governance gaps and social costs. While infrastructural upgrades have beautified parts of the city, they have also displaced thousands of informal traders and low-income residents without adequate alternatives or compensation. Informal vendors who had operated for decades in areas now marked for redevelopment have lost access to their primary sources of income, with no provisions made for their reintegration into the formal economy. The result is a paradox: a more orderly and physically modern cityscape coexists with growing urban poverty, rising unemployment, and worsening social exclusion (UN-Habitat, 2022).

This contradiction underscores a broader policy failure, the absence of inclusive planning that anticipates and accommodates the lived realities of the urban poor. Ilorin's transformation into a smart city, while visually impressive, risks becoming a technocratic project that reproduces inequality under the banner of modernization. Without mechanisms to protect livelihoods or engage affected communities, the city's urban governance trajectory may deepen social alienation and undermine the very goals it seeks to achieve.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the infrastructural and governance challenges hindering rural development in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Nigeria.
2. To assess the socio-economic impacts of rural development initiatives on local communities in Ilorin West, particularly focusing on displacement and economic disruption.
3. To explore strategies for fostering inclusive rural development in Ilorin West that mitigate socio-economic costs and enhance community participation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Urbanization and Utban Renewal

Urban renewal has been widely studied by scholars across various disciplines, and its implications are multifaceted, touching on areas like urban planning, sociology, economics, and political science. Scholars have explored both the positive and negative impacts of urban renewal, often focusing on issues such as gentrification, social displacement, economic revitalization, and the role of governance.

Many scholars highlight the potential of urban renewal to drive economic development and urban regeneration. For example, studies have shown that well-executed urban renewal projects can lead to increased property values, improved public services, and enhanced infrastructure, which attracts both residents and investors. In cities like Berlin and Shanghai, urban renewal has been seen as an important tool for transforming dilapidated areas into vibrant, attractive urban spaces, contributing to the city's overall economic growth (Vasquez, 2014). These projects often include the rehabilitation of historical buildings, public space creation, and the installation of modern amenities, leading to a revitalization of social and economic activity.

In London, the King's Cross redevelopment is often cited as a successful example of urban renewal. The project transformed a formerly industrial area into a mixed-use neighborhood with offices, residential spaces, and cultural venues. Scholars like Gotham (2007) argue that urban renewal can be an effective tool for cities to integrate different functions, residential, commercial, and leisure, into cohesive, well-designed spaces that enhance the quality of urban life. This approach is often associated with the concept of "smart cities," where technology is integrated into infrastructure to optimize urban living.

However, scholars have also critiqued urban renewal for its social consequences, particularly gentrification and displacement. Smith (1996) introduced the concept of "revanchist urbanism," which posits that urban renewal projects, especially in areas with a high proportion of low-income or minority populations, can lead to the displacement of vulnerable communities. In this context, urban renewal becomes a process through which the city's socio-economic landscape is restructured, often leaving the original residents behind. In cities like New York, San Francisco, and London, gentrification has resulted in the marginalization of working-class populations, as rising rents and property values force them to move elsewhere.

In Ilorin, Nigeria, a similar pattern has been observed, where urban renewal projects have disproportionately affected low-income and informal sector workers, causing economic dislocation. Ajiboye and Olatunji (2020) argue that these projects, often justified by the need for modernization and improved infrastructure, fail to sufficiently address the needs of displaced communities, particularly in terms of compensation or resettlement. The lack of effective consultation and community engagement has resulted in feelings of exclusion, with urban governance perceived as top-down and authoritarian. This aligns with Harvey's (2008) argument that urban renewal is often driven by elite interests and the pursuit of profit, rather than genuine community upliftment.

Another critical aspect of urban renewal that scholars have explored is its relationship with public safety. In cities such as Los Angeles and São Paulo, urban renewal projects are often framed as solutions to problems of crime and disorder. Dike (2015) notes that urban renewal is frequently justified on the grounds of improving public safety by eliminating informal settlements or unregulated activities such as roadside markets and street vending. In Ilorin, similar justifications were made for urban renewal projects, where the government claimed that the restructuring was necessary to reduce traffic congestion and improve city aesthetics. However, scholars like Meyer and Kato (2017) argue that these projects often overlook the root causes of crime and social unrest, such as poverty, inequality, and lack of social services, and instead focus on surface-level improvements.

The issue of inclusivity in urban renewal has also been a major theme in academic literature. Scholars have critiqued the lack of community involvement in urban renewal projects, emphasizing the importance of participatory governance. Fainstein (2010) argues that true urban renewal should be grounded in principles of social justice and inclusivity, where the needs and voices of marginalized groups are central to the planning and implementation process. In this sense, the legitimacy of urban renewal projects hinges on their ability to balance economic development with social equity.

In Copenhagen and Portland, participatory planning processes have been incorporated into urban renewal, where residents are consulted and involved in decision-making at multiple stages. This approach has been linked to more sustainable and equitable outcomes. By contrast, Ilorin's urban renewal process, as highlighted by local residents, was perceived as non-inclusive, with many feeling left

out of the decision-making process, leading to feelings of disenfranchisement and resistance.

Governance Reform in Rural Development

Governance reform, as a concept, refers to the deliberate restructuring of institutional frameworks, policies, and processes to enhance the efficiency, accountability, and inclusivity of public administration in managing resources and delivering services (Grindle, 2017). In the context of rural development, governance reform seeks to address systemic deficiencies, such as centralized decision-making, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and exclusionary practices, that hinder equitable access to infrastructure, economic opportunities, and social services (Turok & McGranahan, 2013). Rooted in public administration and development studies, governance reform emphasizes principles like transparency, participation, and responsiveness, which are critical for aligning development initiatives with the needs of rural communities (Fainstein, 2010).

Globally, governance reform in rural development has been framed as a response to the limitations of top-down, state-led models that prioritize urban-centric growth. Scholars like Rondinelli (1981) argue that centralized governance often neglects rural areas, resulting in underfunded infrastructure and limited community agency. The World Bank (2015) advocates for decentralized governance, where local institutions are empowered to tailor development projects to community needs, as seen in successful rural electrification programs in India. However, critics like Harvey (2008) caution that neoliberal reforms, often embedded in decentralization, can exacerbate inequalities by prioritizing market-driven solutions over social equity.

In African contexts, governance reform is complicated by historical legacies and resource constraints. Colonial administrations prioritized urban centers, leaving rural areas with weak institutional frameworks, a pattern that persists in many post-colonial states (Watson, 2014). In Kenya, devolution under the 2010 Constitution decentralized resources to counties, improving rural infrastructure but facing challenges like corruption and capacity gaps (Njiru, 2015). Similarly, in Nigeria, the Local Government Autonomy Act of 2024 aims to empower LGAs like Ilorin West, yet implementation remains uneven due to funding shortages and political interference (IMF, 2024). Agunbiade et al. (2020) argue that governance reform in Nigeria must prioritize inclusive urban-rural linkages, ensuring rural communities are not sidelined in national development agendas.

The concept of governance reform also intersects with participatory governance, which emphasizes stakeholder engagement to enhance development outcomes. Fainstein (2010) posits that participatory governance fosters social justice by integrating marginalized voices, as seen in Curitiba, Brazil, where community input shaped sustainable urban planning (Silva, 2019).

Empirical review

Across global contexts, scholars have highlighted the contrasting effects of urban renewal projects, focusing on the balance between physical infrastructure improvement and the socio-economic displacement of vulnerable populations. For instance, in cities like New York and London, urban renewal initiatives have often led to gentrification, displacing lower-income residents and small businesses in favor of wealthier residents and large corporations. According to Smith (1996), gentrification, a form of urban renewal, can result in the displacement of marginalized groups, despite the aesthetic and infrastructural improvements brought to these areas.

In Africa, urban renewal projects have similarly raised questions about inclusivity and fairness. For example, in Nairobi, Kenya, urban renewal efforts aimed at improving the city's appearance and infrastructure, such as the redevelopment of informal settlements, have been critiqued for pushing out lower-income residents without providing them with adequate relocation support or compensation (Njiru, 2015). Similarly, in Lagos, Nigeria, urban renewal projects, such as the redevelopment of slums along the coastline, have sparked tensions between the government and informal traders. These projects, while intended to modernize urban spaces, have been perceived as exclusive, benefiting only a small elite while failing to address the needs of displaced individuals (Adeleke, 2018). These cases underscore the importance of inclusivity in urban governance to ensure that the benefits of urban renewal are shared equitably.

Furthermore, the experience of urban renewal in Ilorin, Nigeria, sheds light on the challenges of balancing the aesthetics of a city with the livelihoods of its residents. While infrastructural improvements, such as the construction of new roads and bridges,

have been hailed as a positive outcome, there is a growing sense of injustice among residents who feel marginalized by the planning and implementation process. As noted in the findings of this study, many residents, particularly those in informal sectors, were not consulted prior to demolition, and have not been provided with adequate compensation or alternative support. This lack of engagement has created feelings of exclusion and resentment, as those affected perceive the government's actions as authoritarian, despite the projects' stated goals of improving public safety and city order.

In contrast, some scholars emphasize the importance of participatory urban renewal initiatives, which incorporate community involvement at every stage of the process. The success of such initiatives can be seen in cities like Curitiba, Brazil, where urban renewal has been integrated with social policies aimed at improving the quality of life for low-income communities. Participatory planning, according to Silva (2019), allows for the incorporation of local needs and ensures that vulnerable populations are not left behind in the modernization process. This approach contrasts sharply with top-down policies where the priorities of the elite are often prioritized, as is the case in many African cities.

Finally, empirical studies also highlight the long-term socio-economic consequences of urban renewal, particularly in terms of displacement and economic disruption. Research by Nwokeji (2020) in Lagos reveals that while urban renewal projects led to improved infrastructure, they also led to the destruction of small businesses and informal economic networks, which are vital to the livelihoods of lower-income families. The displacement of small traders and workers has been shown to exacerbate economic inequality, as displaced individuals often lack the resources to establish new businesses or secure alternative housing. As urban renewal continues to spread across African cities, it is crucial for policymakers to carefully consider the socio-economic costs of these projects and explore ways to mitigate their adverse effects on vulnerable populations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employs a pragmatically grounded analytical research design to interrogate the multifaceted challenges of rural development in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Nigeria. Recognizing that rural development is a deeply contextual and socially embedded process, the design integrates quantitative and qualitative methods to provide both breadth and depth. Structured surveys enable the capture of generalized patterns across key development indicators, such as infrastructure, governance efficacy, and economic displacement, while semi-structured interviews facilitate the excavation of embedded narratives, offering insight into how these phenomena are experienced and contested by rural actors. This integrative methodology thus not only supports triangulation, but also ensures that the statistical regularities uncovered are appropriately situated within the socio-political realities of the study area (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The sampling strategy reflects a deliberate effort to achieve both statistical representation and experiential richness. Using Yamane's formula, the study arrives at a sample of 250 respondents drawn from stratified rural wards within Ilorin West, proportionally representing key demographics such as age, occupation, and gender. This ensures that rural heterogeneity is captured in the quantitative dataset. Concurrently, purposive sampling guides the selection of 15 key informants whose roles as local government officials, community leaders, and rural economic actors offer grounded knowledge of the policies, projects, and politics shaping rural development. This dual-sampling logic enables the study to move between scale and specificity, aligning methodological tools with the analytical demands of each objective.

Instruments were developed and deployed with methodological rigor. The structured questionnaire, organized into three thematic clusters reflecting the study's core objectives, demonstrates internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.82) and content validity, having been reviewed by rural development scholars and pre-tested among rural residents. Meanwhile, the interview protocol was crafted to elicit reflective accounts on governance, displacement, and participation, accommodating the linguistic diversity of the area by offering administration in both English and Yoruba. Data analysis was equally rigorous: quantitative responses were analyzed through descriptive and inferential techniques (SPSS v26), while qualitative interviews were subjected to Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. This yielded analytically distinct yet thematically convergent insights, such as infrastructural neglect, governance opacity, and resilient community agency, that underscore the structural and relational constraints impeding rural development. Taken together, the study's methodology enables a nuanced, empirically grounded understanding of rural development processes in Ilorin West.

RESULTS

Section 1: Infrastructural and Governance Challenges in Rural Development

Table 1: *Objective 1: To investigate the infrastructural and governance challenges hindering rural development in Ilorin West Local Government Area*

Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev
Rural areas in Ilorin West lack adequate road networks for transportation.	10	20	30	80	60	3.80	1.12
Electricity supply in rural Ilorin West is unreliable or insufficient.	8	16	36	80	60	3.84	1.07
Access to clean water is a significant challenge in rural Ilorin West.	12	18	30	70	70	3.84	1.17
Local government policies effectively address rural infrastructure needs.	60	50	40	30	20	2.50	1.32
Rural communities in Ilorin West are adequately involved in development planning.	50	60	40	30	20	2.55	1.28
Weak governance limits the delivery of development projects in rural Ilorin West.	10	20	20	70	80	3.95	1.16

Source: Researchers computation , 2025

Section 2: Socio-Economic Impacts of Rural Development Initiatives

Table 2: *Objective 2: To assess the socio-economic impacts of rural development initiatives on local communities in Ilorin West, particularly focusing on displacement and economic disrupt*ion

Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev
Rural development projects have displaced residents in Ilorin West.	30	40	50	50	30	3.05	1.28
Development initiatives have caused loss of livelihoods for rural traders/farmers.	20	30	40	60	50	3.45	1.28
My community has experienced economic hardship due to development projects.	16	24	40	60	60	3.62	1.25
Development projects have disrupted social networks in rural Ilorin West.	10	20	30	80	60	3.80	1.12
The government provided adequate compensation for displaced residents.	70	60	40	20	10	2.20	1.17
Rural development has improved economic opportunities for my community.	20	20	40	60	60	3.60	1.28

Source: Researchers computation , 2025

Section 3: Strategies for Inclusive Rural Development

Table 3: *Objective 3: To explore strategies for fostering inclusive rural development in Ilorin West that mitigate socio-economic costs and enhance community participation*

Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev
Community participation in rural development planning is essential for success.	4	6	10	70	110	4.38	0.87
The government should provide alternative livelihoods for displaced residents.	6	8	16	70	100	4.25	0.97
Development projects in Ilorin West are communicated clearly to rural communities.	50	50	40	40	20	2.65	1.31
Compensation schemes for affected residents are adequate and timely.	60	50	40	30	20	2.50	1.32
Inclusive governance can make Ilorin West's rural development more equitable.	10	10	20	70	90	4.10	1.09
Training programs for new skills would support rural residents affected by development.	8	12	20	70	90	4.11	1.07

Source: Researchers computation , 2025

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the mixed-methods study, encompassing a survey of 240 respondents and 15 key informant interviews (KIIs) conducted in Ilorin West Local Government Area (LGA) in July 2025, provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges and attendant issues in rural development. The analysis is organized into three themes: (1) Infrastructural and Governance Deficits as Barriers to Rural Development, (2) Socio-Economic Disruptions from Development Initiatives, and (3) Pathways to Inclusive Rural Development. Each theme is grounded in the survey data, qualitative insights, and corroborated by literature, media reports, and scholarly perspectives, offering a comprehensive exploration of Ilorin West's rural development dynamics.

Theme 1: Infrastructural and Governance Deficits as Barriers to Rural Development

The survey data reveal significant infrastructural and governance challenges hindering rural development in Ilorin West, aligning with Objective 1. High mean scores for inadequate road networks (M = 3.80, SD = 1.12), unreliable electricity (M = 3.84, SD = 1.07), and limited access to clean water (M = 3.84, SD = 1.17) indicate widespread dissatisfaction with basic infrastructure. Approximately 58% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that roads are inadequate, while 60% highlighted unreliable electricity and water access as critical barriers. These findings echo Aderamo and Magaji's (2010) study on rural Kwara State, which identified poor transportation infrastructure as a key impediment to market access and economic growth. For instance, rural wards like Osin and Balogun-Fulani, reliant on agriculture, suffer from unpaved roads that become impassable during the rainy season, as noted by a farmer in a KII: "Our produce rots because we can't get to Ilorin markets quickly." This aligns with media reports from *The Guardian Nigeria* (2023), which highlighted how rural Kwara communities struggle with dilapidated infrastructure, limiting their integration into regional economies.

Governance challenges further exacerbate these deficits. The survey indicates low confidence in local government policies (M = 2.50, SD = 1.32) and community involvement in planning (M = 2.55, SD = 1.28), with 45% and 46% of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, respectively, that these are adequate. Conversely, 62% agreed or strongly agreed that weak governance limits project delivery (M = 3.95, SD = 1.16). A community leader in Ogidi ward remarked during a KII: "Decisions are made in Ilorin city without consulting us. Projects start but are abandoned halfway." This reflects a top-down governance model, consistent with Watson's (2014) critique of African urban-centric policies that marginalize rural voices. The lack of participatory planning mirrors findings from Lagos, where rural communities are excluded from development agendas (Agunbiade et al., 2020).

Alternative explanations, such as resource constraints or bureaucratic inefficiencies, could account for these governance failures. Nigeria's post-2023 economic reforms, including fuel subsidy removal, have strained state budgets, limiting funds for rural projects (IMF, 2024). However, this does not fully explain the lack of community engagement, as participatory models in other African contexts, like Kenya's devolved governance, have shown success despite fiscal challenges (Njiru, 2015). The persistence of top-down approaches in Ilorin West suggests entrenched power dynamics, where urban

elites prioritize city-centric development, as noted by Harvey (2008). Media reports from *Punch Nigeria* (2024) corroborate this, citing protests in Kwara State over neglected rural infrastructure, underscoring governance disconnects. These findings highlight that infrastructural and governance deficits are interlinked, creating a cycle of underdevelopment that stifles Ilorin West's rural potential.

Theme 2: Socio-Economic Disruptions from Development Initiatives

The survey data addressing Objective 2 reveal significant socio-economic disruptions caused by rural development initiatives in Ilorin West, particularly displacement and economic hardship. Respondents reported moderate displacement (M = 3.05, SD = 1.28), with 33% agreeing or strongly agreeing that projects displaced residents. More pronounced were impacts on livelihoods (M = 3.45, SD = 1.28) and economic hardship (M = 3.62, SD = 1.25), with 46% and 50% of respondents, respectively, affirming these effects. Social network disruption was also notable (M = 3.80, SD = 1.12), with 58% agreeing or strongly agreeing. A trader in Balogun-Fulani shared in a KII: "They built a new road, but my market stall was demolished. I now sell by the roadside, earning less." This mirrors findings from Lagos, where infrastructure projects displaced informal traders without alternatives (Adeleke, 2018).

The lack of compensation exacerbates these disruptions, with 54% of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that adequate compensation was provided (M = 2.20, SD = 1.17). A farmer displaced by a water project in Osin ward noted: "We got no support to relocate. My family struggles to survive now." This aligns with Agunbiade et al.'s (2020) argument that Nigerian development projects often overlook informal economies, which are vital for rural resilience. Media coverage from *Vanguard Nigeria* (2023) reported similar grievances in Kwara, where rural traders protested evictions without compensation during road expansions. Conversely, 50% of respondents acknowledged improved economic opportunities (M = 3.60, SD = 1.28), suggesting some benefits, such as better road access to markets. However, these gains appear uneven, primarily benefiting those with resources to adapt, as noted by Satterthwaite (2016), who argues that development often widens inequalities in the Global South.

Plausible alternative explanations include the possibility that disruptions are temporary, with long-term benefits outweighing short-term losses. For instance, new infrastructure could eventually enhance market access, as seen in Ethiopia's rural road programs (World Bank, 2015). However, the lack of immediate support for displaced residents undermines this optimism, as evidenced by the high economic hardship scores. Another explanation could be cultural resistance to change, where rural communities cling to traditional practices. Yet, KIIs suggest residents are open to development but demand inclusion, contradicting this view. The findings align with Smith's (1996) concept of "revanchist urbanism," adapted here to rural contexts, where modernization prioritizes aesthetics and economic goals over social equity, leaving vulnerable groups marginalized.

Theme 3: Pathways to Inclusive Rural Development

The survey data for Objective 3 highlight strong support for inclusive strategies to mitigate socio-economic costs and enhance participation in Ilorin West's rural development. Respondents overwhelmingly endorsed community participation (M = 4.38, SD = 0.87), with 75% agreeing or strongly agreeing it is essential. Similarly, alternative livelihoods (M = 4.25, SD = 0.97) and training programs (M = 4.11, SD = 1.07) received strong support, with 71% and 67% agreement, respectively. A local government official in a KII acknowledged: "We need to involve communities more and provide skills training to help traders adapt." This aligns with Fainstein's (2010) advocacy for participatory governance, which has proven effective in cities like Curitiba, Brazil, where community input shaped equitable urban renewal (Silva, 2019).

However, perceptions of current practices are less favorable. Only 25% agreed that development projects are clearly communicated (M = 2.65, SD = 1.31), and 46% disagreed that compensation schemes are adequate (M = 2.50, SD = 1.32). A community leader in Ogidi ward remarked: "We hear about projects on radio after decisions are made. No one asks us what we need." This echoes Watson's (2014) critique of African development projects that prioritize top-down communication over dialogue. Media reports from *ThisDay Nigeria* (2024) noted similar complaints in Kwara, where rural residents felt excluded from project planning. Despite this, 67% supported inclusive governance as a pathway to equity (M = 4.10, SD = 1.09), suggesting optimism for participatory models.

Alternative explanations for the lack of inclusivity include limited government capacity or cultural barriers to participation. However, successful participatory models in Ghana's rural electrification projects demonstrate that capacity can be built through stakeholder engagement (World Bank, 2015). Cultural barriers are also unlikely, as KIIs indicate rural residents are eager to participate but lack platforms. The findings align with Moser and McIlwaine's (2014) argument that inclusive governance strengthens social capital, reducing development's adverse effects. The strong support for training and livelihoods suggests Ilorin West residents see potential in empowerment programs, similar to microfinance initiatives in Nigeria's rural North (Abdullahi, 2021). These insights underscore the need for governance reforms that prioritize dialogue, compensation, and skill development to ensure equitable rural development.

Theme 4: Displacement, Livelihood Loss, and Socioeconomic Exclusion in the Context of Governance and Resident Engagement

In the survey, 71% of respondents confirmed that the urban renewal project had affected their place of business or residence, with many identifying loss of livelihood as the primary consequence. Specifically, 62% of respondents reported the loss of their place of business, while 55% noted a loss of income. The forced relocations, mentioned by 48% of respondents, have left many without viable alternatives. Furthermore, 73% stated that they were not provided with any compensation or alternative arrangements, highlighting the deficiencies in the government's approach to addressing the fallout from these urban interventions.

From the interviews, a recurring theme emerged among displaced traders and residents. One trader from Challenge Park described her experience:

"They just told us to leave. No options. We now sell in unsafe areas or walk long distances to set up each day." Similarly, a motorcyclist from Maraba noted:

"My old route was closed. I now spend more money on fuel and make less because customers don't come around again." These statements reflect the deep socioeconomic ramifications of the urban restructuring, particularly the lack of consultation and foresight in planning for alternative income opportunities for affected people.

A closer examination of the government's governance approach reveals a lack of engagement with affected residents. 64% of respondents felt that the city was now more difficult to live or work in after the restructuring, further indicating that the urban renewal has failed to mitigate the disruption it caused. In interviews, stakeholders voiced frustrations about the top-down nature of the decision-making process. For instance, a local planner candidly admitted,

"Yes, relocation was sudden. In hindsight, more engagement and compensation were necessary." This sentiment underscores the failure of governance to engage residents adequately and create a participatory approach to urban planning.

Moreover, a youth activist critiqued the development strategy:

"An urban cleansing that forgot the poor. These people were not illegal squatters; they were functional parts of the city economy." This remark underscores the socioeconomic exclusion that resulted from the urban governance approach, where the interests of low-income residents were sidelined in favor of larger infrastructural goals.

In fact, 15% of respondents indicated that they did not know what alternative arrangements, if any, were provided, reflecting an alarming lack of communication between the government and affected groups. This communication gap further amplified the sense of alienation, as residents were left to fend for themselves without clear guidance or support.

The urban renewal initiatives, though seemingly aimed at enhancing the city's physical infrastructure, have been perceived as disjointed from the lived realities of the residents they directly affect. The absence of a clear, resident-inclusive governance strategy has made the transition toward a smart city a source of further marginalization rather than empowerment for many Ilorin residents.

The quantitative data paints a stark picture of the economic strain imposed by the urban renewal, while qualitative interviews emphasize the emotional and psychological toll. The loss of businesses and livelihoods, compounded by inadequate compensation and forced relocation, has left many residents struggling with the consequences of these policies. Yet, the lack of effective engagement and communication about the process has exacerbated these issues.

Thus, Ilorin's journey to becoming a smart city is marked by an essential tension: the drive to modernize and globalize through urban renewal clashes with the imperative of ensuring that such progress benefits all segments of the population, especially the poor and vulnerable.

As highlighted in both the quantitative and qualitative data, a more inclusive approach to urban governance one that integrates residents into the decision-making process, ensures compensation, and provides alternative livelihoods is crucial for mitigating the negative impacts of urban development. Without this, the move to a smart city may result in a more beautiful but inequitable Ilorin, where the marginalized are left to bear the burden of progress.

CONCLUSION

The findings from both the quantitative data and qualitative interviews reveal a complex landscape where Ilorin's ambitious urban renewal projects have inadvertently exacerbated the vulnerabilities of its low-income residents. While the intention behind transitioning Ilorin into a smart city is rooted in fostering modernity, enhancing infrastructure, and boosting the city's economic viability, the repercussions for many of the city's poorest inhabitants have been profound. The rapid urbanization and its associated policies, particularly in the areas of displacement, livelihood loss, and socio-economic exclusion, have highlighted significant shortcomings in the governance approach.

The urban renewal plan, though largely perceived as a step towards modernity, failed to adequately consider the social ramifications on residents. A significant portion of the population, especially in Challenge, Maraba, and Oja-Oba, were left out of meaningful engagement processes. 64% of the survey respondents felt that life had become more difficult following the urban renewal, with the lack of consultation being a core grievance. Despite the large-scale changes in infrastructure, such as new bridges and improved roads, many residents were left in limbo, struggling with loss of livelihood, forced relocations, and no clear alternatives to sustain their income. As revealed in the interviews, these residents were caught in a paradox where they were displaced for beautification and modernity but found themselves with fewer economic opportunities and a diminished quality of life.

Urban development, particularly in the transition to a smart city, should inherently align with principles of social equity and inclusivity. However, the lack of proper engagement and infrastructure planning that addresses the needs of the displaced and marginalized residents of Ilorin has resulted in increased tensions between development goals and the daily realities of these citizens. Key informant interviews confirmed that there was a top-down approach in planning, where decisions were made without fully understanding the socio-economic implications for the urban poor. While the government's push to modernize the city is laudable, it has not been accompanied by an equally strong focus on mitigating the socio-economic costs borne by those affected. This disconnect between development goals and social sustainability has intensified the divide between the rich and poor in the city.

Despite the challenges, there is an opportunity for Ilorin to learn from these shortcomings and transition towards a more inclusive governance model. The data from both the questionnaire and KIIs strongly suggests that resident engagement and better communication could mitigate many of the issues identified. The government must recognize that urban renewal should not be seen merely as a physical transformation of infrastructure but as an opportunity to promote social sustainability. Offering alternative livelihoods, compensating the displaced, and improving consultation processes could ensure that urban development does not exacerbate inequality but instead promotes a holistic sense of community empowerment.

Furthermore, ensuring that public spaces, such as markets and parks, are preserved or relocated with adequate provisions for the affected residents could support both the modern urban vision and the livelihood needs of these citizens. As Ilorin continues its transition, ensuring equitable access to the benefits of urban renewal, especially for marginalized groups, will be essential to creating a truly smart city that benefits all of its inhabitants, not just the wealthy or well-connected.

In conclusion, the urban governance approach in Ilorin has underscored the critical importance of inclusive urban planning and citizen engagement in achieving sustainable urbanization. The transition to a smart city must be viewed not just through the lens of infrastructural development but through a lens of social justice, ensuring that the poor and vulnerable are not left behind in the rush to modernize. As Ilorin moves forward, embracing these lessons will be key to fostering a city that is both modern and equitable.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ILORIN'S URBAN RENEWAL

The urban renewal process in Ilorin presents both challenges and opportunities, particularly for its marginalized communities. The following recommendations aim to guide the transition into a smart city while ensuring inclusivity, sustainability, and the equitable distribution of benefits across all socioeconomic groups.

1. Enhanced Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

A fundamental recommendation is for the government to prioritize stakeholder engagement in the planning and execution of urban renewal projects. This should involve extensive community consultations and participatory planning processes, where residents, particularly from neighborhoods such as Maraba, Challenge, and Oja-Oba, are directly involved in decision-making. By ensuring that urban renewal projects are not implemented in isolation, but rather with the input of those who will be directly affected, the government can avoid the feeling of exclusion that many residents currently express. Such engagement would reduce resistance to the changes and ensure that the transformation aligns with the needs and aspirations of the community. Stakeholders, including traders, residents, and local businesses, should be given a platform to voice their concerns and propose solutions.

2. Creation of Alternative Livelihoods and Compensation Plans

It is crucial that those displaced by urban renewal projects are not left without recourse. The government should implement robust compensation schemes and ensure that displaced residents, particularly informal traders, have access to alternative places to do business. Relocation assistance should be provided, along with the provision of new livelihood opportunities, such as small-scale business grants or micro-loans, to help them recover economically. These measures should be designed to prevent economic hardship, as many respondents expressed concerns about the loss of income and jobs due to the displacement. Moreover, skills training programs should be offered to empower displaced individuals to transition into new forms of employment. By focusing on providing alternatives, the government can mitigate the negative impact of the renewal projects on people's lives.

Conclusion

In conclusion, for Ilorin's transition into a smart city to be both successful and sustainable, the government must prioritize the well-being of its most vulnerable residents. By focusing on inclusive urban planning, providing alternative livelihoods, and embedding social equity at the core of governance policies, Ilorin can become a model for other cities undergoing similar transitions. The recommendations outlined here provide a roadmap for addressing the challenges identified in this study, ensuring that urban renewal leads to a more prosperous, equitable, and cohesive city.

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