PREPAREDNESS AND PLANNED SURVIVAL STRATEGIES IN DESTINATIONS OF ASPIRING OKPAMERI RURAL OUT-MIGRANTS

MATHIAS OGHENETEJIRI OBIRE
Department of Sociology, Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State
mathias.obire@dou.edu.ng, 08037405476
ORCID ID: 0009-0008-8912-2093

MONDAY ABIOLA
Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Benin, Benin City
monday.abiola@uniben.edu, 08062185910
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-5210-136X

DOI: https://doi.org/10.64633/wissj.v10i6.17

Keywords

Out-migrants, Rural, Urban, Okpameri, Destination, Preparedness

Abstract

Research Problem: *This study examined the preparedness and planned coping strategies of aspiring rural out-migrants among the Okpameri of Akoko-Edo Local Government Area, Edo State. The study was informed by the persistence of rural out-migration despite the harsh realities of urban life, including unemployment, high cost of living, crime, poor housing, and weak social support systems. Although many rural dwellers see migration as a pathway to better opportunities, the problem remains that some intending migrants move to urban centres without adequate resources, skills, realistic plans, or reliable survival arrangements.*
Methods: *An exploratory, community-based survey design was adopted for this study. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires based on sample size of 302, while qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews.*
Results: *The findings revealed that 94.7% of respondents were aware of urban socio-economic conditions, while 92.5% had contacts in their intended destinations. However, most expected assistance was limited to accommodation and feeding rather than employment or finance. Although 87.7% believed they could cope, only 5.3% identified finance as a survival tool.*
Conclusion: *The study concludes that aspiring out-migrants possess awareness and optimism, but their preparedness is often weak, informal, and heavily dependent on networks.*
Key Contribution to Knowledge: *The study shows that most aspiring rural out-migrants relied strongly on hope, faith, friendship, and the belief that hard work would eventually bring success.*

***Recommendation**: Stronger rural livelihood opportunities, pre-migration counselling, vocational training, financial planning, and community-based guidance should providedor intending migrants.*

Introduction

Rural out-migration remains one of the most persistent features of social and economic life in Nigeria. For many rural dwellers, movement to urban centres is not simply a matter of choice; it is often imagined as a route to employment, personal advancement, improved living conditions, and wider social opportunities. The attraction of urban centres in Nigeria is closely linked to the long-standing imbalance between rural and urban development. Since the pre- and post-independence periods, development policies have tended to favour cities over rural communities. Urban areas are more likely to have better roads, schools, health facilities, electricity, markets, government offices, and formal employment opportunities. Rural communities, on the other hand, often suffer from poor infrastructure, limited social services, and fewer economic opportunities. This rural–urban dichotomy has made migration appear attractive to many rural residents, even when urban centres themselves are already struggling with poverty, unemployment, overcrowding, housing shortages, environmental pollution, and insecurity.

The rapid growth of Nigeria's urban population further shows the scale of the issue. Since the second half of the 1950s, successive governments have expressed concern over the increasing population of major urban centres. Lagos, for instance, experienced dramatic population growth bin last fifty decades (Koko & Bello,2023). National urban population figures also show a steady shift from a predominantly rural population to an increasingly urban one. In 1985, Nigeria had an estimated 25.5 million urban residents and 57.6 million rural residents. By 2010, the urban population had risen to 87.6 million, while the rural population stood at 80.8 million; projections suggested that beyond 2020, Nigeria's urban population would exceed 150 million, compared with rural residents (Bloch, Fox, Monroy & Ojo, 2015). This trend reflects the continuing pressure on Nigerian cities and the steady movement of people from rural communities to urban destinations.

This issue is particularly related to aspiring Okpameri out-migrants in Akoko-Edo Local Government Area of Edo State. The Okpameri-speaking communities are largely rural and agrarian, and out-migration to urban centres has become a common response to limited opportunities within the local environment. Many young and economically active persons may see the city as a place of hope, independence, and achievement. Yet, it is important to ask whether these intending migrants understand the difficulties they may face at their destinations. It is also necessary to examine whether they have acquired relevant skills, saved money, identified reliable contacts, arranged accommodation, or developed acceptable coping and survival strategies before leaving.

Uncontrolled rural out-migration has already contributed to the growth of urban slums, informal settlements, unemployment, street trading, idleness, and other survivalist activities. It has also placed additional pressure on urban infrastructure and social services. At the same time, rural communities lose young and active members of the population, leaving behind older persons, women, children, and other dependants. This weakens rural labour, reduces agricultural

productivity, and affects community development. The consequences therefore move in two directions: rural areas experience depletion, while urban areas experience congestion and social pressure.

The persistence of rural out-migration despite massive urban poverty raises important sociological questions. Why do rural dwellers still aspire to migrate when many urban migrants struggle to survive? What do they know about the cost of living, job competition, housing problems, and social risks in urban centres? More importantly, how prepared are they to cope with these conditions if their expectations are not immediately fulfilled? These questions are crucial because unprepared migration can create problems not only for the migrants themselves but also for their families, rural communities, and urban host environments.

Research Problem

There is almost no empirical explanation to ascertain whether intending rural out-migrants are aware of the reality of what obtains in urban areas and whether they have planned acceptable strategies and acquired skills to cope with escalating poverty in urban destinations. This gap is important because intention to migrate does not automatically translate into successful migration outcomes.Majority of rural to urban migrants struggle to find work and battle with the relatively high cost of living, with many forced to beg, work odd or illegal jobs or remain idle; thus constituting urban social nuisance. Against this background, this study focuses on the preparedness and planned coping or survival strategies of aspiring Okpameri out-migrants. It seeks to examine whether intending migrants are aware of the economic and social realities of urban destinations, the kinds of arrangements they make before migration, the skills or resources they possess, and the strategies they intend to use if they encounter hardship.

Research Objective

The general objective of study is to examine the preparedness and planned coping/survival strategies in destinations of aspiring Okpameri out-migrants. However, the specific objectives are to:

1. Ascertain the mode of intended coping strategies of aspiring rural out-migrants in destinations.
2. Ascertain the nature of assistance rural out-migrants intend to receive from contacts in destination, and their survival and coping ability in destinations.

Conceptual Clarification

1. Rural Out-migrants: These are able bodied hitherto rural area dweller who intending or are in the process of permanently moving to urban centres.
2. Destination: This is the final place, or the urban centres where the rural out-migrants move to, from the rural origin.
3. Preparedness: This the level of understanding of the demands and situations in urban centres, and the efforts that are made to cope and adjust to these demands and situations.

Preparedness and Planned Coping/Survival Strategies of Intending Rural Out-Migrants

Nwokocha (2010) noted that most youth see out-migration into cities as necessary approach to overcoming poverty and associated powerlessness in rural areas, but they were unprepared to survive in the hard urban life. It is this lack of preparedness that later makes them

nuisances which translates into social discomfort and disequilibrium. By implication, the education, youthfulness, innovativeness and energetic disposition of rural out-migrants are considered by them as means of survival (Anele, 2003). The preceding scholars focused the unpreparedness of rural out-migrants, and the consequences this unpreparedness while already in their destinations. However, this present study focused on the level and nature of preparedness of aspiring rural out-migrants.

In their examination of migration experiences in Africa, Baker and Aina (1995) observed that many households have become increasingly multi-active and geographically dispersed as a strategy for survival and the maintenance of living standards. Rather than relying on a single source of livelihood, families often spread their economic activities across both rural and urban locations in order to manage the challenges associated with social and economic change. Within many urban centres in Sub-Saharan Africa, households depend to varying degrees on food supplies from rural areas to cope with difficult urban living conditions (Weeks, 1994; Baker & Aina, 1995; Weisner et al., 1997; Kruger, 1998; Zimmwer et al., 2022). While the preceding studies showed that rural out-migrants in some other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa relied on food support from their rural family members, this present study intended to check if the same coping strategies is adopted by rural out-migrant in Nigeria using the Okpameri people of Edo State.

Supporting this argument, Frayne (2004), in his study of migration in Windhoek, Namibia, found that urban households and rural out-migrants increasingly relied on food transfers from rural communities to supplement their urban food budgets. These transfers consisted largely of cultivated and wild food products, including pearl millet, meat, poultry, fish, and other locally available food items. According to Frayne (2004), this form of support represents a demographic coping strategy through which migrants draw upon rural-urban linkages to improve household food security and reduce the financial pressures associated with urban life.

Beyond food transfers, Frayne (2004) also identified other coping mechanisms adopted by migrant households. A significant number of rural out-migrants reported sending their children to live with relatives because they lacked the financial resources necessary to support them in urban areas. Among the children who were relocated, approximately 90 percent were living with relatives in rural Namibia. This finding highlights the continued importance of extended family networks in supporting migrant households and demonstrates how families strategically redistribute their members across different locations in response to economic hardship.

One aspect which almost all literature has neglected in examining the survival strategy of intending or actual rural out-migrants was the possibility of them learning a trade why under the care and guidance of relatives or bosses. It is possible that most rural out-migrants move to destinations where there was someone to receive them. Therefore, to some extent these contacts would definitely see to the fact that these rural out-migrants settle down and do something meaningful. This study therefore explored the role of contacts that would receive intending rural out-migrants in aiding their survival and sustenance in their destinations, and whether these intending rural out-migrants included such assistance from their contacts in their preparation to out-migrate, and to what extent this was depended upon.

Drawing on ethnographic data collected from women who were currently employed or had

previously worked as full-time or hourly domestic workers, Howell (2006) provided valuable insight into the experiences of unskilled female migrants who moved to urban areas in search of better opportunities. Her study revealed the difficult realities faced by many of these women, who often found themselves concentrated in some of the lowest-paid and least prestigious occupations within the urban economy. Despite these challenges, many demonstrated remarkable resilience and determination. Howell (2006) found that some women used their earnings to finance their own education or support their children's schooling, recognizing education as a pathway to more secure, better-paying, and socially rewarding employment in the formal sector.

These findings highlight the considerable economic and social pressures that characterize the lives of many unskilled rural-to-urban migrants. For many women, migration does not immediately translate into improved living conditions. The study further suggests that a significant number of migrants leave their rural communities with little preparation for the realities of urban life. Even when migration is planned, many lack a clear strategy for securing stable employment or meeting their basic needs upon arrival.

The propensity of reaping better life with migration is determined largely by personal characteristics, such as age, sex, education, professional experience etc (Narayan &Chakraborty, 2023). In their study of migration among rural dwellers in Uganda, Stites *et al* (2007), they discovered there were two groups of migrants from Bokora, a rural community. The first were predominantly young people who out-migrated for casual or seasonal labour and return to their communities throughout the year, or to assist with cultivation in the rainy seasons. They noted that the second set of rural out-migrants were those who appeared on the streets of Kampala and other major cities, where they engaged in a range of livelihood strategies that included begging (usually through the use of children), sweeping of mills in exchange for collecting fallen grain, childcare for children of relatives living in the city, unloading lorries, stocking of stores, collecting and selling metal found in garbage dumps and engaging in other odd jobs. Begging is the highly visible and main livelihood strategy due to the role and likely exploration of children, as well as being part of a more complex livelihood strategy (Stites *et al*, 2002). These previous studies captured the coping strategies of migrants who had already migrated to urban centres, but this present study focused on the planned strategies that aspiring rural out-migrants have put in place to survive the uncertainties of urban centres.

Methods

The study adopted an exploratory, community-based survey design to examine the preparedness and planned coping or survival strategies of aspiring Okpameri out-migrants. The survey design was considered appropriate because it allowed the researcher to collect primary data from a selected sample and use the findings to understand broader patterns within the study population. To strengthen the quality of evidence, the study combined quantitative and qualitative approaches through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The study was conducted in the Okpameri-speaking communities of Akoko-Edo Local Government Area in Edo State, Nigeria. The area is largely rural and agrarian, with out-migration to urban centres being a common social and economic response to limited local opportunities. The population comprised male and female Okpameri indigenes aged 18 to 50 years, including married and unmarried persons as well as educated and non-educated residents.

The sample size of 302 was derived from the table for a minimum sample size estimate for a population survey 95% confidence interval (Lemeshow*et al,* 1990) using the formula:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 [p(1 - p)]}{d^2}$$

where n = sample size, Z = level of significance (1.96 at 95%), p = the estimated proportion of the factor to be studied (0.27 or 27%), d = sampling error that can be tolerated (0,05 or 5%)

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 [0.2.7 (1 - 0.27)]}{0.05^2}$$

n = 302

The value of (0.27 or 27%) used in the above sample size calculation represented the projected proportion of Akoko-Edo population aged 18-50 years by 2006 (NationalPopulation Commission, 2007). Twelve (12) participants were selected for in-depth interviews. Purposive sampling was used to select the major Okpameri communities, while quota sampling ensured gender balance. Simple random sampling was then applied in selecting questionnaire respondents. Interview participants were purposively chosen based on relevant characteristics such as age, educational status, socio-economic background, length of residence, city experience, gender, and intention to migrate. Quantitative data were analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics, including Chi-square tests. Qualitative data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically and through content analysis. Ethical issues such as informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were carefully observed.

Results

From the findings of this study, it was discovered that 94.7% of the respondents had the knowledge of the socio-economic condition of both rural and urban areas. As regards the urban centres, they said they were aware of the unemployment situation, high cost of living, high crime rate and inadequate housing that abound there. It was therefore necessary to evaluate and assess the issues that related to the preparation decisions and actions that would ensure that intending rural out-migrants cope and settle down in their migration destinations so as not to add to the human social problems already in existence in the urban centres.

Table 1 Nature of assistance to receive from contact and survival and coping ability of respondents in destination

Nature of Assistance of Contact and Coping Ability	Frequency	Percentage
Have contact in out-migration destination		
Yes	211	92.5
No	17	7.5
Nature of assistance from Contact in out-migration destination		
Accommodation	180	43..4
Feeding	103	24.8
Job	95	22.9
Finance	37	8.9
Survival and coping ability in destination		
Yes	200	87.7
No	28	12.3
Survival and coping measures		
Talent	98	30.6
Certificate	93	29.1
Vocational skill	93	29.1
None	19	5.9
Finance	17	5.3

An overwhelming majority of the respondents making up 92.5% claimed they had someone who will be receiving them in their preferred out-migration destination, while only a paltry 7.56% of the respondents claimed not to have contact in their migration destination of choice. Since respondents would be out-migrating for certain reasons, they were asked to rank in order of importance the nature of assistance they would be receiving from their contact persons. Accommodation topped the list as 43.4% of the respondents chose it. Following accommodation was feeding with 24.8% of the respondents choosing it. Coming third was 'job', as chosen by 22.9% of the respondents, and 'finance' got the least ranking from 8.9% of the respondents. This shows that most intending rural out-migrations may not get job on time or may never get a legal one since 68.2% of the respondents, as inferred from the latter analysis, would not be expecting their contacts in their preferred out-migration destination to get them the job of their dream.

When asked if they thought they personally had what it takes to survive and cope in their migration destination of choice, 87.7% of the respondents said yes while 12.3% of them said no. They were further asked to rank this personal coping ability they thought they possessed among vocational skill, talent, finance, certificate and none. Coming top of the ranking was 'talent' as chosen by 30.6% of the respondents, with vocational skills and certificate coming joint second of the ranking as chosen by 29.1% and 29.1% of the respondents. 'Finance' came fourth in their ranking with votes from 5.3% of the respondents. A small set of the respondents representing 5.9% actually claimed not to have any meaningful personal coping tool,

giving the 'none' category the third position in the ranking order.

Table 2 Mode of coping in destination, support from home, and the decision when support does not come

Mode of Coping in Destination and other Coping Decisions	Frequency	Percentage
Planned mode of coping in destination		
Learn a trade	64	28.1
Set up a business	44	19.3
Find a job	89	39.0
no idea	31	13.6
Support from home before settling down in destination		
Yes	172	75.4
No	56	24.4
Decision when expected support does not come from home		
Will manage	115	50.9
Will work harder	103	45.6
Will go back home	8	3.5

Among the respondents with the intention to out-migrate, 28.1% said learning a trade or handwork (blue collar skill) was their planned mode of coping in their out-migration locations. Finding a job, was the planned mode of 39.0% of the respondents, while setting up a business was claimed to be the planned method of coping in migration destination of 19.3% of the respondents. Respondents making up 13.6% of the total respondents who intended to out-migrate submitted they had no idea of how they would cope in the migration destination. Inferring from this data it can be said that about two-third of the rural dwellers with the intention to out-migrate will get to their place of migration and would not immediately be engaged in any legal income generating venture that would enable them keep body and soul together. Therefore, it can be concluded that the level of preparedness of aspiring rural out-migration to cope in destination is very low, lacks quality, and uncertain. Thus, the bourgeoning urban problems are sustained.

Several literature have noted that fresh migrants in the cities do get support from home before they settle down, and some of them continue to receive support, for several years after migrating, front home. When respondents sampled for this study were asked if they would be receiving support from home in terms of money and food items, 172 (74.6%) responded with "yes" but 56 (24.4%) of them said "no". However, when asked what would be their decision should the support they expect to get from home when they out-migrate, fails to come or is below expectation, 115 (50.9%) affirmed they would manage and remain there to fend for themselves, 103(45.6%) said they would work harder and remain there, while only 8(3.5%) of the respondents affirmed they would return home rather than suffer there. Supplementing the above quantitative data was the qualitative data obtained from in-depth interviews based on questions relating to how they hope to cope in their destinations, and how long they thought it would take them to achieve their aims of out-

migrating. The level of preparedness of respondents who intend to out-migrate are captured below.

Three of the interviewees hoped to complement their survival and coping strategy of job search with assistance they would get from friends they would make at their out-migration destination. They said:

> *The urban centre is a place I have been to before, it's not that I have spent all my life in this rural area, I know what is going on around, I have a lot of friends out there and I can easily find my way, that is just the simple truth. So, my planned survival and coping strategy when I get to the city is the network of people I know there. Well, for the time interval it will take the settle down in the city, I don't think I will take much time. The reason is that in anything you are doing it depends on when you start building up your career, it also depends on your relationship with the people you come across and the way you interact with them. When you don't have a bad record, getting out there, you start from somewhere and before you know it you are up there. So, settling down there is not going to be much longer than I expected. If I am unable to achieve my aims from migrating within the expected time frame, It does not mean I cannot make it, so I can easily fall and rise again. That's it.* ***(25 years old male IDI respondent, Ugboshi-Afe).***

> *I have plans on how to survive and cope in my out-migration destination on my own, I have saved money for this purpose, so when I get to that place job or no job, I can establish a business on my own. This will keep me going while looking for job. I don't know how long it will take me to settle down and achieve my aims of out-migrating, it all depends on God. Even if I set a time frame, and I am nowhere near my target, I will keep hustling and working hard and making friends as well as making new contacts. I will not return home if things still do not go well* ***(35 years old male IDI respondent, Ibillo).***

> *I hope to survive and cope in the city by getting a good job. No matter the nature of the job, I will make sure I concentrate on it and be good in it. With a good job I will secure, I will be able to cope and survive in my new migration destination. Although, when I get to the city, I will not get job immediately and even a place of my own to stay, but I can put up with friends who will help me settle down the way I want.* ***(18 years old female IDI respondent, Lampese).***

One of the interviewees planned setting up a business immediately he gets to his destination and also have the mind of going back to school. This is what he said:

> *By the grace of God, the way I am now I thinks I am prepared to move to the city. At least with the little things I have seen down there and some other arrangements I have put in place, I know if I get there, by the grace of God, I am going to make ends meet. I am a barber, and with this I can start up something. Barber saloon is a good business with which those in the business in the city have acquired wealth. However, the barber saloon will be a starting survival strategy for me. As time goes on with things getting better, I will go back to school to complete my education. I believe education is the key to survival because, with it one can get a very well-paid job* ***(30 years old male IDI respondent, Ugboshi-Afe).***

Among the interviewees, only one planned to return home if she was unable to achieve her goals for out-migrating in good time, as she said:

> *The plans I have to cope and survive in the city when I get there is to look for a job. If I cannot get a job, I will come back home* ***(23 years old female IDI respondent, Ibillo. 06/06/2011)***

The qualitative data show that aspiring Okpameri out-migrants possess some level of awareness about urban life, but their preparedness was uneven and largely informal. A major theme across the interviews was reliance on social networks. Several interviewees believed that friends, contacts, and prior exposure to urban centres would help them settle down. For them, knowing people in the city was not merely a source of emotional comfort; it was viewed as a practical survival strategy for securing accommodation, information, and possible job opportunities. Another clear theme was economic self-reliance. Some interviewees expressed confidence that they could survive through savings, small business, vocational skill, or any available job. The barber, for instance, saw his skill as an entry point into urban survival, while another respondent planned to establish a business while searching for better employment. This suggests that some intending migrants are not entirely passive or unprepared; they have personal resources and survival ideas, even if these plans are not always detailed.

The data also reveal strong optimism and resilience. Many interviewees believed that hardship in the city can be overcome through hard work, patience, good relationships, and perseverance. Expressions such as "I will keep hustling," "I can easily fall and rise again," and "by the grace of God" show confidence, faith, and determination. However, this optimism sometimes borders on uncertainty. Several interviewees could not state a clear time frame for achieving their goals, and some depended heavily on hope rather than concrete arrangements. Return migration appears to be a weak option. Only one interviewee clearly stated that she would return home if she failed to secure a job. Most others preferred to remain in the city and continue struggling.

In as much as most of the interviewees came up with plans of survival and coping in their out-migration destinations, it is vividly noticeable that a lot of them were engrossed in wishful thinking as the realities of urban life do not make things easy as they saw them. Even at that, there was evidently a large number of long-time urban dwellers who were still looking for job. These go to explain the lack of quality preparation of intending rural out-migrants, and some of the reasons why a lot of rural out-migrants are living a below par life in urban centres.

Discussion of Findings

The findings reveal a striking gap between awareness of urban hardship and the actual quality of preparation among aspiring Okpameri rural out-migrants. On the surface, the respondents appeared informed: 94.7% indicated that they knew the socio-economic conditions of both rural and urban areas, including unemployment, high cost of living, crime, inadequate housing, and other pressures associated with urban life. This suggests that intending migrants are not completely ignorant of the risks in destination areas. However, the deeper issue is that awareness has not translated into strong, practical, and sustainable preparation. Many respondents knew the city would be difficult, yet their planned strategies still depended heavily on informal support,

hope, personal confidence, and uncertain employment prospects.

A major finding is the importance of social contacts in migration planning. About 92.5% of respondents said they had someone to receive them in their intended destination. This supports migration network theory, which argues that relatives, friends, and community contacts reduce the cost, fear, and uncertainty associated with migration. De Haas (2010) notes that migrant networks often reduce the economic, social, and psychological costs of migration, while Massey and colleagues similarly argue that social networks provide migration-related social capital. In this study, contacts were expected to provide mainly accommodation, feeding, job assistance, and finance. This finding therefore supports the view that migration is not only an individual decision; it is also embedded in kinship, friendship, and community-based support systems.

However, the nature of expected assistance shows that the respondents' preparedness was fragile. Accommodation ranked highest at 43.4%, followed by feeding at 24.8%, while job assistance accounted for only 22.9% and finance only 8.9%. This means that most aspiring migrants expected their contacts to help them survive temporarily, not necessarily to secure stable employment or long-term economic independence. The implication is important. A migrant may have a place to sleep and food to eat for a short period, but without employment, savings, or a clear income plan, such support may quickly become inadequate. This finding agrees with Aworemi, Abdul-Azeez, and Opoola's (2011) study of rural-urban migration in Lagos State, which found that migrants were attracted by education, employment, family reasons, and inadequate rural amenities, but also faced serious problems at destination, including unemployment, lack of accommodation, exploitation, and distance to workplaces.

The finding that 87.7% of respondents believed they had what it takes to survive in their destination also requires careful interpretation. While this figure suggests confidence, the listed coping tools reveal a weak material foundation. Talent accounted for 30.6%, certificates for 29.1%, vocational skills for 29.1%, finance for only 5.3%, and no meaningful coping tool for 5.9%. This suggests that many respondents equated preparedness with personal ability or educational possession, rather than with concrete economic readiness. Certificates, talents, and vocational skills can support survival, but they do not automatically guarantee employment or income in a competitive urban labour market. The low percentage of respondents who identified finance as a coping tool is especially revealing because urban settlement requires money for transportation, rent, feeding, communication, job search, and emergencies.

This finding strongly aligns with the aspirations-capabilities framework. De Haas (2021) argues that migration is shaped not only by people's desire to move but also by their actual capability to convert that desire into meaningful mobility within perceived opportunity structures. Applied to the present study, many aspiring Okpameri out-migrants have strong migration aspirations, but their capabilities are uneven. They possess hope, social contacts, and some skills, but many lack financial capital, reliable job placement, and realistic settlement plans. Their migration intention is therefore not fully matched by practical preparedness.

The planned modes of coping further strengthen this interpretation. About 39.0% intended to find a job, 28.1% planned to learn a

trade, 19.3% intended to set up a business, while 13.6% had no idea how they would cope. The dominance of job-seeking as a coping strategy is understandable, but it is also risky because urban employment is uncertain. Harris and Todaro's (1970) migration model is useful here: rural-urban migration may continue even when urban unemployment is high because migrants make decisions based on expected urban income rather than guaranteed employment. This helps explain why respondents still wished to migrate despite their awareness of unemployment and hardship in the city.

The qualitative interviews confirm this pattern of hopeful but uncertain preparedness. Some interviewees planned to depend on friends and networks; others expected to "hustle," find any available job, start a small business, or rely on skills such as barbering. These responses show resilience and agency, but they also reveal a strong element of optimism that may not be supported by adequate planning. For example, one respondent believed that having friends in the city would make settlement easy, while another hoped to keep working hard even if his plans failed. Only one interviewee clearly stated that she would return home if she failed to secure a job. This agrees with the quantitative result showing that only 3.5% would return home if expected support from home failed to come. Most respondents preferred to "manage" or "work harder," suggesting that return migration was viewed as failure or defeat.

The expectation of support from home also shows the continuing link between migrants and rural households. About 75.4% expected money or food support from home, yet 50.9% said they would manage if such support did not come, while 45.6% said they would work harder. This finding supports the broader Nigerian evidence that internal migration is influenced by economic incentives, family circumstances, and destination opportunities. A 2023 United Nations Nigeria analysis of internal migration trends shows that internal migration in Nigeria is substantial, often occurs from rural areas to towns and larger cities, and is influenced by economic incentives, marriage, and conflict.

In a nutshell, the findings show that aspiring Okpameri out-migrants are aware of urban hardship but only partially prepared for it. Their coping strategies rely heavily on social networks, personal confidence, uncertain job search, and expected household support. While these resources may ease initial settlement, they do not guarantee sustainable survival in destination areas. The study therefore supports the conclusion that poor-quality preparation among intending rural out-migrants can contribute to urban poverty, informal survival activities, and prolonged hardship after migration.

Conclusion

The study concludes that aspiring Okpameri rural out-migrants are not entirely unaware of the difficulties associated with urban life. Most respondents understood that urban centres are marked by unemployment, high living costs, housing problems, crime, and other social pressures. However, this awareness did not translate into strong and practical preparation. The evidence shows a clear gap between knowing the risks of migration and having the resources needed to manage those risks effectively. A large proportion of the respondents had contacts in their intended destinations, but the support expected from these contacts was mainly temporary. Accommodation and feeding were the most common forms of assistance, while job placement and financial support were less available. This suggests that many intending migrants may reach their destinations with a place to stay for a while, but without a stable

means of livelihood. Their survival may therefore depend on patience, informal networks, trial-and-error job search, and personal resilience.The study also found that many respondents believed they possessed the ability to cope in the city through talent, certificates, vocational skills, or business ideas. Yet, the low level of financial preparation weakens this confidence. The qualitative data further showed that some respondents relied strongly on hope, faith, friendship, and the belief that hard work would eventually bring success. Only a few considered returning home if their plans failed. The study therefore recommends stronger rural livelihood opportunities, pre-migration counselling, vocational training, financial planning, and community-based guidance for intending migrants.

References

Anele, K.A (2003). Enthonography of Sub-Saharan Africa, Second and Enlarged Edition. Owerri: Springfield publishers. Enlarged and revised by Luckozim Nigeria Limited, Port-Harcourt

Aworemi, J. R., Abdul-Azeez, I. A., &Opoola, N. A. (2011). An appraisal of the factors influencing rural-urban migration in some selected local government areas of Lagos State Nigeria. *Journal of Sustainable Development,* *4*(3), 136–141. https://doi.org/10.5539/jsd.v4n3p136

Baker, J. and Aina, T. (1995). The migration experience in Africa, NordiskaAfrikainstitutet, Uppsala, Sweden

Bloch R., Fox S., Monroy J., & Ojo A. (2015). Urbanisation and urban expansion in Nigeria. Urbanisation Research Nigeria (URN) Research Report. London: ICF International.

De Haas, H. (2010). The internal dynamics of migration processes: A theoretical inquiry. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 36*(10), 1587–1617. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2010.489361

De Haas, H. (2021). A theory of migration: The aspirations-capabilities framework. *Comparative Migration Studies, 9*, Article 8. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-020-00210-4

Frayne, B. (2004). Migration and urban survival strategies in Windhoek, Namibia. *Geoforum*, *35*(4), 489–505. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2004.01.003

Harris, J. R., & Todaro, M. P. (1970). Migration, unemployment and development: A two-sector analysis. *American Economic Review, 60*(1), 126–142.

Howell, J. (2006). Women's city ward migration domestic service and scholarship in Southern Mexico. Migration Letters 3(2): 125-135

Koko, A. F., & Bello, M. (2023). Exploring the Contemporary Challenges of Urbanization and the Role of Sustainable Urban Development: A Study of Lagos City, Nigeria. Journal of Contemporary Urban Affairs, 7(1), 175-188. https://doi.org/10.25034/ijcua.2023.v7n1-12

Kruger, F. (1998). Taking advantage of rural assets as a coping strategy', Environment and Urbanization 10(1): 119-134

Massey, D. S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A., & Taylor, J. E. (1993). Theories of international migration: A review and appraisal. *Population and Development Review, 19*(3), 431–466.

Narayan, A. C., & Chakraborty, R. (2023). Life-course transition as a determinant of migration: A scoping review. Research Square. https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-2879711/v1

Nwokocha, E .E.(2010). Engaging the burden of rural - urban migration in a non-regulatory system: the case of Nigeria. Retrieved Nov. 12, 2010, from www.irmgard-coninx-stiftung.de/

Stites, E.; Mazurana, D. and Akabwai, D. (2007). Out-migration, return and resettlement in Karamoja, Uganda - the case of Kobulin, Bokora county. Retrieved Dec. 11, 2010 from https//www.scribd.com/doc/4683229/

United Nations Nigeria. (2023). *Internal migration trends in Nigeria*. United Nations.

Weeks, J. 1994. Economic aspect of rural-urban migration, in Tarver, J. (ed), Urbanization in Africa: A handbook. Westport: Greenwood Press.

Weisner, T.J.; Bradley, C. and Kilbride, P. (eds) 1997. African families and the crisis of social change. Westport: Bergin & Garvey

Zimmer, Andrew & Guido, Zack & Davies, Julia & Joshi, Nupur&Chilenga, Allan & Evans, Tom. (2022). Food systems and rural-urban linkages in African secondary cities. *Urban Transformations.* 4. 10.1186/s42854-022-00042-8.