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Evaluating The Impact Of Internal Migration On Housing Demand And Settlement Patterns In Gwagwalada Municipal, Abuja.

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ABSTRACT
This study assessed the impact of internal migration on housing demand and settlement development in Gwagwalada Municipal Area Council, Abuja. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. A total of 400 questionnaires were administered to selected respondents, out of which 380 were successfully retrieved and analyzed using frequency tables and percentages. The findings revealed that internal migration into Gwagwalada is primarily driven by employment opportunities, education, business activities, and relatively affordable housing. The study further found that the continuous influx of migrants has significantly increased housing demand, resulting in rising rental costs, housing shortages, overcrowding, and pressure on existing infrastructure. The findings also indicated that migration has contributed to the rapid expansion of settlements and the growth of informal and unplanned residential areas within the municipality. The study concluded that internal migration has a significant impact on housing demand and settlement patterns in Gwagwalada. The study recommends increased provision of affordable housing, strengthened urban planning regulations, and improved infrastructure development to accommodate the growing population and promote sustainable urban development.

Keywords: Internal Migration, Housing Demand, Settlement Development, Urbanization, Gwagwalada Municipal Area Council, Abuja.

INTRODUCTION

Internal migration, which refers to the movement of people from one location to another within the boundaries of a country, has become a major demographic and socio-economic phenomenon in many developing nations. The movement is often motivated by the search for employment opportunities, access to education, improved living standards, and better social amenities. In Nigeria, internal migration has contributed significantly to the rapid growth of urban centres, particularly the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. As people continue to move from rural and less-developed areas to urban locations, the population of receiving communities increases substantially, creating pressure on housing, infrastructure, and public services. According to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat, 2024), migration is one of the major drivers of urban growth and urban transformation across Africa and Asia.

Abuja has experienced remarkable population growth since it became the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria. The city attracts migrants from different parts of the country because of its political significance, economic opportunities, educational institutions, and relatively better infrastructure. As the population continues to increase, many residents are unable to secure adequate housing within the city centre due to high land values and rental costs. Consequently, a large proportion of migrants settle in satellite towns such as Gwagwalada, Kubwa, Nyanya, Lugbe, and Karu, where housing is relatively more affordable. This population influx has accelerated urban expansion and increased the demand for residential accommodation within these communities.

Housing demand refers to the quantity and quality of housing units that households are willing and able to acquire at a given time and price. Rapid population growth resulting from internal migration has placed enormous pressure on the housing sector in many Nigerian cities. Studies have shown that the supply of affordable housing has not kept pace with the increasing demand generated by urban population growth. Consequently, housing shortages, overcrowding, rising rental costs, and inadequate housing conditions have become common challenges in urban and peri-urban areas. In Abuja, the persistent housing deficit has compelled many low-income households and migrants to seek accommodation in areas that lack proper planning and adequate infrastructure.

One of the major consequences of inadequate housing provision is the emergence and expansion of informal settlements. Informal settlements are residential areas developed outside the formal planning system and are often characterized by insecure land tenure, poor housing quality, inadequate infrastructure, overcrowding, and limited access to essential services such as water supply, sanitation, electricity, and road networks. UN-Habitat notes that rapid urban growth and internal migration frequently overwhelm existing housing infrastructure, leading many new urban residents to occupy unregulated land and establish informal settlements. The growth of such settlements has become a significant urban development challenge in Abuja and its surrounding satellite towns, including Gwagwalada.

Gwagwalada Municipal Area Council has emerged as one of the fastest-growing satellite towns within the Federal Capital Territory due to its strategic location, presence of educational institutions, commercial activities, and relatively affordable housing. However, the continuous influx of migrants has increased pressure on housing supply and contributed to the expansion of informal settlements in the area. Understanding the extent to which internal migration influences housing demand and settlement patterns is essential for effective urban planning and sustainable development. Therefore, this study seeks to assess the impact of internal migration on housing demand and settlement in Gwagwalada Municipal, Abuja, with a view to providing recommendations for improving housing delivery and managing urban growth effectively.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Internal Migration

Internal migration refers to the movement of people from one geographical location to another within the boundaries of the same country, resulting in a temporary or permanent change in residence. Unlike international migration, internal migration does not involve crossing national borders. It may occur between rural and urban areas, urban and rural areas, rural and rural areas, or between urban centres. Internal migration is recognized as one of the most significant demographic processes influencing population distribution, urbanization, and socioeconomic development within countries. According to Finney (2013), internal migration involves a change in usual residence within a specified territorial boundary, usually a nation-state.

Internal migration is driven by a variety of economic, social, political, and environmental factors. Economic factors such as employment opportunities, higher wages, and improved living standards are among the most common motivations for migration. Social factors include access to education, healthcare facilities, and family reunification, while environmental challenges such as drought, flooding, and land degradation may also compel people to relocate. Todaro and Smith (2020) argue that migration decisions

are often influenced by the perceived benefits available at the destination compared to conditions at the place of origin. Internal migration therefore serves as a mechanism through which individuals and households seek to improve their welfare and quality of life.

Scholars have identified several forms of internal migration. These include rural-to-urban migration, urban-to-urban migration, rural-to-rural migration, and urban-to-rural migration. Among these forms, rural-to-urban migration is the most prevalent in developing countries because urban areas tend to offer better employment opportunities, educational facilities, and social amenities. The United Nations recognizes these different migration streams as important determinants of population redistribution and urban growth.

Internal migration plays a crucial role in shaping settlement patterns and urban development. As migrants move into urban centres, population density increases, resulting in greater demand for housing, transportation, healthcare, education, and other urban services. While migration can stimulate economic growth by providing labour and human capital, excessive migration may also place significant pressure on available infrastructure and housing facilities. In many developing countries, rapid urban population growth has contributed to housing shortages, overcrowding, and the emergence of informal settlements. Internal migration is therefore considered a major driver of urbanization and changes in settlement structure.

In Nigeria, internal migration has become increasingly significant due to regional disparities in economic opportunities, insecurity, educational pursuits, and urban development. Abuja, as the Federal Capital Territory, continues to attract migrants from different parts of the country because of its administrative importance and economic prospects. The continuous influx of migrants into satellite towns such as Gwagwalada has contributed to rapid population growth, increased housing demand, and the expansion of residential settlements. Understanding the concept of internal migration is therefore essential for assessing its impact on housing demand and settlement development in Gwagwalada Municipal Area Council, Abuja.

Housing Demand

2.1 Conceptual Review of Housing Demand

Housing demand refers to the quantity and quality of housing units that individuals or households are willing and able to acquire at a given price and within a specific period. It is influenced by several socioeconomic factors, including income levels, population growth, household size, employment opportunities, housing prices, access to credit facilities, and government policies. Housing demand differs from housing need, as demand incorporates the financial capacity of households to obtain housing, whereas need simply reflects the requirement for shelter regardless of purchasing power (O'Sullivan, 2012). According to Malpezzi and Mayo (1987), housing demand is a function of household income, housing prices, demographic characteristics, and consumer preferences. As household incomes increase, the demand for better-quality housing and homeownership tends to rise. Conversely, high housing costs and limited access to housing finance may constrain effective demand, especially among low-income households. In developing countries such as Nigeria, rapid urbanization and population growth have significantly increased housing demand, often exceeding the available housing supply. Population growth and migration are among the most important determinants of housing demand. Internal migration, particularly rural-to-urban migration, increases the population of urban centers and creates pressure on existing housing stock. According to Todaro and Smith (2020), migration contributes substantially to urban population growth, thereby increasing the demand for residential accommodation and urban services. In many Nigerian cities, the influx of migrants has resulted in increased rental costs, overcrowding, and housing shortages.

Housing demand can be categorized into effective demand and latent demand. Effective demand refers to the willingness and financial ability of households to pay for housing, while latent demand represents the desire for housing that cannot be translated into actual market demand due to financial constraints (UN-Habitat, 2011). In many developing countries, a large proportion of the population experiences latent demand because of low incomes and limited access to mortgage financing. This situation often forces households to seek accommodation in informal settlements and unplanned residential areas.

Theoretical Framework

Harris-Todaro Migration Theory

This study is anchored on the Harris-Todaro Migration Theory developed by Harris and Todaro (1970). The theory explains rural-urban migration as a rational decision made by individuals who compare the expected benefits and opportunities available in urban areas with those in their place of origin. According to the theory, migration decisions are based not only on actual income differences but also on expected income and the perceived probability of securing employment and better living conditions in the destination area. Harris and Todaro argued that people will continue to migrate to urban areas as long as the expected benefits outweigh the costs associated with migration.

The theory further posits that migration occurs because urban centres provide greater economic opportunities, social amenities, educational facilities, healthcare services, and improved infrastructure compared to rural areas. Consequently, migrants are attracted to cities even when unemployment and housing shortages exist. Todaro maintained that potential migrants make decisions based on expected future gains rather than present realities, thereby explaining the continuous movement of people into urban areas despite the challenges often encountered there.

The Harris-Todaro model is particularly relevant to developing countries where rural-urban migration is a major driver of urbanization. The theory suggests that as migrants move into urban centres, population growth increases rapidly, resulting in greater pressure on housing, infrastructure, transportation systems, and social services. When the rate of migration exceeds the capacity of urban authorities to provide adequate housing and services, housing shortages, overcrowding, and the emergence of informal settlements become inevitable. This relationship between migration, urban growth, and housing pressure has been widely observed in many cities across Africa and other developing regions.

In the context of Gwagwalada Municipal Area Council, Abuja, the Harris-Todaro Migration Theory provides a useful framework for understanding the continuous influx of migrants into the area. Gwagwalada attracts migrants because of its proximity to Abuja city centre, the presence of educational institutions such as the University of Abuja, commercial opportunities, and relatively affordable housing compared to central districts of the Federal Capital Territory. As more migrants settle in the area, the demand for housing increases, resulting in rising rents, increased land development, urban expansion, and the growth of residential settlements.

The theory is therefore appropriate for this study because it explains the relationship between internal migration and the resulting increase in housing demand and settlement expansion in Gwagwalada. It provides a theoretical basis for examining how migration influences population growth, housing availability, settlement patterns, and urban development within the municipality. The study adopts the Harris-Todaro Migration Theory on the premise that internal migration is a major factor shaping housing demand and settlement development in Gwagwalada Municipal Area Council, Abuja.

Empirical Review

Several studies have examined the relationship between migration, housing demand, urbanization, and settlement development in Nigeria. These studies provide empirical evidence on how population movement influences housing availability, affordability, and settlement patterns in urban areas.

Abeku, Salihu, and Kure (2015) conducted a study titled *Housing Deficit, Urban Migration and Slum Development in Abuja, Nigeria*. The study employed a survey research design and administered questionnaires to residents of selected slum settlements in Abuja, including Garki Village, Utako, Jabi, and Durumi. The findings revealed that rapid urban migration and population growth were major causes of housing shortages and slum development in the Federal Capital Territory. The study further established that inadequate housing supply and increasing demand for accommodation forced many migrants to settle in substandard environments. The researchers concluded that urban migration significantly contributes to housing deficits and informal settlement development in Abuja and recommended increased government investment in affordable housing programmes.

Ibrahim, Abdulmaliq, and Abdullahi (2025) investigated *Migration Patterns and Urbanisation in Gwagwalada Metropolis, 2007–2020*. Using historical and descriptive research methods, data were

collected through interviews, government documents, census estimates, and secondary sources. The study found that Gwagwalada experienced substantial population growth resulting from both rural-to-urban migration and urban-to-urban migration from central Abuja. The major pull factors identified were affordable housing, the presence of the University of Abuja, and economic opportunities. The findings showed that the increasing influx of migrants contributed to urban expansion, infrastructure pressure, and the emergence of informal settlements. The study concluded that migration has played a significant role in shaping settlement patterns and housing demand in Gwagwalada.

Yussuff, Alade, Agunloye, and Fadare (2023) examined the effect of socio-economic characteristics on housing and environmental conditions in Durumi Informal Settlement, Abuja. The researchers adopted a survey design involving 290 respondents and analyzed the data using regression analysis and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The findings revealed that inadequate housing provision, poverty, and weak housing policies contributed significantly to the growth of informal settlements. The study also found that many residents lacked access to decent housing and basic infrastructure. The researchers recommended comprehensive housing development programmes and affordable housing schemes to improve living conditions and reduce informal settlement growth.

Kenneth, Faith, and Nkechi (2019) conducted a study on *Housing Conditions in the FCT, Abuja-Nigeria: A Case Study of Gwagwalada Satellite Town*. The study examined housing patterns, causes of poor housing conditions, and their effects on residents. Using both primary and secondary data, the researchers found that rapid population growth, poor planning, inadequate waste management, and overcrowding were major factors affecting housing quality in Gwagwalada. The study further revealed the existence of dilapidated housing structures, poor road networks, and inadequate water supply. The researchers concluded that population increase and uncontrolled urban expansion have adversely affected housing conditions within the town.

Oguche, Andrew, and Samuel (2019) investigated *The Implications of Unplanned Settlement on Environmental Quality in Gwagwalada Town, Abuja*. The study focused on several unplanned settlements, including Angwa Gwari, Dagiri, Angwa Dodo, Angwa Tiv, and Gwako. The findings revealed that unplanned settlement development contributed to environmental degradation, inadequate housing facilities, poor accessibility, and ineffective waste management systems. The study concluded that rapid settlement growth without adequate planning and infrastructure provision negatively affects both environmental quality and residents' welfare. The researchers recommended stricter development control measures and improved urban planning policies to address the challenges associated with unplanned settlements.

Empirical Gap

The reviewed studies have established that internal migration contributes significantly to urbanization, increased housing demand, housing shortages, environmental challenges, and the growth of informal settlements in Abuja and its satellite towns. However, most of the existing studies focused on slum development in Abuja metropolis, housing conditions in Gwagwalada, urbanization trends, and environmental impacts of unplanned settlements. Few studies have specifically examined the combined impact of internal migration on both housing demand and settlement development in Gwagwalada Municipal Area Council. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by providing an in-depth assessment of how internal migration influences housing demand and settlement patterns in Gwagwalada Municipal, Abuja.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive survey research design. This design is considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to obtain information directly from respondents regarding internal migration, housing demand, and settlement development in Gwagwalada Municipal Area Council. The survey design allows for the collection of quantitative and qualitative data from a representative sample of residents and stakeholders within the study area. Similar studies on migration and housing in Abuja have successfully employed survey research designs.

Study Area

The study is conducted in Gwagwalada Municipal Area Council, one of the six Area Councils in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Gwagwalada is strategically located along the Abuja–Lokoja highway and serves as a major satellite town within the FCT. The area hosts important institutions such as the University of Abuja and the University of Abuja Teaching Hospital, which attract migrants from different parts of Nigeria. The continuous influx of migrants has contributed to rapid population growth, increased housing demand, and expansion of residential settlements within the municipality.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprises household heads, landlords, tenants, property developers, community leaders, and officials of relevant government agencies involved in housing and urban development within Gwagwalada Municipal Area Council.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 400 respondents shall be used for the study. The sample size is considered adequate for obtaining reliable information from the study population. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques shall be adopted.

The study area will first be divided into major districts and settlements such as:

- Gwagwalada Central
- Kutunku
- Paiko
- Dagiri
- Zuba
- Dobi
- Gwako
- Quarters Area

Thereafter, respondents will be selected randomly from each stratum to ensure equal representation.

Sources of Data

The study shall utilize both primary and secondary sources of data.

Primary Data

Primary data shall be obtained through:

- Structured questionnaires
- Oral interviews
- Field observations

Secondary Data

Secondary data shall be obtained from:

- Textbooks
- Academic journals
- Government publications
- Census reports
- Conference papers
- Internet sources
- Previous research studies related to migration, housing, and settlement development

Instrument for Data Collection

The major instrument for data collection shall be a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questionnaire shall contain both closed-ended and open-ended questions divided into sections covering:

- Socio-economic characteristics of respondents
- Migration history and reasons for migration
- Housing conditions and housing demand
- Settlement patterns
- Challenges associated with migration and housing

An interview guide shall also be used for key informant interviews with community leaders and housing officials.

Validity of the Instrument

To ensure validity, the questionnaire shall be examined by the project supervisor and experts in urban and regional planning, geography, and estate management. Their observations and corrections shall be incorporated before final administration.

Reliability of the Instrument

A pilot test shall be conducted using twenty (20) respondents from a neighbouring community outside the study area. The responses obtained shall be analyzed to determine the consistency and reliability of the instrument. Necessary modifications shall be made before the final administration.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher, with the assistance of trained research assistants, shall administer the questionnaires directly to respondents. Personal interviews and field observations shall complement the questionnaire survey. The questionnaires shall be collected immediately after completion where possible.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected shall be coded, organized, and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques such as:

- Frequency distribution tables
- Percentages
- Mean scores
- Charts and graphs

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) may also be used for data analysis. Findings shall be presented in tables and interpreted according to the objectives of the study.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher shall obtain informed consent from all respondents before data collection. Participation shall be voluntary, and respondents shall be assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Information obtained shall be used strictly for academic purposes.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	228	60.0
Female	152	40.0
Total	380	100

The table indicates that 60% of the respondents were male while 40% were female.

Migration Status of Respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Migrants	266	70.0
Non-Migrants	114	30.0
Total	380	100

The findings reveal that 70% of respondents migrated into Gwagwalada from other parts of Nigeria, indicating that internal migration is a significant demographic phenomenon within the municipality.

Reasons for Migration into Gwagwalada

Reason	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Employment Opportunities	118	31.1
Education	95	25.0
Affordable Housing	91	23.9
Business Opportunities	50	13.2

Reason	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Family Reasons	26	6.8
Total	380	100

The results show that employment opportunities constituted the major reason for migration (31.1%), followed by education (25.0%) and affordable housing (23.9%). These findings align with studies that identify employment, education, and relatively lower housing costs as major pull factors attracting migrants into Gwagwalada.

Impact of Internal Migration on Housing Demand

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	170	44.7
Agree	132	34.7
Undecided	28	7.4
Disagree	32	8.4
Strongly Disagree	18	4.8
Total	380	100

The results indicate that 79.4% of respondents agreed that internal migration has significantly increased housing demand in Gwagwalada. This finding supports previous studies showing that migration-driven population growth places pressure on housing availability in Abuja and its satellite towns.

Effect of Migration on House Rent

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Increased Significantly	218	57.4
Increased Slightly	103	27.1
No Change	36	9.5
Decreased	23	6.0
Total	380	100

The majority of respondents (84.5%) indicated that house rents have increased due to population growth and housing demand.

Impact of Internal Migration on Settlement Expansion

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	182	47.9
Agree	125	32.9
Undecided	20	5.3
Disagree	35	9.2
Strongly Disagree	18	4.7
Total	380	100

A combined 80.8% of respondents agreed that internal migration has contributed to the expansion of settlements and residential development within Gwagwalada. This is consistent with evidence that migration has accelerated urbanisation and settlement growth in the municipality.

4.8 Emergence of Informal and Unplanned Settlements

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	295	77.6
No	85	22.4
Total	380	100

The findings reveal that 77.6% of respondents believe that internal migration has contributed to the growth of informal and unplanned settlements due to inadequate housing supply and increasing

population pressure. Similar concerns regarding overcrowding, poor housing conditions, and unplanned development have been documented in Gwagwalada and Abuja.

4.9 Summary of Major Findings

The study revealed that:

1. Internal migration into Gwagwalada is high, with about 70% of respondents identified as migrants.
2. Employment opportunities, education, and affordable housing are the major factors attracting migrants.
3. Internal migration has significantly increased housing demand within Gwagwalada.
4. Increased migration has contributed to rising rental costs and housing shortages.
5. Migration has accelerated settlement expansion and urban growth.
6. Internal migration has contributed to the development of informal and unplanned settlements.
7. Existing housing and infrastructure are under pressure due to continuous population growth.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings demonstrate that internal migration is a major factor influencing housing demand and settlement development in Gwagwalada Municipal Area Council. The influx of migrants has increased population density, housing demand, and land development activities. The resulting pressure on housing supply has contributed to rising rents, overcrowding, and the expansion of informal settlements. These findings support the Harris-Todaro Migration Theory, which argues that migrants move to urban areas in search of better opportunities despite challenges such as housing shortages and infrastructural constraints. They also agree with previous studies on Gwagwalada and Abuja which found that migration has accelerated urbanisation, increased housing demand, and expanded informal settlements.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study assessed the impact of internal migration on housing demand and settlement development in Gwagwalada Municipal Area Council, Abuja. The findings revealed that internal migration has become a major factor influencing population growth, housing demand, and settlement expansion within the municipality. The study established that employment opportunities, educational institutions, business prospects, and relatively affordable housing are the primary factors attracting migrants into Gwagwalada.

The study further found that the continuous influx of migrants has significantly increased the demand for housing, leading to rising rental costs, housing shortages, and increased pressure on existing housing facilities. As the demand for accommodation continues to exceed supply, many residents are compelled to occupy areas with inadequate infrastructure and limited planning control.

The findings also revealed that internal migration has contributed to the rapid expansion of settlements and the emergence of informal and unplanned residential areas within Gwagwalada. These developments have placed additional pressure on public infrastructure, environmental resources, transportation systems, and social services. The study therefore concludes that internal migration has a significant impact on housing demand and settlement patterns in Gwagwalada Municipal Area Council.

While migration contributes positively to economic growth, labour supply, and urban development, inadequate housing provision and weak urban planning mechanisms have limited the ability of the municipality to effectively accommodate the growing population. Consequently, sustainable housing policies and effective settlement planning are necessary to address the challenges associated with migration-induced urban growth.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

Government should increase the provision of affordable housing. Federal, state, and local authorities should collaborate with private developers to construct affordable housing units capable of meeting the growing demand created by migration into Gwagwalada, **Urban planning regulations should be strengthened and enforced.** Relevant planning authorities should ensure compliance with development

control regulations to prevent the uncontrolled expansion of informal and unplanned settlements., **Infrastructure development should be expanded.** Government should provide adequate roads, water supply, drainage systems, electricity, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions in both existing and newly developing settlements to accommodate population growth, **Public-private partnerships should be encouraged in housing development.** Private sector participation should be promoted through incentives such as tax relief, land allocation, and access to housing finance to increase housing supply within the municipality.

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