

# Urbanization Processes and Child Breadwinner in Lagos Metropolis

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## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explain how increasing urbanization is changing family lifestyles in the city. This paper was first presented as a seminar paper in urban sociology (sociology of development postgraduate class of 2015/2016 session) in the department of sociology, University of Ibadan. Increasing population growth, high unemployment rate, low income, poor working condition, a high cost of living have all put heavy pressures on the family. This has consequently made most families engage their children in child employment and labour in order to survive the economic pressures. The demands of life in the city of Lagos make children active participants in the economic fortunes of families majorly among the poor. The cases of child labour in Lagos are high in spite of efforts by the government to reduce drastically child employment and labour. This paper, therefore, seeks to examine the changing lifestyles and family structures of the cities using the city of Lagos as a microcosm. The city of Lagos has a large population size of more than 20 million people. The younger generation dominates the economic control of the state both in the formal and informal sectors. Children cope better with urbanization pressures and stress of Lagos megacity than the parents. This study is anchored on Oscar Lewis's theory of culture of poverty. The thesis of the theory explains children breadwinners from the point of view of poverty and a response to the social and economic hardships. This culture is transmitted from one generation to another and they have strongly embraced the culture to be a coping mechanism and also the major solution to their problems. Consequently, children becoming breadwinners for their families have exposed a lot of them to hazardous works and make them more vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse. The definition of what child labour is most times is equivalent to the cultural definition of child work which is part of the socialization process of a child. Based on this conflicting ideology, this paper recommends that the concept of child labour should be defined from society to society.

**Keywords:** child breadwinner, child work, urbanization processes, Lagos, child employment and labour

## INTRODUCTION

Globally, a majority of people live in urban areas than in rural areas, with 53 percent of the world's population living in urban areas in 2015 and in Africa, 40 percent live in urban centers. The population of Nigerians living in urban centers has experienced increased rapidly over the last 50 years. This increase has been projected to relatively grow at a fast pace in the coming decades. Nigeria is the seventh most populated country in the world with a population of 182 million and it is projected to become the fourth largest population in the world by 2025 with a population of 397 million (World Population data sheet 2015, Bloch et al 2015).

The industrial revolution of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries led to massive migration of people from rural areas to the cities. The switch from the agricultural based economy to a robust industrial system resulted into a technological and economic expansion, more employment opportunities in the cities and change in the role of women among others. This increasing urbanization produced a lot of problems in the cities, some of which are housing issues, high rate of crimes, road congestion and so on. These changes have a lot of striking impact on the family structure. The agrarian-based economy which encouraged large family size faded away, smaller families coupled with low or moderate fertility rate became encouraged (Giddens, 2009; Haralambos, M. & Holborn, M., 2007).

With the impact of industrialization and urbanization, the roles and structures of the family have experienced a lot of profound changes globally. Changes in the definition of marriage, increase in divorce rate, increase in the number of households headed by female, increase in single parenthood coupled with economic downturns have altered men's role and responsibility of being the sole provider for their families thereby relying on their children and women majorly (Carlson and Corcoran, 2001). Traditionally, communal life is characterized by stronger and intimate relationships amongst family members, kinsmen, and friends. Today's modern societies are characterized by individualism with striking changes in the roles of women. Ferdinand Tonnies (1855-1936) used the term *Gemeinschaft* which means community plight and *Gesellschaft* which means commercial individualism. The terms were adopted from his native German languages to describe traditional or rural societies that are characterized by life on a small scale which emphasized close and intimate relationships and life in an urban setting or a growing urban setting which is characterized by individualism and loss of moral closeness. Relationships in this type of society are purposely with a weak social bond (Giddens, 2009, Stolley, 2005, Flanagan, 2010).

Lagos is the largest city in Nigeria and the most urbanized city. Lagos is the seat of major commercial

activities in the country contributing largely to the national GDP. It has the highest urban population in Nigeria with a population growth rate of 6 percent per annum. The city attained the status of a megacity in 2010 and is currently one of the fastest growing megacities in the world. It has a robust economy being the 7th largest in Africa. Over the years the city has faced enormous challenges of urban renewal and development challenges. The challenges have altered the traditional family values and resulted in continuous alterations in the family structures and settings. There is high divorce rate, single parent household, a large number of female-headed household and children becoming breadwinners in the family (Filani, 2012; Opoko and Oluwatayo 2014; ERDF ND).

As there are quite a large number of works of literature on men and women breadwinners in the family structure (Glynn, 2014; Drago et al 2004; Warner and Baran-Rees, 2012; Gayawan and Adebayo 2015), it is therefore expedient to examine urbanization processes and child breadwinner in Lagos (the most urbanized city in Nigeria). It is in the light of this that this paper examines the urbanization processes in Lagos with its impact on the family structure vis-à-vis the changing role of men as the sole bread winner.

### **URBANIZATION PROCESSES AND THE CHANGING FAMILY STRUCTURES IN LAGOS AND NIGERIA AS A WHOLE**

Since the oil boom in Nigeria in the late 1970's, the country has witnessed a rapid increase in rural-urban migration. Urban growth in Nigeria has also been accompanied by the emergence of new urban settlements and enlargement of the existing urban areas. The underlying factors behind increasing urban population in Nigeria are economic, infrastructural and technological development in the cities, high employment rates in the cities than in the rural areas, rural-urban migration, the concentration of industries in the cities, unequal distribution of wealth, declining fertility rate among others (Opoko and Oluwatayo, 2014). In the North, Kano is the largest city; in the South-West, Lagos is the largest city and also a megacity; in the South-South, Port Harcourt is the largest city and Aba is the largest in the South East.

The term 'urbanization' refers to as an increase in the number of people who are residing in urban areas or settlements while 'urban growth' refers to as an increase in the size of a country's urban population. Urbanization can also be defined as the socio-economic changes that come with population concentration in urban areas and cities growth (Borgatta and Montgomery, 2000). The family structure of an urban area is peculiar in terms of composition, social ties and values compare to rural areas. In meeting the demands of the city life among major urban dwellers in Lagos, family roles and responsibilities of economic sustainability are mostly shared, women and children engage in various labor works in order to contribute to the family well-being. With the promotion of gender equality, the role of men as the sole breadwinner of the families is now being shared with the mother as well as the children. The promotion of gender equality majorly in the cities has had some remarkable impacts. Over the years, there has been an increase in the number of female attendance at school. Data on NDHS report 2013 shows that 70 percent of males who are age 6 have ever attended school, as compared to about 58 percent of female. The median years of school attendance for men residing in urban centers is 7.0 while that of the female is 5.6. In every society, education is a major instrument used in human development. Women changing role in the family in Nigeria has been due to an increasing enrolment of girl child education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The percentage of female enrolment in secondary schools in Nigeria increased from about 45 percent in 2010 to 47.3 percent in 2013. Similarly, the percentage of female enrolment in tertiary institutions in Nigeria increased from about 44.9 percent in 2010 to 46.2 percent in 2013 (NDHS, 2013). The significance of these trends reflects that the role of women in the family structure from the traditional arrangement is fast changing. The participation rate of women and men in the labor force are 64.5 percent and 70.3 percent respectively. In Lagos, women participation rate in the labor force is about 70 percent both in the formal and informal settings. Majorly in the informal settings, women dominate and control, this is obvious in places like Isale Eko market, Oshodi market, Shomolu market and other major markets in the state. Also, Rural-urban migration plays important role in the urban growth processes in Lagos megacity and research also shows that there is no significant difference in migration patterns between men and women into the cities (Bloch et al, 2015, NBS 2013).

In Lagos megacity, the trend of urbanization processes has a great impact on the changing family structure, priorities and roles. Women's contribution to the socio-economic development of the state and also to the family finances cannot be quantified. They play significant roles in both the formal and informal sectors, in the formal sectors, they play a prominent role in the service industries and presently the service sector is contributing immensely to the economic development of the country thus making them breadwinners in some or most families in Lagos state. Female breadwinner in this context simply means the woman is the most income earner in the family. Unlike the era when men usually have many wives for socio-economic and cultural reasons, today's modern cities have encouraged a nuclear family system in order to meet the demands of industrialization and modernization. Men majorly have responded to the changing roles of the family structures most especially rural men are fighting hard to resist this wind of change (World Development Report, 2012).

In Lagos for instance, the demands of life in the city make an average young and adult woman either directly employed or self-employed in different businesses like trading and servicing to compliment the family well-being. In most houses majorly in the suburbs and slums area in Lagos, there are shops where majorly women engage in different economic activities like food selling, trading and others. As it is generally believed that men control the world but women control the men who control the world, the Lagos experience is not an exception. In the Lagos of today, it is observed that there are more women in the banking sector; more women are also gaining ground in the usually male-dominated engineering sector. Few women have taken the courage to be commercial bus drivers that are also predominantly dominated by the male folks. Women are seen everywhere engaging in various commercial activities thus, making many of them household heads and breadwinners of their families. There are many instances in Lagos where women earn higher than their men irrespective of the educational attainment, some women in some cases are highly educated than their men. Income in an urban home is diversified, unlike the rural households that have their major source of income from agricultural related activities. Data from the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics on household traits and income sources reveals that on the average, households headed by women are less diversified. More than half of these households have only one source of income as against households headed by a male with a percentage of 35. Research also shows that 64.5 percent of women participate in the country's labor force (NBS, 2014). This implies that women are gaining ground towards self-development, empowerment, and reliance.

#### The City of Lagos

Lagos is the second largest city in Africa after Cairo and also the fastest growing megacity in the world with a population of more than 20 million. The status of a megacity is conferred by the United Nations (UN) on a city when its population has exceeded 10 million people. The city of Lagos has experienced economic and infrastructural development since the colonial era when it was the administrative headquarters of the country. Lagos was the Federal capital territory of Nigeria until 1991 when it was moved to Abuja. Lagos is the commercial center and industrial hub of the country. The informal sector of the state is vibrant employing over 50 percent residents of the state (Olaitan, 2007). Today, the state has grown to become the 5th largest fastest growing economic in Africa. Lagos population is young with about 36 percent are below of 15 years while about 28 percent are within 15-29 age bracket (Opoko et al, 2014).

#### **URBANIZATION PRESSURES AND FAMILY LIVING STYLES IN LAGOS MEGACITY**

The economy development of Lagos state and several tourist attractions of the city make it a desired place of residence for people who want to experience the life of a city in Nigeria. In the past two decades, there has been major significant economic and infrastructural development in Lagos megacity coupled with the favorable population structure (the majority being in the working age category). This has made the city more attractive to foreign and local investors, tourists and business travelers and entrepreneurs. Lagos is increasingly experiencing rapid urbanization and urban growth. A lot of urban development and renewal plans are presently in place to achieve further development in the city (Heinrich Boll Stiftung Nigeria, 2016)

Urbanization processes in a Lagos megacity is chaotic and unfriendly, this has left many household heads of the megacity in a state of despair, tumult, psychological and mental distress thereby forcing them to seek all means to adapt to the disturbing changes of the cities, most especially those who cannot easily cope (the urban poor). Some of the compounding problems of urbanization in Lagos megacity are housing problems, transportation challenges, traffic congestion, high rate of criminal activities, unemployment/underemployment, flooding, urban planning and renewal, pollutions (noise, water, and air) and man-made disasters.

Lagos is highly populated; no wonder the numerous slums and the emerging slums in the city. Despite being the seventh largest economy in Africa, the economic challenges for most of the families are enormous. Cases of loss of jobs for the family head are abounding coupled with underemployment. The husband father's earning is not usually enough to meet the demands of the city and has made the women active participants in economic activities. The UNDP report on human development shows that about 51 percent and 54 percent of male and female residents of Lagos megacity are poor. The Darwinian view that a process of natural selection "survival of the fittest" occurred in the social world is applicable to the pressures that urban dwellers face in Lagos mega city. People who are 'fit' to cope with the demands of the Lagos mega city survive the pressures while those who are 'unfit' eventually fade away or die out (Ritzer, 2010:36). Employment being the most viable instrument to alleviate poverty and to cope with the pressures of urbanization in Lagos is a huge challenge for the dwellers. The requirements for major and highly paid employments in Lagos favors largely the younger youths. The fathers and mothers who are not socially unconnected struggle with the economic hurdles of the city coupled the high cost of living (Olaitan, 2007).

The younger generation is fast taking over economic control of Lagos megacity. Both the formal and the informal settings, opportunities are abounding for the younger generation as they are very fast in the use of modern technological facilities (NBS 2016; Kunuji 2014). Children cope better with urbanization pressures and stress of Lagos megacity than the parents. The stress of continuous road congestion and the high cost of living

which usually result in mental and physical fatigue have made parents less competitive in the economic activities of Lagos megacity.

In most cases, due to urban pressures, parents cannot adequately cater for their families even though some of them are still in the working age-group. These have made some children pursue the upkeep of the family, some engage in street and traffic hawking, different trading activities, some are even engaged in various cyber-crime. The majority of the children who engage in these various activities do it alongside schooling while some who can't combine both, focus solely on different business both legal and illegal.

In Lagos megacity, quite a large number of parents who are in the working age-group or old dependency ratio are relying more on their children for survival as many children have taken over the role of breadwinning in their families and are performing the role effectively. Many of these children are business owners in commercial areas like Eko market, Alaba, computer village while others are into 'yahoo-yahoo' (this is the street name given to internet fraud).

Age selectivity of migration depicts that younger generation is more likely to migrate than their older counterpart. The trend of rural-urban migration in Nigeria reveals that the younger move into the cities and thereafter usually invites their parents to the cities. The same goes for international migration; the children migrate to other countries for economic purposes and later bring other members of their family to be with them. Remittance plays a significant of coping strategy for parents in the cities. Remittance flows refers to any monetary transfers that migrants send home to their family members or other beneficiaries for maintenance and up keeping. Aside from playing an important role in economic development of the cities and Nation at large, it also serves as one of the means children help their family members cope with urban pressures in Lagos. Also, data from the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics also reveal that 25 percent of households receive remittances and the remittances are significant to their consumption, being about 26 percent of overall consumption of the household.

Also, the death of the parent (s) has also made children take over the role of breadwinners in Lagos metropolis. In some cases as the parent (s) die, the eldest son takes over the properties of the family and breadwinning position to provide for the well-being of the family. Life expectancy at birth in Lagos is 48 years for male and 51 years for female (National Human Development Report, 2015).

### CHILD WORK, CHILD LABOUR AND CHILDREN BREADWINNERS IN LAGOS

The conventional and Nigeria legal definition of a child is any person who is below the age of 18 (eighteen) years. Literally, a child is a young person who is not yet an adult. On the other hand, this study defines a breadwinning child to be a person who contributes sufficiently to the well-being of his family of orientation. Majorly in Africa, parents or elders consider their offsprings 'children' whether they are above or below the age of 18 years and in Nigeria for instance, anyone who is still under the control of his parents is still a child and in most cases age is not a barrier.

In the child right act of 2003, the following are considered as child labour:

1. Subjecting a child to any forced or exploitative labour.
2. Employing a child to work in any capacity except when the child is employed by the parents and other members of the family on a relatively simple task.
3. Engaging a child to carry anything heavy that is likely to have an adverse effect on their physical, mental, moral, spiritual or social development.
4. Employing a child outside his home as a domestic help.
5. Employing a child to work in an industrial setting.

Put simply, child labour means the act of engaging a child in services and activities for monetary reasons which expose them to various forms of dangers. This act ensures that parents, guardians, institutions or authority in whose care are children to take precautionary measures in order to ensure proper guidance, training and education for the children. The child rights act of 2003 has been passed into law in Nigeria except in the following states: Kano, Adamawa, Bauchi, Enugu, Borno, Kaduna, Kebbi, Katsina, Sokoto, Yobe, Zamfara and Gombe (UNICEF NIGERIA 2011).

**Table 1-**

Children in employment, child labour and hazardous work by region, 5-15 years age-group, 2012

Region	Children population ('000)	Children in employment		Child labour		Hazardous work	
		('000)	%	('000)	%	('000)	%
Asia and the Pacific	835,334	129,358	15.5	77,723	9.3	33,860	4.1
Latin American and the Carribean	142,693	17,843	12.5	12,505	8.8	9,638	6.8
Sub Saharan African	275,397	83,570	30.3	59,031	21.4	28,767	10.4

Source: International Labour Organization 2013

The International Labour Organisation Report of 2013 shows that 168 million children globally are in child labour, this accounts for about 11 percent of the population of children worldwide. The sub-Saharan region accounts for the highest rate of child labour globally as more than one children are in child labour. In 2012, 264 million children are in employment, 85 million children are doing various hazardous works that can endanger their health and life. Among the children engaging in hazardous work, 10 percent are the sub-Saharan Africa compare with Middle east and North Africa (4.7 percent). This shows that children employment and child labour is still a major challenge in the region of sub-Saharan Africa. (ILO, 2013).

Child labour in Nigeria is still a major concern despite the passage of the child right act into law in two-third of states in Nigeria. The number of children in Lagos engaging in child labour activities such as street trading, apprenticeships, prostitution, cyber-crime, hostel attendants, car washing, hawking, bus conducting, domestic service and weaving are still on the increase (Bassey et al 2012). These activities make children vulnerable to abuse in form of sexual, physical and emotional, maltreatment, and exploitation. Despite the effort of International bodies in charge of children welfare such as UNICEF and numerous Non-Governmental Organizations in Nigeria, cases of abuse and exploitation of children are still on the increase in the country. A recent report from the Nigerian Violence Against Children (VAC) survey reveals that 6 out of every 10 children in Nigeria have experienced some forms of physical, emotional and sexual abuse. The most commonly reported form of abuse is physical abuse and this comes majorly from parents, guardian and teachers, and neighbours. This implies that children are more likely to be abused by those closer to them than those who are not. Aside from physical violence, sexual violence most especially rape of children is also very common in Lagos metropolis and majority of children sexual abuse are usually unreported (UNICEF NIGERIA 2011). There are a lot of campaigns in Lagos state against child abuse, government, and other related agencies have played significant roles in curbing various forms of violence against children in the state. The government has passed the child rights act into law and ensuring the implementation. Though there a lot of reported cases daily on violence against children.

The cultural dimension to child labour in Africa is very complex. The African culture recognizes child labour in form of child work. It is believed that part of the training and the socialization process of a child must include the engagement of the child in different work processes in the house. Children must perform their domestic obligations before setting out for school and in cases where the family has a business, the children are incorporated. For instance, where the mother is a trader and owns a shop, it is expected that the child must help the mother not only domestically but also at work. From the traditional family setting, the wife or wives as the case may be coupled with the children are indispensable towards the economic position of the family in the communal arrangement. In the pre-modern society which is an agricultural based economy, women, and children integrated into the economy system and are a major source of support for the well-being of the family. In today's modern societies, women and children are always integrated into the economy system of the family with more emphasis on paid work. In Lagos city, as the men are engaged in paid work so also the women and also the children, this they do in order to meet the demands of the life in the city. House rents and other costs of living in Lagos are among the highest in the country, this has made families adopt various methods of survival.

### **The Indispensability of Child Labour in Lagos City**

Despite the fact that child labour is a social phenomenon in Lagos, child work, and labour is a response to urban pressures and economic downturns presently experienced in the country as a whole. Families in Lagos engage their children in various works purposely for socio-economic reasons which are culturally acceptable. Child employment and labour are on the increase in the country as it is mostly encouraged by the economic situation of the country. Studies have however shown that there is a relationship between socio-economic status and child labour. The findings of the research studies conducted by Omotayo and Ajiboye (2014) and Salisu (2012) revealed that child labour exists more among poorer families.

*ever since I lost my husband, life has been so difficult for me and my children and my job is only fetching me little or no income at times. I have to let the children assist me to raise the household income in order to make ends meet'.*

*(Source: Salisu 2012)*

*My children do hawk tomatoes and pepper for me because the sales in the market are very poor and I have no other means than to ask them to hawk so as to sell more.*

*(Source: Omotayo and Ajiboye 2014)*

A female street-hawker interviewed by Omotayo and Ajiboye (2014) stated that:

*I will also allow my children to assist me in my work in future if the condition in the country persists, especially if I cannot get work*

*(Source: Omotayo and Ajiboye 2014/Female/Street hawker/13 Years Old.)*

*A 13-year old boy interviewed by Salisu (2014) stated that: After the loss of my father's job as a gateman in a private firm, we are not able to have our three square meal daily, buying our school books is difficult, and we usually go to school with tattered school uniform. We were withdrawn from the school by our daddy and we started helping our mother to sell so that we can have money to eat"*

*(Source: Salisu 2012/Male/13 years old)*

Also, a study on the determinants factors of Child Street hawking in Agege area of Lagos State by Dada in 2013 shows that there is a significant relationship between parents' occupational level and child hawking. Economic stiff competitiveness and downturns experiences in Lagos make children perform the breadwinning roles as they contribute immensely to the economic well-being of their family of orientation by engaging in the various works, some of which are street and traffic hawkers, some are engaged in buying and selling of clothes, cosmetics. While some other women are stylists, fashion designers, artist, sales representatives and other forms of economic activities. The present era of economic recession in the country and high inflation have also added to the prevailing challenges of urban dwellers as this has consequently made a large number of Lagos dwellers have diversified sources of income. It is important to also state that in order to meet the demands of the city, a lot of young men engaged in various related fraud activities.

Although child employment and labour can contribute greatly to the family economic conditions and the economic growth of the country, the risk factors embedded in it are much greater than the gains. Some of the risk factors include rape, physical attack, motor accident, child involvement in robbery and cyber-crime, sexual molestation, extortion and kidnapping (Dada, 2013).

### **THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING: CULTURE OF POVERTY AND CHILDREN BREADWINNERS IN LAGOS METROPOLIS**

The concept of a culture of poverty was first introduced by Oscar Lewis (an American Anthropologist) in the late 1950s. The concept has a different explanation and a different approach to the explanation of some behavior patterns that have been ascribed to distinctive ethnic, national or regional groups' characteristics. In reality, the theory explains that behavioral patterns and household essential traits of the culture of poverty can be seen among different people in the world, it is more of a design for living transferred from one generation to another (Lewis 1966).

The concept of poverty explains child work and labour which invariably results into child breadwinner from the point of view of poverty. Engaging children in different economic activities is a response by the poor to their situation and this "coping mechanism" is passed on from one generation to another, this explains the fact that child labour has been for time immemorial (Haralambos and Holborn 2007). Most parents and guardians who engage their children in excessive work and economic activities do not only see it as a coping mechanism but also as a tool of training and child socialization majorly because that was the way they were brought up and it is important to train their children in that path and this continues from one generation to another. A lot of children who grew under this condition absorb this value and see it as a means to meet the demands of life. For those in the cities, they see it as coping strategy to meet up with the lifestyle of the cities. A majority of the poor in the city of Lagos have adopted this lifestyle of child labour and work which has now resulted in having many children as breadwinners for their family. Critically, this theory lacks substantive empirical foundations for the existence of a culture of poverty. Besides this, the concept of the theory largely blames the poor for their conditions that are most times out of their control.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The trend of having children breadwinners in Lagos due the enormous urban problems faced by the residents of the city is on the increase and has a lot of consequences. One of the consequences is that it disrupts the education of a child. A lot of students in tertiary education today are preoccupied with different works. This most times affects their concentration to academic work and consequently affects their performance. Also, a lot of children are compelled directly and indirectly to engage in illegal activities and social vices such as robbery (armed or unarmed), internet fraud, kidnapping and so on. Measures must be taken in order to control the menaces that arise as a result of urban pressure on children.

Based on the cultural acceptance of child work as part of child socialization, there should be a revisit to the definition of child labour. For effective championing of the course of issues surrounding child labour, it is imperative to define the concept taking cognizance of some cultural values and elements, that is, child labor should be defined from society to society.

Government and other various agencies should promote social welfare programs for the older population in order to reduce the pressure on the children. Similar to this, it is imperative for the government to initiate policies on social welfare programs for nursing mothers in Lagos state. Social welfare programs for mothers especially the nursing mothers will go a long way in reducing the pressure parents put on their children for economic gains.

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