RURAL MIGRANTS AND URBAN ADAPTATION: A CASE STUDY OF KAMPALA CITY SLUMS, UGANDA

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by
Abel Nzabona and Fredrick Tumwine
Makerere University Kampala, Uganda

Abstract

The paper discusses rural out migration in Uganda and how migrants adapt to Kampala City's urban environment. Using primary data, the paper examines forms and factors of adaptation. Objective and subjective indicators of adaptation are presented and discussed.

The paper reveals that differential adaptation had taken place. Bivariate and multivariate analysis show that demographic and socioeconomic factors significantly influenced adaptation. Although Kampala City's urban environment poses challenges to new arrivals, migrants continued to come into the city and some managed to adjust to its conditions. The conclusion is that slum settlements are likely to persist. It is recommended that programmes be put in place to address slum realities. Furthermore, in light of the gender disparity in adaptation, it is suggested that women empowerment efforts be scaled up.

Introduction

Africa has witnessed a rapid pace of rural-urban population movements in the recent decades. These movements have contributed to increasing proportions of population living in towns and cities. In Uganda for example, whereas the urban population in 1969 was 6.6% of the total population, the proportion increased to 7.4%, 11.3 % and 12.3% in 1980, 1991 and 2002 respectively (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2005). The increase in urban populations has engendered both scholarly and policy interests and concerns.

One matter of interest is the very practical question: what happens to individuals, who have developed in one socio-cultural context, when they attempt to live in a new one? Do the individuals continue to act in the new setting as they did in the previous one, do they change their behavioural patterns to be more relevant to the new one, or is there some complex pattern of continuity and change in how people go about their lives in the new society? These questions have generated interest into studies in migration and adaptation of migration.

Berry (1997) has described *adaptation* as referring to changes that take place in individuals or groups in response to environmental demands. These adaptations can occur immediately, or they can be extended over the longer term. Some short term changes may be negative while some long term ones may be positive over time.

In the context of urban setting, adaptation may mean adjustment from rural lifestyles to urban social, cultural or economic conditions. When rural out-migrants arrive in the urban environment, they gradually become like the indigenes and take on the norms and values they find. With adaptation, there is a gradual shift from rural life style characterised by such attributes as predominance of subsistence production, unpaid family labouring and low income or limited property, to a changed lifestyle characterised by paid labouring in formal and informal sectors, as well as acquiring more property.

Changes in dressing and appearance are yet another indicator of adaptation. Migrants tend to abandon the traditional rural dresses and take on the urban fashions. For example, girls and young women abandon traditional long dresses and start sporting mini-skirts and other fancy dresses considered modern in the urban setting. Furthermore, whereas some people may walk bare-footed in rural areas, most of them shift from this practice and start putting on footwear (shoes or, at worst, sandals even if they are made out of old car tyres!) when they move into the city. It is very rare to come across a townsman walking bare-footed in Kampala City slums.

The main objective of the study was to examine rural-urban migrants' adaptation to the Kampala City slum environment and assess factors that influenced the adjustment. The study was informed by the Goldlust and Richmond model as reported by Peil (1981)[1]. Adopting some aspects of the model, this study centred on three broad independent factors namely, characteristics of migrants, characteristics of the receiving society and length of urban stay. These are the factors which were conceptualised to influence

[1] Peil, M. (1981): Cities and Suburbs: Urban Life in West Africa, Holmes and Meirs Publishers Inc.

adaptation. The resultant adaptation was deemed to be both objective and subjective. Employment, property acquisition, skills development and socialization were the objective forms of adaptation, while satisfaction with and internalization of city life were considered to be subjective indicators. Internalisation of city life was operationalised by considering the extent to which migrants had developed a positive attitude towards continued stay in the city and a negative one towards return to their rural home areas. Adoption of urban dressing arrangements was another indicator of internalisation.

Methodology

Primary data were collected in a cross-sectional study carried out in selected Kampala City slum areas. In the first stage, three slum settlements were selected from the list of slums of Kampala City. In the second stage, 450 households were selected by systematic random sampling from the three slum areas, with probability proportional to size.

Data analysis involved running frequencies at univariate level. Bivariate analysis was done to establish association between independent variables and indicators of adaptation. Scaling technique was used to assess aggregate adaptation, that is, overall picture of urban adjustment. This was done by examining the sum total of the objective and subjective indicators of adaptation. The extent to which a given migrant had adapted in terms of all the indicators gave a total picture of their adaptation to urban life.

Logistic regression model was used in multivariate analysis to assess the relative importance of independent variables in influencing adaptation. The key independent factors considered were age, sex, education, duration of stay, place of first stay and marital environment.

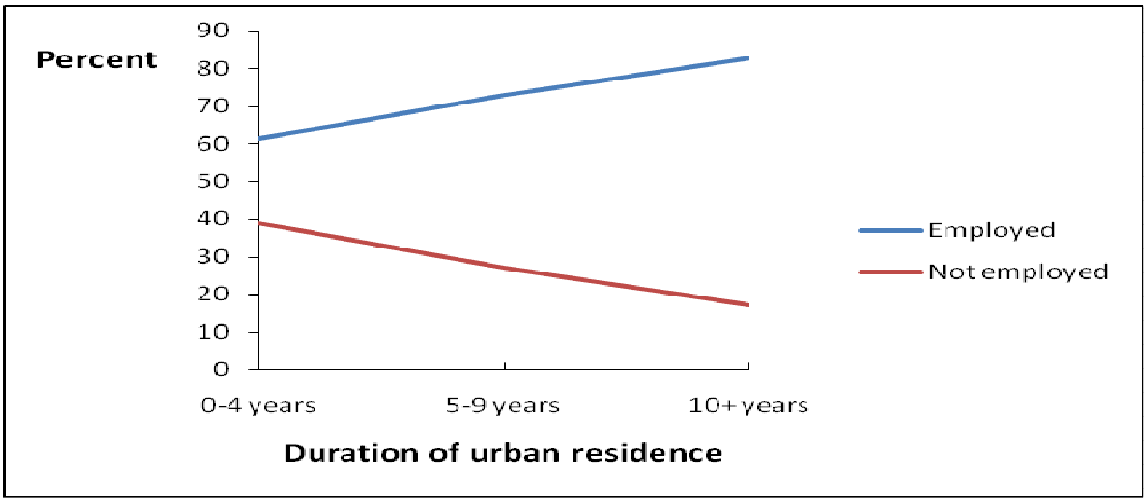
Results

Analysis indicated that migrants had experienced differential adjustment with respect to both subjective and objective forms of adaptation. Tables 1 and 2 illustrate the key findings as presented below.

Employment

Slightly over three quarters of the rural migrants had obtained employment in Kampala City though this was mainly in the informal sector. A large percentage of migrants had therefore adapted to urban environment in terms of employment. Age, sex and duration of stay in the urban area are the factors which significantly influenced respondents' adaptation to employment. Findings indicate, for example, that employment increased with duration of urban stay (Figure 1). The association between the two was statistically significant (P=0.00010). The implication is that migrants who stayed in Kampala City for a long duration were likely to be better adapted, in employment terms, than those who had stayed for a short period.

Figure 1 Percent distribution of migrants by employment by duration of urban residence



Multivariate analysis showed that males were about five times (Exp (B) =5.4255) more likely than females to influence employment. This fact was confirmed by the high level of significance (0.0000). Male migrants were therefore more successful and better adapted to urban employment compared to their female counterparts.

The beta value for sex (1.6911) was higher than values for age, place of stay and duration of urban stay. Sex therefore increased the log odds of being employed compared to other variables. Sex was therefore deemed to be the strongest factor affecting adaptation to Kampala City in terms of employment. The results nevertheless suggest that all factors played a role in influencing employment in the city.

Visiting of places of entertainment

Some migrants were found to have adjusted to the city's social environment by regularly visiting places of entertainment such as sports grounds, theatres and nightclubs. The level of socialisation was however low as only just under one third (29.6%) reported visiting such entertainment places. This could be attributed to low income levels. Multivariate analysis showed that sex, duration of work and occupation were the statistically significant influencing factors.

Males were about two times (Exp (B) =2.1002) more likely to influence the respondents' visiting places of entertainment than their female counterparts. Duration of work decreased the chances of visiting places of entertainment compared to short duration by about 41 percent (Exp (B)=0.4104). Occupation also significantly affected visiting places of entertainment (sig=0.0451). Respondents who were professionals, technicians or builders were about 1.2 times (Exp (B) =1.2011) more likely to influence respondents' visiting of places of entertainment than petty traders, porters cleaners or messengers. Differences in income level could probably account for the disparity.

The beta value for sex (0.7420) was higher than the values for occupation (0.1832) and duration of work (-0.8907). Sex therefore increased the log odds of visiting places of entertainment more than occupation and duration of work. Sex was therefore the

strongest factor affecting adaptation in the urban environment in terms of visiting places of entertainment.

Skills Acquisition

Urban adaptation in terms of acquisition of skills occurred but the level was low. Just under 50% of the migrants had acquired new skills since arriving in the city. These were essentially basic survival skills such as craft, building/masonry, hairdressing, repair works and carpentry/joinery. These were basic abilities needed to facilitate migrants cope with day to day urban social and financial challenges. There was therefore lack of much more technical and managerial skills. The absence of such higher-order skills could imply that migrants in slum areas will increasingly find it difficult to uplift themselves from low social and financial status.

Age was the only factor which had significant relationship with acquisition of skills in the city. Migrants aged 45 years and above were about three times (Exp (B) =2.6865) more likely to have acquired skills than those aged 15-29. This was confirmed by a high significance level of 0.0037. Old migrants were therefore better adapted to urban conditions, as measured by skill acquisition, than their younger counterparts. This is probably because old age also implies wider experience and longer exposure to various activities, which factors promote chances of learning and acquiring skills.

Satisfaction with city life

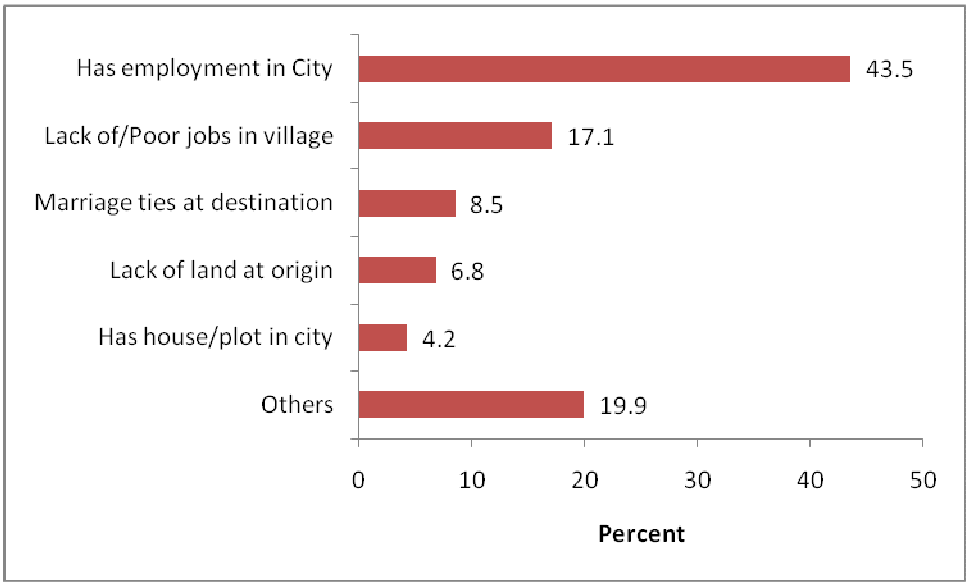
Just over three quarters of the migrants reported being satisfied with urban life. The migrants therefore appeared to have settled and internalised life in their new urban residential environment. This level of satisfaction can be taken to imply high level of adaptation.

The beta values for employment and marital environment were 1.1385 and 0.7839 respectively. Employment therefore increased the log odds of being satisfied with city life more than marital environment. In the context of satisfaction with city life, employment was therefore the stronger influencing factor.

Attitude towards rural return migration

The study sought migrants' attitude towards returning to their rural home areas. Over 85% of them expressed negative attitude towards return migration in contrast to just under 15% whose attitude was positive. The large proportion of migrants preferring continued stay in the urban setting (in spite of its socio-economic challenges), was considered a measure of internalisation and adjustment to the urban environment. Figure 2 shows that being employed in the city was the main reason migrants gave for not being eager to effect return migration.

Figure 2 Reported reasons against return migration



Satisfaction with city life was the only factor which significantly influenced attitude towards return migration. Satisfaction with city life decreased the chances of favourable attitude by about 22 percent (Exp (B) =0.2190). This fact was confirmed by the high significance level of 0.0000. These findings imply that satisfied migrants were more likely to have better internalised urban life and therefore more adapted than those who were not satisfied. This is in agreement with the hypothesis that satisfied urban migrants were more likely to have a negative attitude towards rural return migration than their not satisfied counterparts.

Dressing/Appearance

Migrants were asked whether people who come from rural areas change the way they dress as well as their bodily appearance during their stay in Kampala city. A big percentage (88.6 per cent) agreed that rural dressing patterns are abandoned and instead migrants take on urban dressing lifestyle. Buying and wearing expensive clothes/goods was the leading reported form in which migrants change. This finding was a pointer to the phenomenon of adjustment.

The study sought to find out why migrants thought rural-urban migrants tend to change their forms of dressing and appearance after arriving and during their stay in the urban environment. Adjusting to or 'fitting into' the new urban environment was the main reason given. This suggests that the receiving society plays a role in shaping migrants' lifestyle upon arrival in the city. Urban migrants whose rural places of origin are different from the urban setting adjust to the new urban environment in order to fit in its ways, values and standards. This is an indication of adaptation.

Table 1 Likelihood of being adapted: Kampala City Slums

Characteristic	B	Df	Sig	Exp(B)
Employment				
Age				
15-29*	0.0000			1.0000
30-34	-0.6597	1	0.0405#	0.5170
45+	0.3865	1	0.3546	1.4718
Sex				
Male*	1.6911	1	0.0000#	5.4255
Female	0.0000			1.0000
Duration of stay				
Long	0.8328	1	0.0047#	2.2997
Short*	0.0000			1.0000
Place of first stay				
Rented	1.0159	1	0.0319#	2.7619
Relatives*	0.0000			1.0000
Visiting places of entertainment				
Sex				
Male*	0.7420	1	0.0103#	2.1002
Female	0.0000			1.0000
Occupation				
Professionals[1]	0.1832	1	0.0451#	1.2011
Petty traders[2]*	0.0000			1.0000
Duration of work				
Long	-0.8907	1	0.0202#	0.4104
Short*	0.0000			1.0000
Acquisition of skills				
Age				
15-29*	0.0000			1.0000
30-44	0.0228	1	0.9132	1.0231
45+	0.9883	1	0.0037#	2.6865
Satisfaction with city life				
Employment				
Employed	1.1385	1	0.0000#	3.1222
Not employed	0.0000			1.0000
Marital environment				
Never married	0.7839	1	0.0227#	2.1901
Ever married*	0.0000			1.0000
Attitude to rural return migration				
Satisfaction with city life				
Satisfied	-1.5187	1	0.0000#	0.2190
Not satisfied*	0.0000			1.0000

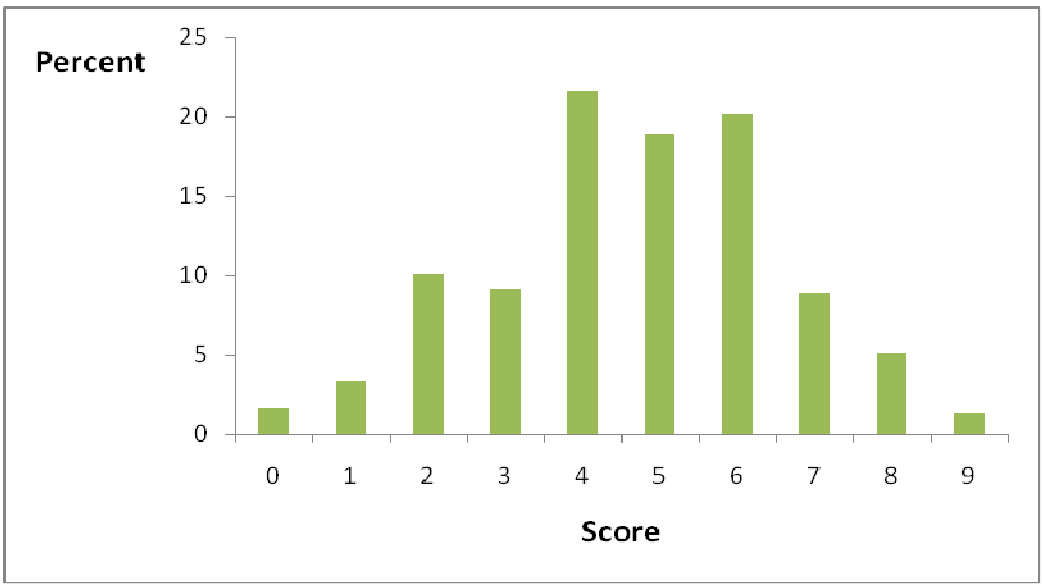
*** = Reference Category**
 # = Significant at 0.05 level

[1] Includes professionals, technicians & builders
[2] Includes petty traders, porters, messengers and cleaners

Aggregate adaptation

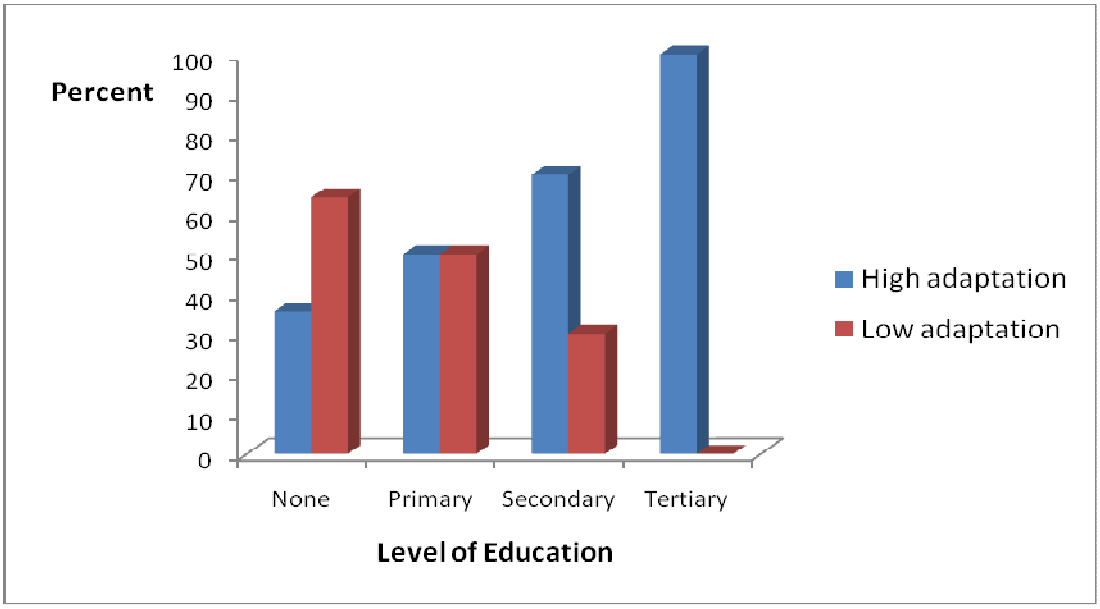
As pointed out earlier, scaling technique was used to analyse indicators of adaptation at aggregate level. Just over 1.5% of the respondents scored 0 on the scale of aggregate adaptation. These are persons regarded as having totally failed to adapt to urban conditions. The proportion who obtained a total score of 9 was just under 1.5%. These can be considered as people who had completely adapted to urban life in terms of the nine indicators of adaptation. The proportion of migrants who had experienced complete adaptation in terms of these nine indicators was relatively low. Figure 3 shows highest percentages corresponded to migrants who obtained scores of 4 (21.6%) and 6 (20.2%) respectively.

Figure 3 **Percent distribution of migrants by total scores on scale of aggregate adaptation**



The variable of aggregate adaptation was dichotomised into *low adaptation,* ranging from score 0-4 and *high adaptation* extending from score 5-9. Aggregate adaptation was found to have a significant association with age, sex and education. Figure 4, for example, shows that persons with no education constituted the category with the lowest percentage of highly adapted migrants. The percentage of people who were highly adapted increased with increasing level of education. The percentage of highly adapted migrants having tertiary level of education was in fact 100%!

Figure 4 Percent distribution of migrants by aggregate adaptation by education



Multivariate analysis indicated that sex and education significantly influenced aggregate adaptation. Males were about 2 times (Exp (B) =1.7530) more likely to be highly adapted than females. Secondary education appeared to have decreased the chances for aggregate adaptation to slum life (Table 2). The dominance of informal lifestyle for which adaptation does not necessarily require high level of formal education could explain this situation. Migrants with little or even no formal education can easily cope with slum life and even tend to be the dominant population sub-group. In contrast, there is a tendency for persons with much higher level of education to re-locate to the more affluent parts of the city, particularly when their levels of income experience an upward shift.

Table 2 shows that the beta value for male category (0.5613) was higher than for secondary education category (-1.4668). Sex was therefore more strongly associated with aggregate adaptation than education. Sex was by far the strongest factor affecting overall adaptation to Kampala City Slums.

Table 2 Likelihood of being highly adapted: Kampala City Slums

Characteristic	B	Df	Sig	Exp(B)
Sex				
Male*	0.5613	1	0.0149#	1.7530
Female	0.0000			1.0000
Education				
Primary	-0.3326	1	0.3359	0.7170
Secondary	-1.4668	1	0.0003#	0.2307
Tertiary	-7.2504	1	0.4225	0.0007
None*	0.0000			1.0000

*** = Reference Category**
 # = Significant at 0.05 level

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusions

The analysis of migration and urban adaptation reveals that, in spite of the urban area being a new environment to rural out-migrants, some of them had adjusted to its conditions. A substantial number of migrants had experienced successful adaptation in certain aspects. For example, some migrants managed to acquire vocational skills. This is a measure of success in the city. In this context, rural-urban migration yielded positive results for the concerned rural out-migrants.

The study further indicated that some migrants had secured jobs in the city and were therefore able to afford some basic necessities of life. Some migrants had therefore experienced positive changes in their social-economic lives in the course of staying in the city. Indeed, a big proportion reported being satisfied with city life. Being employed partially explained preference for continued urban stay to returning to rural home areas.

However, among these employed migrants, a big cross section was working in elementary occupations where average monthly income is ordinarily low. These were largely migrants of low educational levels. In contrast, only a small population were working in professional occupations where income is often higher. These are the ones with relatively high educational levels. The implication of this is that as long as level of education remains low, the level of income is also likely to remain low among the rural migrants in Kampala City slums. This is likely to lead to difficulty in affording the basic necessities of life, such as nutrition, education, shelter and clothing. This could exacerbate incidences of morbidity and mortality.

Disparity in employment was also evident. The employment was biased towards men. Female migrants were less likely to be employed compared to their male counterparts. A big proportion of the latter were found to be depending on relatives and husbands for survival. The gender inequality could have implications on socioeconomic development of slum settlers.

Although acquisition of skills had occurred, the level was low. Multivariate analysis showed that young migrants were less successful in skills acquisition compared to their older counterparts. The skills limitation and low level of self-reliance could translate into development of social problems.

The negative attitude towards rural return migration (in spite of urban challenges) could be interpreted to mean the rural area is less attractive than the urban environment. Any migration policy should therefore take into consideration these realities. It would be futile, for example, to design a policy in which slum dwellers would be forcibly evicted and repatriated to their rural areas of origin in a bid to achieve slum upgrading and urban renewal.

Although a large percentage of the migrants reported being employed, there is, nevertheless, a category of people without jobs and who are mainly dependant on relatives and carrying out odd jobs. Such migrants are likely to be surviving only

marginally. The option of family support cannot be a sustainable source of urban livelihood. In the event that such support ceases, the unemployed population is likely to become a source of social problems.

Lastly, it has been shown that the proportion of migrants with a positive attitude towards rural return migration is quite low. Employed and unemployed migrants alike seem to prefer continued residence in Kampala City to returning to their rural home areas. Furthermore, even some migrants who are not satisfied with urban life have a negative attitude towards rural return migration. The implication of this is that continued residence of migrants in Kampala City is likely to persist; thus dashing the hope of the "trickle down" proposition!

Recommendations

In light of the preceding findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

Majority of slum dwellers are adapted to elementary occupations particularly petty trading. The pattern is consistent with migrants' low levels of education and paucity of employment opportunities. It is recommended that continued effort towards vocationalisation be made. This will increase employment opportunities for the slum settlers and hopefully avert possible rise of social problems.

In light of the fact that migrants are prepared to remain in the urban environment rather than return to their rural areas, the Kampala Capital City Authority needs to initiate programmes aimed at uplifting slum conditions. Such programmes could involve slum up-grading and provision of appropriate utilities and services.

There is however the perennial dilemma often faced by policy makers in finding solutions to the slum question. Slum upgrading, for example, may lead to improved standards that attract fresh populations from rural areas and other parts of the city. Furthermore, there may be a category of former inhabitants who may now not afford the new high costs in the upgraded area. Such people may tend to re-locate to the fringes of the old slum (now turned modern) where they construct new make-shift structures. This may gradually exacerbate and compound the slum problem. This, in fact, happened in Namuwongo, one of Kampala City's suburbs in the early 1990s. It is therefore strongly recommended that any slum upgrading project should be implemented after thorough and comprehensive planning that promotes orderly development. This is likely to save a situation where food vendors co-exist with charcoal and local brew-sellers as well as low-grade sanitation facilities.

The findings indicated majority of the employed rural migrants were men. Only a few of the migrant women were employed while the majority merely played the role of housewives. Furthermore, sex has been found to be the strongest factor affecting overall urban adaptation with males being better adapted then females. This is because, among others, males are associated with higher levels of education and better employment opportunities than their female counterparts. There is therefore need to raise the status of the women so that they too can secure employment in the urban area and get integrated in all aspects of urban lifestyles for balanced urban development.

Research agenda

This study concentrated largely on the more objective forms of adaptation and focused only on two subjective aspects namely: satisfaction with city life and attitude change. Subsequent studies may want to address other subjective aspects of urban adjustment which, though more difficult to measure, could be more important indices of how well the migrant has adapted to urban life. In particular, future adaptation research in Kampala City slums could focus on *identification* which, according to the Goldlust and Richmond (1974) model, implies transference of loyalty to a new home and involves a denial of kinship with one's ancestors.

The study also focused only on the relatively poorer parts of the urban area and yet it is probable that the pattern of adaptation in those parts may not be exactly the same as that in the more affluent urban sections. Research on adaptation in parts of urban centres other than slums could be another area of interest. This would enrich the stock of knowledge about the entire spectrum of urban adaptation issues.

This study did not focus on migrants at different intervals during their stay in Kampala City owing to resource constraints. It was therefore not possible to identify and trace a synthetic cohort of migrants through their stages of adaptation. This would perhaps have painted a better and more refined picture of urban adaptation. It is therefore recommended that longitudinal studies be carried out in future.

Lastly, future research could delve into sensitive social areas such as urban theft, prostitution and corruption. This is because it is speculated that these could be other survival strategies and coping mechanisms which enable rural migrants subsist and persist in the urban environment. This could lead to acquisition of information which may be used to combat crime as well as predict future adaptation patterns.

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