

Urbanization And Its Effects On Centers And Communities: A Case Study Of Mbarara City

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Abstract

Uganda has been experiencing rapid rates of urbanization over the past decades which has brought many opportunities but also developmental challenges for local authorities. Mbarara City in South Western Uganda offers an invaluable case study due to its extraordinarily high population growth from 100,000 to over 233,233 residents between 2002 to 2014 according to national census data, exerting massive pressure on its limited infrastructure and services. This study sought to conduct an in-depth analysis of the multiplier effects of this unprecedented urban expansion through a mixed methods research approach incorporating quantitative and qualitative data collection from key city institutions and local communities. Official reports indicate that more than 65% of Mbarara City's residents presently occupy overcrowded informal settlements with inadequate access to basic amenities as public service coverage lags behind at only 30% for water and 25% for electricity as the city's limited resources have been overwhelmed trying to accommodate the demands of a mushrooming population. Field observations and key informant interviews further revealed deteriorating environmental sanitation, chronic housing shortages, dilapidated road networks, high 30% youth unemployment, acute land use conflicts and rising insecurity issues associated with the city's unequipped response to rapid urbanization. The findings shown that 37% responded that urbanization led to increased trade, then 30% responded that urbanization created employment for the people, 24% said that urbanization improved social service provision and finally 9% said that urbanization led to wealth creation of individuals in the centers and communities of Mbarara city. All political leaders should be sensitized to go ahead and attend high levels of education because some leaders could not understand some English statements and also failed to understand the reasons to why I was doing research despite the fact that prior explanation was given to them about the latter.

Keywords: Urbanization, Centers And Communities

Background of the study

Uganda has witnessed a rapid pace of urbanization over the past few decades, with the national urban population growing from 3.2% in 1960 to more than 20% today, according to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics. One of the main cities experiencing this rapid growth is the Mbarara municipality in southwestern Uganda, which recorded an annual urban growth rate of 6% between 2002 and 2014, bringing its total population to an estimated 233,233 people

based on the national census and housing in 2014. (Ronald & Kazaara, 2023). This surge in urbanization in Mbarara City has been driven by several factors, including natural population growth, rural-urban migration in search of employment opportunities and social services, as well as government policies promoting urban centers as engines of economic growth (Ramadhan et al., 2023). . However, this rapid urbanization has presented significant development

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challenges to Mbarara Local Government Authorities in terms of providing adequate housing, transport, water, health care, education, waste management and other basic amenities to meet the needs of the growing urban population within the municipal boundary, which currently amounts to 233 square kilometers. As a result, there is overwhelming evidence of overcrowding in existing residential areas, deteriorating environmental sanitation, traffic congestion, expanding slums, increased crime rates (Godfrey et al., 2023), unemployment and rising poverty levels, according to the State of Urban Infrastructure Report for FY2020 /2021. This study therefore seeks to conduct an in-depth analysis of the multiplier effects of rapid urban growth on the spatial structure, service delivery systems and general livability of Mbarara city through the collection and analysis of both primary and secondary data from key urban planning institutions and residents. (Victor et al., 2023). Over the past 25 years, Mbarara city has

been a rapidly developing area with various promotions over the years from the town council level in 1995 to the city level in 2020. The city has throughout been the largest commercial city in the western region of Uganda with the largest regional referral hospital in a country that attracts people with various diseases from all regions of Ankole, Kigezi and Rwenzori. These people were eventually forced to stay close to health facilities, which was one of the factors that led to the rapid growth of Mbarara town (Oliver et al., 2023). The city has developed so far both in terms of infrastructure and population. It serves its population by having most of the public offices spread in the city closer to most of the people in the western part of Uganda. The road network was also extended to almost all parts of the region through urban outlets, not forgetting the increased negative effects such as theft, reduced organic food production among others that also came to the city due to rapid urbanization (Kazaara & Christopher, 2023).

Problem statement.

The city of Mbarara in south-western Uganda, which has experienced an extraordinarily rapid pace of urbanization over the past two decades, with its population expanding from 100,000 in 2002 to more than 233,233 people in 2014 according to the National Population and Housing Census, faces immense development challenges resulting from the pressure to accommodate this massive influx of population within its fixed urban boundaries (Jackline et al., 2023). As evidenced by the city's latest five-year development plan and infrastructure status reports, spiraling urban growth resulting from high natural increase, large-scale rural-urban migration and government decentralization policies promoting urban supremacy has far outstripped the capacity of Mbarara. authorities to ensure adequate housing, transport, water, electricity, health, education and sanitation facilities to meet the basic needs of the population (Christopher et al., 2022). Official records indicate that more than 65% of the urban population now live in overcrowded informal settlements, often with inadequate access to clean water (less than 30% service coverage), regulated electricity connections (25% coverage) and approved sewage systems (10% coverage), which triggered an epidemic of water-borne diseases and created an unsanitary urban environment (Emmanuel et al., 2023). In addition, the city faces chronic dilapidated road infrastructure, an acute lack of public services, rising unemployment estimated at over 30% among the youth population, and rampant cases of urban poverty, crime, and social disruption attributed to uneven and uncontrolled urban growth (Jackline et al., 2023).

Specific objectives

1. To find out the rate at which Mbarara city is becoming urbanized.
2. To assess how increased level urbanization affects in Mbarara city
3. To establish the effect of urbanization on centers and communities of Mbarara city

Methodology

The study used a descriptive research design to reflect aspects of perception, feelings, experiences, facts and emotional feelings of the study respondents in finding out about urbanization and its effects on centers and communities in Mbarara city (Jallow et al., 2022). The researcher also used a descriptive research design so as to establish more facts about the study whereby both qualitative and quantitative data will be analyzed inform of numerical and words. The study was carried out in Mbarara city, specifically in Biharwe division, found in Western Uganda (Olanrewaju et al., 2021). This is because it was one of the most growing centers with many sites that can characterize urbanization. The study population involved 80 participants, where 60 were business owners around the area of study and the 20 were political leaders of the study area (Anwar et al., 2022). The sample purposively selected the area political leaders on both old and youth positions and randomly owners of different businesses to give each an equal chance of representation. All respondents were assumed to have vital information on urbanization and its effects on centers and communities (Nafiu et al., 2017). A sample size of 66 respondents was determined through purposive and random sampling methods using Krejcie and Morgan table (1970). This was so because the nature of information to be

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generated require different techniques for better understanding of the research problem under investigation. More so, this approach was also commonly known for achieving higher degree of validity and reliability as well as elimination of biases as per Amin (2005). Therefore, the sample size was 66 respondents (Nafiu & Ph, 2012).

Table 1: Showing Research Population and sample size

Category of the population Target Sample size

Category	N	S
Business owners	60	50
Political leaders	20	16
Total	80	66

Where N-Study Population and S-Sample Size

The questionnaires were self-administered and interpreted to interviewee with the guidance of the researcher and a research assistant so as to obtain reliable information from the respondents. The processing of data was done after its collection for verification of the information that had been gathered and for attainment of completeness, accuracy and uniformity (A & Ahmed, 2019). Data editing involved checking the information for errors, which was an added advantage because it enabled the researcher to delete and eliminate possible errors that were traced which in the end manipulated the results of the study. The researcher used questions based on the questionnaire and for other items, tabulation pie-charts and percentage and simple statistical methods were also used for data presentation, analysis and qualification (Nafiu & Ph, 2012). Data was analyzed inform of tables, frequencies and percentages using SPSS & STATA (Nelson et al., 2022)

RESULTS

Table 2. The rate at which Mbarara city is being urbanized.

Rate at which Mbarara city is being urbanized	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High rate of urbanization	30	45
Moderate rate of urbanization	24	36
Low rate of urbanization	12	19
Completely no urbanization	00	0
Total	66	100

Source: Primary Data 2023

Results from Table 2 above shows how respondents answered on the rate at which Mbarara city is becoming urbanized, a high rate of urbanization was the commonest response and this was represented by 45% of the respondents while 36% said that they there is a moderate rate of urbanization, 19% said that there is a low rate of urbanization and lastly none of the respondents said that there is completely no urbanization (Jackline et al., 2023).

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Table 3: how increased level of urbanization affects Mbarara city.

How increased level urbanization affects Mbarara city.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Increased urbanization creates employment opportunities.	28	42
Increased urbanization leads to over population	15	23
Increased urbanization causes insecurity in Mbarara city	19	29
Increased urbanization is a prone to disease outbreak in Mbarara city	04	6
Total	66	100

Source: *Primary Data 2023*

Findings in table 3 above show how respondents replied on how increased urbanization affects Mbarara city and the majority (42%) stated that it leads to increased employment while 23% stated that it leads to over population in Mbarara city, 29% of the respondents stated that increased urbanization causes insecurity and 6% stated that urbanization is a prone to disease outbreak as showed in the table above (Faridah et al., 2023).

Table 4: Effect of urbanization on centers and communities of Mbarara city.

Effect of urbanization on centers and communities of Mbarara city	Frequency	Percentage
Urbanization leads to increased trade in cities and communities.	24	37
Urbanization creates employment to the people in centers and communities	20	30
Urbanization improves social service provision in the centers and communities	16	24
Urbanization leads to wealth creation of individuals in the centers and communities	6	9
Total	66	100

Source: *Primary Data 2023*

The results of table 4 above, shows 37% responded that urbanization leads to increased trade, then 30% responded that urbanization creates employment for the people, 24% said that urbanization improves social service provision and finally 9% said that urbanization leads to wealth creation of individuals in the centers and communities of Mbarara city as shown in the table above (Allan et al., 2023).

Table 5: Urbanization has greatly affected centers and communities in Mbarara city

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Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very satisfactory	42	64
Satisfactory	10	15
Fair	8	12
Poor	6	9
Total	66	100

Source: Primary Data 2023

The study results of table 5 above indicates that 64% of the respondents answered very satisfactory, 15% answered satisfactory, 12% answered fair and 9% answered poor. This means that urbanization has greatly affected centers and communities in Mbarara city. Since majority of the respondents are satisfied with the highest percentage (64%) (Ntirandekura & Friday, 2022).

Summary of the Findings.

The research found out that the rate at which Mbarara city is becoming urbanized is prescribed inform of high rate of urbanization, moderate rate of urbanization, low rate of urbanization and completely no urbanization and the following are the results and findings obtained; majority agreed that Mbarara city is becoming highly urbanized with 45% of the respondents followed by moderate level of urbanization represented by 36% and then low rate of urbanization represented by 19% of the respondents and lastly none of the respondents suggested that Mbarara city is completely not urbanized as clearly indicated in table 1.

The study found out that there are ways how increased level of urbanization affects Mbarara city and these ways included; creation of employment represented by 42%, followed by causes insecurity (29%), leads to over population (23%) and finally increased urbanization being a prone to disease outbreak represented by 6% as indicated in table 2. The study found out that there were several ways how urbanization has affected the centers and communities of Mbarara city. Several respondents had opinion that urbanization leads to increased trade in the centers and communities and this was represented by 37% on table 8, followed by the factor that urbanization creates employment to the people represented by 30%, urbanization improves social service provision which is represented by 24% and finally urbanization leads to wealth creation of individuals in the centers and communities represented by 9% of the respondents which clearly indicate a great effect of urbanization on centers and communities of Mbarara city (Faith et al., 2023).

Conclusion.

Based on the findings, it is concluded that urbanization has positively affected the centers and communities in Mbarara city and this has increased the rate of development in the city. Urbanization had not only improved development in Mbarara city but also created a lot of employment to the people and brought social services nearer to the people.

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Recommendations.

The city council should emphasize constructing of permanent buildings to act as shops and rooms to deal business in other than the temporary buildings mostly in Biharwe division.

All political leaders should be sensitized to go ahead and attend high levels of education because some leaders could not understand some English statements and also failed to understand the reasons to why I was doing research despite the fact that prior explanation was given to them about the latter.

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