Rural Service Centre and Rural Development in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area of Rivers, Nigeria

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Abstract
The Nigeria rural areas though formed a significant portion of the country's population, have perpetually remained stagnated, backward and undeveloped compared to the urban areas despite their roles in national growth and development. It is in apparent responses to bridge the gap between the rural and urban societies to enhance better living conditions and overall rural development that this study sought to examine the role of rural service centre on rural development in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study was analysed using a total of two hundred and eighty-two (282) copies of retrieved questionnaire which formed the basis for analysis. Findings of the study revealed that Opobo town was the most appropriate settlement for rural development in the study area while the installation of telecommunication is the most appropriate factor needed for the development of the area. The study further revealed that land was a major factor that hinders the management of the rural service centre, Opobo town is the most appropriate for rural service centre and Opukalama happened to be the least community that has rural development. Arising from these findings, the study recommended amongst others, the enhancement of efficient location of central developmental facilities and the overall transformation of rural area in rivers state by the government and other development partners, the integration of the rural service centre in the planning framework of the government, proper equipment of these centres with central facilities and sensitization of the rural people about government projects to forestall abuse and defacing of critical installations.

Keywords: *Nigeria, Opobo, Rural Development, Rural Service Centre, Settlement*

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest problems of third world countries today is the high rate of rural-urban drift, making the population in the cities, more difficult to manage. This rural-urban drift poses serious challenges to the third world countries as only very few city governments have the resources and facilities to cope with such a rapidly growing population (Otto, 2008). The major cause of the high exodus to the urban areas is the neglect of rural areas, even though over 65 per cent of Nigerians are rural dwellers. The rural areas are generally characterized by a high level of illiteracy, abject poverty, unemployment and lack of other basic infrastructural facilities including housing, electricity and inadequate communication facilities, though in 2002 President Obasanjo introduced the GSM services which have been extended to semi-urban areas (Otto, 2008). The standard of living is generally low, this has partly informed the drift to urban areas where basic facilities are relatively more available and standards of living are higher.

The Nigeria rural area though formed a significant portion of the country's population, have perpetually remained stagnated, backward and undeveloped compared to the urban areas despite their roles in national growth and development. It is in apparent response to bridge the gap between the rural and urban societies, enhance better living conditions and overall rural development that this study sought to examine the role of rural service centres or rural development in Rivers State, Nigeria. Every human being existing on earth came from a tribe which makes up a rural community. In a similar direction, urbanization is said to be rapidly increasing in Nigeria yet the country is predominantly made up of village settlement with its economy dominated by peasant agriculture that is generally rural in character. Trager (1986) argued that the urban places in Nigeria impinged directly on a small proportion of the population. These cities have been growing at the expense of the rural areas that provide most of the resources for their growth. Mabogunje (1977) argued that the relationship between the urban places and surrounding hinterland has been parasitic rather than generative; with the recognition that large primate cities are growing ever large with little trickling down development effects, and that Nigeria's population is exceedingly rural. Emphasis has shifted from urban-based strategy to rural-based strategy.

Due to rural poverty and insecurity, many rural populaces have migrated to urban cities in search of greener pasture, the fact that most of them migrate to state capital because growth and development seem to be concentrated there and also at peripheral towns, which poses a serious problem due to influx of people into the city. This migration into the state capital has resulted in several problems among which are a shortage of housing facilities, high rent, slums, high pressure on existing educational, health, water, power and other infrastructural facilities, high crime rate and other social vices. Thus, unless the rural area is developed, the rural-urban centres themselves may experience both environmental and infrastructural decay as a result of heavy pressures from population movement. Moreover, grassroots development is imperative if we are to improve community production and diversify sources of foreign exchange. It is also an important means of assuring political and social stability not only within the local government but in the state and country in general.

Over the years, Governments have tried to salvage some rural areas. One of these attempts is the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) rural development and agricultural programme launched in 1976 with objectives of mobilizing all class of people in the country to embrace agricultural project enhance food production, create jobs and income to the people.

Since past rural development effort has failed and hence government cannot provide socio-economic facilities in all the numerous scattered and sparsely populated rural settlements at the same time, need therefore arises for an alternative means of locating or providing these socio-economic facilities to effectively trickledown development to the remotest parts of Rivers State, Nigeria (Onyasi, 2005).

There is an irony in the situation of Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State. They are endowed with oil which should translate into petrodollars, yet there is little or no development there. The LGA is not connected to the national grid forcing them to power their communities with generators. Opobo/Nkoro rural communities need electricity supply, water and other social amenities in the LGA. Both the oil companies and government are not bothered.

In the LGA there are some existing problems such as transportation, ecological challenges, economic empowerment, unemployment, poverty, lack of enough farmlands for agricultural purposes, lack of acquisition, social welfare, security problem, embankment and shore protection, tourism centres, rural water supply, bridge construction, education, eradication of illiteracy, rural housing scheme, mobile clinic and landing jetty. Effort should be intensified by the Federal

Government of Nigeria, Rivers State Government, LGA and NGOs within and outside of Nigeria and donor agencies such as UNESCO, NEPAD, IFAD, WHO, foreign countries etc, to come to the aid of the rural communities.

A recent study by rural British Planners on settlement policies and rural development suggested that before development plans, planners, especially in developing countries, should identify existing rural service centres and additional centres if need be to support investment in rural areas and also to build up certain key settlement into the ideal central village model whereby additional services provided in one central location will benefit a wide rural hinterland. The early development plan emphasized on existing central places; this does not only set the pattern for trend planning in rural areas but also had some considerable bearing on the introduction of key settlement policies which stress the importance of a centre's ability to service its surrounding areas. If rural service centres are supported in policy plan, it will continue to serve hinterland rural area as thus instilled in British rural settlement planning policy. The planning policies to also support selective resources allocation and has even been utilized as a model on which to base entirely new settlement pattern such as those on Dutch Polders, (Cloke, 2005).

Research has been done in Sudan on Rural Service Centre strategy, and the positive result has been achieved. FAO (2012) cooperated with the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Sudan and the Agricultural Bank of Sudan (ABS) on two projects developed on pilot sites along the Nile. The project involved building and directing the operation of rural service centres offering advice to farmers, access to agricultural inputs in specialized stores.

In Denmark from (1977-1990), there was increased crops yield through improved mineral fertilization, but the problem was how can those crops be accessible to the rural poor and as a result of this the government set up a pilot scheme for the distribution of agricultural inputs and it formed the starting point for the construction of 35 rural service centres. The rural service centre policy provided:

- Advice to the farmer in cultivation techniques.
- Supply of agricultural input and a means of distribution and accessibility.
- Short-term credit.

The second project was funded by Netherland (1990-1993) to strengthen those rural service centres and train a large number of extension agents. The result obtained from 52 rural service centres were so promising that ABS financed the expansion of its activities in other regions of Sudan. FAO (2012) concluded that rural service centres were powerful tools for rural development, agricultural growth and productivity. Indonesia government adopted this policy in central Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, South Kalimantan, Central Sulawesi, North Sulawesi, and south-east Sulawesi, and has since recorded huge success.

Bury St Edmunds also had a planning policy from (2001-2016) period to establish five settlements. This policy also defined rural service centres to provide important secondary service role to their local population and their immediate surrounding rural hinterland. The paper concluded by stating that all the rural service centres accord the criteria of the development strategy of the country structure plan and the facilities that they provided are not generally available in other villages in the borough. (Bury St Edmunds Local Plan Part 2, 2001-2016). Both the Provincial Growth and Development Strategy and the Integrated Rural Development White Paper place particular emphasis on the concept of the identification, establishment and promotion of rural service centres (now Rural Service Systems). These systems are seen as practical ways forward towards enhancing service delivery, both infrastructural and social, to rural communities deprived of such facilities in

the past at Mbazwana in Uthungulu District Council of Kwazulu-Natal province South Africa, (Shanmugam, 2003).

Similar work was done in Hampshire, in the plan for Lindsey, Lincolnshire. The plan followed the standard practice for overtaking a survey of villages facilities and using this information to create a hierarchy of service centres, each servicing a stipulated hinterland. Durham County Council adopted this policy to create a more modern, efficient and compact settlement pattern appropriate to the needs of 20th century by concentrating new development in that settlements which have more hopeful economic future and where, in the long-run, better living conditions can be provided, (Cornwall, 2005).

A Durham County Council research work by a team headed by Raygreen in 2005 indicated that any settlement of fewer than 5,000 populations is likely to be able to support a reasonably full range of facilities in the future; a population of 5,000 might well be taken as a theoretical minimum for planning rural settlement in future. The best-known example of a plan decline policy was initiated by Durham county council in 1954, where the dense network of 19th-century mining villages had been anachronized by 20th-century pit closures and where a definite need was perceived.

It is commonly recognized that planning policies have led to the definite improvement of residents of the key villages and their community hinterlands. Studies on rural development and rural service centres provide evidence that shows by a large extent, that residential and employment growth had been concentrated in the selected centres where services and infrastructure had been provided. A series of documents from (Kovalev, 1972: Voskresensky, 1976: Mclaughlin, 1976, Woodruffe, 1976 and Pallot 1977) have served to outline the development of a strong framework policy for rural settlements in the Soviet Union. The elimination of rural-urban differences has been central to the theoretical guidance offered by Marx, Engels and Lenin, and therefore planner in rural soviet areas have been given the task of directing the process of resource concentration, which would create an equality between rural and urban life.

Despite all these studies, there is no known research on the analysis of rural centres and rural development in Opobo/Nkoro LGA of Rivers State, Nigeria. This is the gap that this present study seeks to fill.

1.1 Conceptual Underpinnings

- **Growth Poles Strategy in Regional Planning**

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, industrialized and developing countries alike applied the growth poles concept in their urban, regional and national developments planning. After as almost twenty years period of reaction (Late 1970s and 1980s) on the growth pole 'dogma,' the growth poles process has been evolved during the last two decades.

The formulation of a regional development strategy is a basic requirement for the successful implementation of regional programming. A constitutive element of the strategy is the selection of the spatial or regional development model. Internationally, there are two dominant models. The growth poles and diffusion models, and the model of integrated-local-endogenous development. The first perspective refers to the attraction of activities and the concentration of growth is expected to occur towards the surrounding region (Perroux 1988; Boudeville, 1966). The second model refers to the integrated spatial development which is based on the utilization of the endogenous potential of the regions (Coffey and Polere, 1985, Barquero, 1991, Garofoli, 2000)

The strategy that is based on the growth poles model has roots in the field at an international level since the beginning of the 20th century most specifically after world war two and it constituted a 'dogma'.

Most of the regional development policies and theories of that period were based on the hypothesis of the almost complete identification of the industrialization with enlargement and growth. The major objective has been the increase of the industrial product and the concentration of development in large urban centres (growth poles) which had the necessary prerequisites (i.e. infrastructure, external economies, labour force, market etc) for the attraction and operation of large industrial complexes – propulsive industries, (Lasuen, 1969).

Thus, according to Hadjimichalis (1992) and Christofokis (2001), 'Top-Down' intervention prevails which mean the state intervention should be intense through the means of regional policy, to boost the process of concentration and diffusion of growth from the pole cut to the other areas.

On a theoretical level, the explanation of regional disparities by Myrdal (cumulative causation) as well as the concentration and dispersion theories as mainly expressed by Christaller (central place), Perroux (enlargement poles) and Bourdeville (Growth poles), have greatly supported the formation of the growth poles and diffusion model (Rodriguez et al; 2006). The work of Perroux (1955) is considered perhaps the most significant contribution to the theory of growth poles, mainly through the connection of the growth poles with the operation of "propulsive industries" that exert positive influences on the surrounding area. Growth poles, metropolis centres and growth axes are the main forms of polar concentrations (Lois Gonzalez, 2004).

The period from world war two until almost the mid-1970s can be characterized as a period of implementation of growth poles strategy in developed as well as developing countries of the world like Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, France, Great Britain, Italy, Peru, Spain, United State, Venezuela (Friedmann and weaver, 1979; Richardson, 1981, Borquero, 1991; Hadjimidaalis, 1992).

These developments have caused a shift in the dominant perspectives regarding regional development, resulting in most significantly in a departure from the 'dogma' of growth poles, a process that was never concluded, however, on the contrary, it evolved since the process of Economic growth parse reinforces various types of spatial concentrations. The theoretical approaches of the "new economic geography' were based on this acknowledgement, emphasizing the increasing returns to scale, due to the geographic concentration (Krugman, 1999). The effect of transport and the role of hubs in the formation of dynamic urban centres, (Fujita and Mori 1996). The industrial spatial organization and concentration economic (Krugmann and Venables, 1996) as well as the role of cities and urban networks in the global economic system and commercial relations (Fujito et al, 1999). These approaches, despite the difficulty of their systematic adaptation to both national and regional levels of capital development planning, offer new evidence for the explanation and the dynamics of spatial organization and this evidence should be taken into consideration in any growth plan (Clinch and O Neill, 2009; Venuecla Jimenez et al; 2010).

1.2 Study Area

Opobo/Nkoro(also spelt as Opobo-Nkoro) is one of the 23 LGAs in Rivers State, Nigeria. It is part of the Andoni/Opobo/Nkoro Federal constituency of the Nigeria National Assembly from Rivers State. The capital of Opobo/Nkoro LGA is Opobo Town. Opobo/Nkoro people are mainly farmers and mostly fishermen. They are of Igbo extraction. They speak Igbo and Ibani language just like their neighbouring Bonny, founded by Ndokis of Azuogu slaves from the hinterland who transformed the demography of the area when the transatlantic slave trade was abolished. Ijaws who came in as porters also settled there and the Igbo language was adopted although there are no

indigenous Ijaw communities there, most Ijaw migrants and porters have fully been integrated into the original indigenous Igbo communities, (Alfred, 2009).

Opobo/Nkoro is located in Rivers State (Table 1). Opobo has as neighbours the Andonis (North), Ogonis (West) and the people of IkotAbasi – Akwa Ibom (South) formerly, it was under Andoni/Opobo LGA until 1996 when it became the headquarters of the newly created Opobo/Nkoro LGA, some of the major town sharing an affinity with Opobo or in the which the Opobian are located which include Queen's Town, Epelima, Minima, Okilebiama and Kilabiara, (Alfred, 2009).

Opobo was founded in 1870 and made up of several Islands and communities, mainly Opobo Town, Queen's Town, Kalasunju, Kalaibiama and Epellama, while a part of the region is now in Akwa Ibom state, made up of the Ikot Abasi, Kampa. Jaja and his group secured a geographical location that reinforced their tactical and diplomatic vision as founding fathers. The land stood just about a day's paddle away from their ancestral Ibani roots with it they were set to turn their new kingdom into a unique 19th-century bridge for commerce, (Alfred, 2009).

The communities of the kingdom sprawl out in a geographical canvass co-ordinate of latitude 04^{o}34'N and longitude 07^{o}12'E. The kingdom is located on the interphase between Imo River estuary and the Atlantic Ocean which has surrounded Opobo with more blackish that saline water. They derive from the volume of runoff of freshwater into Imo River estuary from the hinterland and the large rainfall of over 6000mm per annum. The result is a more delicate ecosystem. It is mixed with the flora and fauna or both fresh water tolerant species such as the Nypa palm vegetation as well as a saline sensitive stock of shellfishes. There are also flourish of rare mangrove forests of white and red varieties. Its population in 1991 was about 49,862 and by projection of 2003, has a population of about 89,726. (Jaja, 2005).

The climate is tropical in Opobo town. Opobo Town has significant rainfall most months, with a short dry season according to Kapen and Geiger, this climate is classified as 'AM'. The average arrival temperature in Opobo Town is 26.7^{o}C. About 3557mm of precipitation falls annually. The precipitation varies 529mm between the driest month and wettest month. The variation in annual temperature is around 2.5^{o}C. (Cookey-Gam, 2009).

With an average of 27.9^{o}C, March is the warmest month. At 25.4^{o}C on average July is the coldest of the year, (Cookey-Gam, 2009).

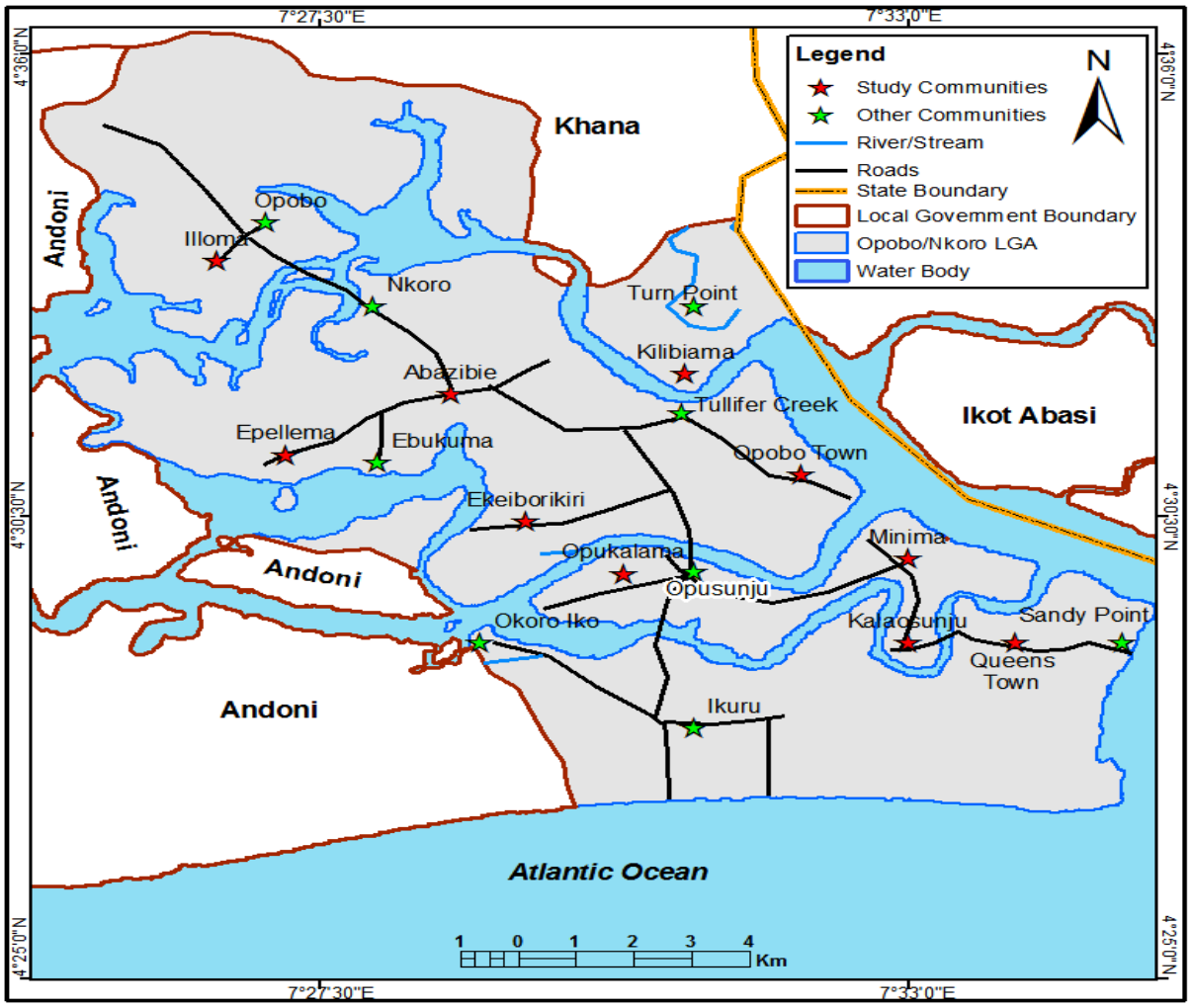

Figure 1. Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area
Source: Office of the Surveyor-General of Rivers State

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design used for this study is the cross-sectional survey research design which is a type of observational study that involves the analysis of data collected from a population or a representative.

The researcher used both primary and secondary data. The primary data consists of information obtained using a structured questionnaire and direct observation. The secondary data were gathered from journal articles, textbooks, and news from government report as well as other literature reviews. The population of the study consists of the ten communities in Opobo/Nkoro LGA of River State.

Two reasons informed the choice of these communities.

- They are the ten most populated communities in the LGA.
- Their spatial arrangement within the LGA gave a full representation of the study area.

The sampled communities are Illoma, Epellema, Ekeriborikiri, Opukama, Kalibiama, Opobotown, Minima, Queens town, Abazibie and Kalasunju. The participants in these communities were selected using simple random sampling techniques.

To effectively cover the scope for this study, 318 copies of questionnaires were properly administered while 282 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved which formed the basis for analysis as shown in Table 1 below

Table 1. Administration and Retrieval of Questionnaires

LGA	ZONES	Names of Selected Communities	No of Estimated Households	No of Questionnaire Administered	No of Questionnaire Retrieved
Opobo/ Nkoro	**OPOBO 1**	1. Illoma	305	30	29
		2. Epellema	306	32	30
		3. EKeiborikiri	391	30	29
		4.Queens town	300	33	30
	OPOBO 2	5. Opukalama	399	29	20
		6. Kalibiama	400	33	29
		7.Opobo town	387	29	25
		8.Minima	392	32	29
	NKORO	9.Abazibie	399	31	29
		10.Kalasunju	390	39	32
Total			3,669	318	282

The data collected were subjected to descriptive statistics, using simple statistical tools such as mean, median, mode, percentage and frequency in analyzing the research questions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of data results from the field survey illustrated with the aid of appropriate tables.

3.1 Socio-Economic Conditions of Respondents

Tables 2 – 4 highlights the socio-economic conditions of the respondents in Opobo/Nkoro LGA.

Table 2: Age/Sex of Respondents

Age	Sex				
	Male	%	Female	%	Total
<18	8	4.04	8	9.52	16
18-30	7	3.53	18	21.4	25

31-45	12	6.06	14	16.66	26
46-60	79	39.8	24	28.5	103
60 & above	92	46.46	20	23.80	112
Total	198	100	84	100	282

Table 2 above shows that 70.21% are male while females are 29.78%. It further shows that the age bracket 60 and above has the highest respondents of 46.46% for the male while for the female the age bracket 46-60 has the highest percentage of 28.5%. This is indicative of the reliability of the data collected because the age group is matured and responsible.
Those under the age bracket of 46-60 years are next with 39.8% for male and age bracket above 60 with 23.80% for female. This is followed by the age bracket of 31-45years, less than 18 and 18-30 with the frequencies of 6.6%, 4.04% and 3.53% for the male while for the female age bracket 18-30, 31-45 and less than 18 has the percentage 21.4%, 16.66 and 9.52% respectively.

Table 3 reveals that civil service constitutes the highest percentage of the respondents with 25.17%, followed by transportation with 18.4% and agriculture with 14.18%, other skills 9.92% and petty trading with 9.57%. It further depicts that Metalwork/blacksmithing, tailoring and Fishermen had the lowest percentage of respondent of 5.31% 7.09%, 8.1% respectively.

Table 3: Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Fishermen	23	8.1
Agriculture	40	14.18
Metalwork/Blacksmith	15	5.31
Woodwork/Carpentry	6	2.12
Petty Trading	27	9.57
Transportation	52	18.4
Tailoring	20	7.09
Civil Service	71	25.17
Other	28	9.92
Total	282	100

Table 4: Major Income and Education of Respondents

Monthly Income (=N=)	Frequency	%	Education Tertiary	Frequency	%
<10,000	35	12.41	No education	89	31.56
10,001 - 20,000	46	16.31	Non-Formal	21	7.44
20,001 - 30,000	47	16.67	Primary	100	35.46
30,001- 40,000	54	19.14	Secondary	21	7.44
40,001- 50,000	50	17.73	Tertiary (ND, NCE)	20	7.09
>50,000	50	17.73	11(PGD BSc, MSc & PhD)	31	10.99
Total	282	100		282	100

Table 4, on the other hand, shows the major income and education of the respondent in the study area. In terms of income, 45.39% of the respondent are living below the poverty line as well as the Federal Government minimum wage of N30,000.00 (Thirty Thousand Naira only) per month. It is shown that 54.6% earn over the appropriate minimum wage of above N30, 000.00 (Thirty Thousand Naira Only). The implication of those earning above the minimum wage is that they will be fully aware of the importance of rural service centre in the study area.
In terms of education, Table 4 reveals that holders of primary education certificate form bulk of the educational level of the respondent with 35.7%. The frequency is as a result of the rural nature and lack of rural service centre in the study area.

3.2 Settlements that are Appropriate for Rural Service Center

Table 5 Settlement that would be Most Appropriate for a Rural Service Centre

Communities	**4- SA**	**3- A**	**2- SD**	**1- D**	**TOTAL**	**MEAN**	**Decision**	**Ranking**
Illoma	149(596)	49(147)	5(10)	79(79)	832	2.9	Accept	6th
Epellema	150(600)	56(168)	9(18)	67(67)	853	3.0	Accept	5th
Ekeiborikiri	125(500)	40(120)	4(8)	113(113)	741	2.6	Accept	8th
Opukalama	90(360)	40(120)	2(4)	150(150)	634	2.2	Reject	10th
Kalabiama	192(768)	76(228)	14(28)	-	1024	3.6	Accept	2nd
Opobo Town	200(800)	80(240)	2(4)	--	1044	3.7	Accept	1ST

Minima	130(520)	45(135)	3(6)	104(104)	765	2.7	Accept	7th
Queens Town	180(720)	70(210)	11(22)	21(21)	973	3.4	Accept	3rd
Abazibie	100(400)	35(75)	2(4)	145(145)	624	2.2	Reject	9th
Kalasunju	162(648)	65(195)	10(20)	42(42)	905	3.2	Accept	4th

The figures in parenthesis are response frequencies
SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree. Likert scale =2.5

Table 5 shows respondents view on a settlement that will be most appropriate for a rural service centre in the study area. The result shows that the Opobo town ranked 1st with a mean Likert score of 3.7. The result also revealed that Kalabiama, Queens town, Kalasunju, Epellema, Illoma, Minima, Ekeiborikiri, Abazibie and Opukalalma ranked 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th,9th and 10th respectively. It can be deduced from here that the most appropriate settlement for the rural service centre is Opobo town because of its mean Likert score of 3.7 while the least appropriate settlement for the rural service centre is Opukalama with a mean Likert score of 2.2 which was rejected.
The status and strategic location of Opobo town as the capital of the LGA may have informed the choice as the most appropriate settlement for the rural service centre.

3.3 Rural Service Centre Facilities Most Appropriate for Development

Table 6 shows respondents view on rural service centre facility that will be appropriate for the development of the area.

Table 6: Rural Service Centre Facility Most Appropriate for Development in the Area

Communities	Facilities					
	Banks	Shopping Centres	Telecommunication mast	Recreational Activity	Others	Total
Illoma	7	9	8	4	1	29
Epellema	9	5	9	5	2	30
Ekeiborikiri	5	4	10	4	6	29
Opukalama	3	4	3	5	5	20
Kalabiama	4	3	4	9	9	29
Opobo town	5	7	6	3	4	25
Minima	4	9	10	5	1	29

Queens town	5	6	12	7	-	30
Abazibie	8	6	7	4	4	29
Kalasunju	7	4	3	9	9	32
Total	57	57	72	55	41	282

Table 6 depicts the individual respondent view on the rural service centre that will be appropriate for the development of the area. Out of the 282 people understudy in 10 communities, opinions were varied as follows, Banks (57 persons), Shopping Centers, (57 persons), Telecommunication mast (72 persons), Recreational activity (55 persons), and others (41 persons). Thus, with the analyzed result, it implies that telecommunication mast is appropriately needed for fast development of the area.

3.4 Factors that Hinder the Efficient Management of Rural Service Centre

Table 7 below shows respondents view on factors that hinder the efficient management of the rural service centre.

Table 7: Factors that Hinder the Efficient Management of Rural Service Centre

Communities	Factors					
	Security	Poor Access Road	Land	Community Interference	Others	Total
Illoma	9	7	4	8	1	29
Epellema	4	10	5	9	2	30
Ekeiborikiri	5	4	10	7	3	29
Opukalama	3	4	3	8	2	20
Kalabiama	2	5	9	4	9	29
Opobo town	7	1	10	6	1	25
Minima	4	9	10	5	1	29
Queens town	2	9	12	5	2	30
Abazibie	4	10	5	6	4	29

Kalasunju	4	10	3	7	8	32
Total	44	69	71	65	33	282

Table 7 revealed individual responses to the factors that hinder the efficient management of the rural service centre. Out of the 282 respondents in the 10 communities, opinions were based as follows, security (44 persons), Poor access road, (69 persons), Land (71 persons), Community Interference (65 persons) and others (35persons).
Thus, with the analyzed result it implies that the major factor that hinders the efficient management of the rural service centre in the study area is the lack of land for meaningful development.

3.5 Difference in Number of Rural Service Facilities in Opobo/Nkoro LGA

Table 8 shows the respondents view on the difference in the number of facilities in the study area.

Table 8: Difference in Number of Rural Service Facilities in the Study Area

Communities	Difference				
	<2	<3	<4	<5	Total
Illoma	-	29	-	-	29
Epellema	-	-	30	-	30
Ekeiborikiri	-	29	-	-	29
Opukalama	20	-	-	-	20
Kalabiama	-	29	-	-	29
Opobo town	-	-	-	25	25
Minima	-	-	29	-	29
Queens town	-	30	-	-	30
Abazibie	-	-	29	-	29
Kalasunju	-	32	-	-	32
Total					282

Table 8 shows the respondents' view of the differences in the number of rural service facilities in the study area. Out of the 282 respondents in the study area, opinions were based as follows, Illoma (<3), Epellema (<4), Ekeiborikiri (<3), Opukalama (<2), Kalabiama (<3), Opobo town (<5), Minima (<4), Queens town (<3), Abazibie (<4) and Kalansunju
(<3)
The analyzed result implies that the community that has the least number of the rural service centre is Opukalama with less than two (<2) rural service centre while the community that has the highest number of rural service centre is Opobo town with less than five (<5)

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Discussions arising from the findings of this study cannot be overemphasized.
The result of the study as revealed in Table 3 shows that civil service constitutes the highest percentage of the respondents with 25.17%, followed by transportation with 18.4% and agriculture

with 14.18%, other skills 9.92% and petty trading with 9.57%. It further depicts that Metalwork/blacksmithing, tailoring and Fishermen had the lowest percentage of respondent of 5.31% 7.09%, 8.1% respectively. This result is consistent with the study of Adeboye (2015) which associated rural development to association with highly valued land uses including farming, grazing, lumbering, forestry, hunting, fishing, mining and settlement among others. Despite these, the rural environment in Nigeria experiences socio-economic difficulties which makes their inhabitants to be highly deprived.

Table 4 reveals that holders of primary education certificate (35.7%) form the bulk of the educational level of the respondents in the study area. This can be attributed to the rural nature and lack of rural service centre in the study area. Adeboye (2015) affirmed that rural development is a way of improving or making accessible development and comfort to the rural dwellers by providing land for agriculture, water, loans and training. He believed that before a rural area can be said to be developed, rural poor should have access to basic needs, including academic institutions, and so on, in a way which does not burden the environment or reduce biodiversity.

Majority of the respondents strongly agree that Opobo town is mostly suitable for the appropriate location of rural development centre as indication shows that the town has the highest population of people in the Local Government Area. This finding agrees with Otigba (2013) which defined rural development as a strategy designed to improve the socio-economic and social life of the people in the rural areas. He added that rural development constitutes a process of planned change for which one approach or the other is adopted foe the improvement and or transformation of the rural populace. Adelakun (2013) also believed that rural development is the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas. He stated further that rural development has traditionally centred on the exploitation of land-intensive natural resources such as agriculture and forestry.

Findings from the study which focused on the kind of rural service centre that will be most appropriate for the development of the area shows the respondents had the opinion that installation of more telecommunication which will aid communication which will catalyze to promote development. Laah (2013) viewed rural development to include the provision of social and physical infrastructure, the provision of financial services in non-urban areas, non-farm and small-medium enterprises activities in rural communities and market towns that are more closely linked to the rural economy than they are to the economies of the larger urban cities, as well as the development of traditional rural sectors, such as agriculture and natural resources management. It noted key elements that will facilitate the realization of rural development to include social infrastructure, physical infrastructure and financial services. The dynamics of these three elements pave the way for the upliftment of the living condition of rural households. Observing events and issues related to such dynamics can facilitate the measurement of the constructs of rural development.

Also, Ogeidefa (2010) alleged rural development to be an integrated approach to food production, provision of physical, social and institutional infrastructures with an ultimate goal of bringing about good telecommunication, healthcare delivery system, affordable and quality education, improved and sustainable agriculture, etc. Rural development can be simply understood to be the creation of infrastructural facilities that bring about a high standard of living in the villages.

Further findings in Table 8 revealed that land was a major factor that hinders the efficient development and management of rural service centre as it was discovered that there was not enough land to build the infrastructure of international standard. Okafor (2008) noted that rural service centre is of growth initiation and development transmission to their hinterland. Sequel to

this, rural service centres perform enormous roles in rural development which are very paramount but requires land for expansion. The ultimate role of the service centre is that of settlement stabilization and transmission of development to their surroundings. Okafor (2008) further stressed that for rural service centres to stabilize rural settlements and stem out-migration, they perform two basic functions. Firstly, they support a package of services which are crucial in holding settlements together. Secondly, they transmit growth impulses to the surrounding settlements in the lower order hierarchy through the spatio-economic linkage that exist between the centres and other lower-order settlements and availability of land is central for this function.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study was carried out to analyze rural service centre and rural development in Opobo/Nkoro LGA of River State, Nigeria, focusing on ten communities in the area. The study analyzed the most appropriate settlement for the rural service centre, identified the kind of rural service centre facility that will be most appropriate for development, identified factors that hinder the efficient management of rural service centre and the difference in several rural services.

Opobo town was discovered as the most appropriate settlement for rural development in the study area while the installation of telecommunication mast was largely seen as the most appropriate stimulus for the development of the area. Nevertheless, land was seen as a major factor hindering the efficient management of the rural service.

Consequently, to enhance the location of central developmental facilities and overall transformation of rural areas in Rivers State, we suggest official adoption and integration of the rural service centres into planning framework of the State, proper equipment of the service centres with facilities like electricity and good communication services, efficient functioning of the administrative facilities located in the service centres. We further recommend serious sensitization of the rural people on the protection of government projects in their areas to forestall abuse and defacing of such government projects in their communities. This could be made realistic through much emphasis on participatory project development and adequate funding of government projects.

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