

**SKILL NEEDS OF AGRARIAN MIGRANTS IN LOW-INCOME URBAN SETTLEMENTS IN  
PORT-HARCOURT CITY OF THE NIGER DELTA REGION, NIGERIA.**

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**Abstract**

*This study investigated skill needs of agrarian migrants in low-income urban settlements in Port Harcourt city of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was used to select seven (7) out of the eleven (11) settlement Areas in Port Harcourt City Local Government, then 15 respondents were purposively selected from each of the settlements to give a total sample size of one hundred and five (105) respondents. Data were collected with the aid of an interview schedule from 105 agrarian migrants in the study area. Data were analyzed with the use of frequency, percentage, and mean and chi-square statistic. The skills to which migrants expressed need include hair dressing (mean = 2.50), computer operation (mean = 2.50), dry cleaning (mean = 2.54), tailoring (mean = 2.54), bag making (mean = 2.50), shoe making (mean = 2.50), baking and confectionary (mean = 2.52) among others. Challenges encountered by migrants in skill acquisition in the study area include Poor awareness of skill acquisition programmes (mean = 2.89), high cost of skill acquisition (mean = 3.24), lack of finance (mean = 3.00), inadequate training centers (mean = 2.70), training facilities (mean = 2.97), poor targeting of skill acquisition programmes (mean = 3.24). The significant factors that influenced skill needs of agrarian migrants were Age ( $p = 0.003$ ), marital status ( $p = 0.004$ ), occupation ( $p = 0.018$ ), Length of residence ( $p = 0.014$ ) and educational level ( $p = 0.015$ ). It was concluded that agrarian migrants in the study area have a wide range of skill needs with trading as their most common interest. Also they were faced with several challenges in their bid to access their skill interest. It was therefore recommended that Non-governmental organizations, philanthropic organizations, government agencies and groups should mount accessible skill acquisition programmes with sufficient trainers and training facilities in low-income urban settlements to enable greater numbers of migrants benefit.*

**Keywords:** Skill needs, Agrarian migrants, Low income, urban settlements.

**1.0 Introduction**

History of human society is replete with migration from one community to another. Migration has been a persistent feature of human existence. Rohen (1995) identified distinct periods of migration within the last four centuries namely; the 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century,

migration within Europe, Africa and Asia, permanent settlements in colonies; 1500s to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, slave trade era; 1550 to the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century, migration to the new world; 1800 to 1930, post World War II migration; late 1940s to 1960s and post 1970s migration. The various periods of population movement have played major roles in shaping the structure and function of human society. Two broad groups of societies affected are the rural society and the urban society.

In Nigeria, migration trend takes the form of rural to rural, rural to urban, urban to rural, or urban to urban migration. However population movement favours rural to urban migration. The above forms of population movement have been pronounced in Port Harcourt, which is at the center of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. This phenomenon, triggered off by the oil boom of the 1970s has been heightened by various factors such as wars and communal conflicts, religious intolerance, poverty and search for new economic opportunities. According to Xiaochu (2012) although there are several motivations behind rural to urban migration, economic motivations are unquestionably the primary motivation. Ajaero and Onokala (2013) observed that there is increasing voluntary migration from less developed areas especially in developing countries in search of perceived or real opportunities and quest for better quality of life. Rural to urban migration has played major role in urbanization and development of migrant destinations. For example rural to urban migration was a contributing factor to the industrial revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. However in recent times rural to urban migration has been a cause of concern in many developing countries. The 2013 World Population Policy Reports state that among 185 countries with available detail in 2013, 80 per cent of governments had policies to lower rural to urban migration, which was an increase from 38 percent in 1996 especially among developing countries, particularly in Africa and Asia (Tocoli, *et al.*, 2015).

Despite government efforts to stem the tide, there is still high level of rural to urban migration with serious development and social implications. According to Tocoli *et al.* (2015), in many cities migrants constitute the large population of urban poor, with income and non-income disadvantages such as difficulty in affording adequate housing, long working hours in low-paid jobs, insecure and unsafe jobs, settlements lacking basic infrastructure, poor access to social security, education and health

services, and this problem is prevalent amongst migrants, especially among low skilled migrants, with labour and informal sector work as their only source of income. These negative conditions are largely due to the wide difference between urban and rural areas in terms of structural pattern, institutional structure, system of administration, job types amongst others. These migrants constitute various groups including the poor, the landless, the distressed, vulnerable groups and agrarian people. Among the above mentioned groups, the agrarian migrants become very significant because of their background in farming.

Agrarian migrants are the segment of the population in new settlement areas who were involved in agricultural production as their major means of livelihood but in urban areas they are unable to continue their livelihood base because land for agricultural activities is either not readily available or too expensive to afford. In various urban settlements in Nigeria with special reference to the Niger Delta Region, agrarian migrants live in the very poor housing or low-income areas such as slums, shanties, and squatter settlements with far reaching consequences on their health and security. Most of them are unable to afford education, transportation and other basic amenities. The need for more finances to cater for the expensive feeding and other necessities, in some cases compel them to indulge in street hawking of petty goods, child labour and social vices. Due to lack of employable skills for gainful employment in an urban livelihood setting, young migrant are often underemployed in the urban areas. Consequently, they engage in social vices while others engage in unskilled labour; working long hours in low paying jobs, which affect their health and living conditions. According to Oxford Economics (2009) knowledge and skill intensive jobs are on the increase in urban areas, higher employment rates and higher wage levels are associated with higher skills. These are beyond the migrants and therefore demand that they are exposed to relevant skills.

Despite the interest of migrants, most are unable to access government and other sponsored skill acquisition programs and are unable to afford skill acquisition programs from private institutions. Other issue include whether available skill training programmes meet the interest and needs of agrarian migrants in their new settlements. The above concern raises the need to investigate the skill needs of agrarian migrants in low-income urban settlements in Port Harcourt city of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. In specific terms, the study is designed to; describe the socio-economic characteristics of

agrarian migrants; identify skill needs of agrarian migrants in Port Harcourt City of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria; ascertain the challenges faced by agrarian migrants in acquiring relevant skills; and determine the relationship between socio-economic characteristics and skill needs of agrarian migrants in the study area.

## 2.0 Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Port Harcourt City of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Port Harcourt City Local Government lies on latitude  $7^{\circ} 00'$  east and longitude  $4^{\circ} 75'$  north. Port Harcourt City Local Government is bounded in the north by Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, in the east by Eleme Local Government Area, in the west by Emouha Local Government Area and in the south by Akuku-toru Local Government Area. Port Harcourt City Local Government has a total area of  $360\text{km}^2$  with a population of one million, three hundred and eighty two thousand five hundred and ninety two (National Population Commission (NPC), 2006). Port Harcourt city local government was purposively selected because of its status as the center and the most populated agrarian migrant destination in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. The population of the study was composed of all the agrarian migrants in low-income areas of Port Harcourt city. Simple random sampling technique was used to select seven (7) out of the eleven (11) settlement Areas in Port Harcourt City Local Government, then 15 respondents were purposively selected from each of the settlements to give a total sample size of one hundred and five (105) respondents. The instrument for data collection was a structured interview schedule designed in three sections and validated by the researchers. Section A sought for responses on the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and nominal scale was used to measure the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. Section B contained thirty-seven item clusters on possible skill needs while Section C contained thirteen-item statements on possible challenges in securing needed skills in the study area. Responses to items in Sections B and C were measured using a 4-point Likert-type rating scale of agreement, where SA (strongly agree) = 4, A (agree) = 3, D (disagreed) = 2 and SD (strongly disagree) = 1. The values of the scale (4, 3, 2 and 1) were summed up to obtain 10. The mean value of the sum gave 2.50, which became the benchmark for accepting any item as possible skill need and the challenges in securing needed skills by the respondents. Data collected were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean and chi-square.

### 3.0 Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Socio-Economic Characteristics of Agrarian Migrants.

Results on the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents were presented on Table 1.

**Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Agrarian Migrants**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	52	49.5
Female	53	50.5
<b>Total</b>	105	100.0
<b>Age Categories</b>		
20-29	21	20.0
30-39	56	53.3
40-59	25	23.8
60 and Above	3	2.9
<b>Total</b>	105	100.0
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	34	32.4
Married	69	65.7
Divorced	1	1.0
Widowed	1	1.0
<b>Total</b>	105	100.0
<b>Educational level</b>		
No Formal Education	18	17.1
Primary	18	17.1
Secondary	53	50.5
Tertiary	16	15.3
<b>Total</b>	105	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Length of Residency</b>		
1 – 5 years	26	24.8
6 – 10 years	35	33.3
11 – 15 years	34	32.4
16 years and above	10	9.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

The gender distribution of respondents showed that 49.5% were males and 50.5% were females. This implies that approximately equal representation of both male and female agrarian migrants were found in the study area. Majority of the respondents were within 30-39 years age (53.3%). This indicates that majority of the agrarian migrants were young adults. The finding confirms the observation by Ajaero and Onokala (2013) that there is a continuous decline in the population of youths and young adults in rural areas. The trend could result in reduction in the availability of farm labour in rural areas and increase of population in the urban slums and shanties. Results in Table 1 further revealed that majority of the respondents were married (65.7%). This places on them family responsibilities that demand viable skills for a sustainable livelihood. It was also revealed that majority of respondents 65.8% have a minimum of secondary education indicating

that majority of the agrarian migrants could have capacity for low paid skills and livelihood interests as a result of their level of education. In addition, with 84.7% of the respondents having secondary education or lower, it implies that most agrarian migrants lack the relevant qualification for better employment opportunities in the urban areas. This finding agrees with the view in Oxford Economics (2009) that knowledge and skill intensive jobs are on the increase in urban areas, higher employment rates and higher wage levels are associated with higher skills and higher education.

Result on the length of residence indicates that 33.3% and 32.4% the migrants have spent 6-10 years and 11-15 years respectively in the study area. This implies that the agrarian migrants have spent reasonable time to enable them adjust to livelihood realities in their new residences.

### 3.2 Skill Needs of Agrarian Migrants in the Study Area.

Entries on Table 2 show the possible skill needs of agrarian migrants in the study area.

**Table 2: Skill needs of Agrarian migrants in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area**

S/N	Skills	Mean	Remark
1.	Welding	1.32	Not needed
2.	Hair dressing	2.50	Needed
3.	Barbing	1.17	Not needed
4.	Motorcycle Service	1.10	Not needed
5.	Keke-napep service	1.14	Not needed
6.	Plumbing	1.35	Not needed
7.	Carpentry	1.10	Not needed
8.	Bicycle Repair	1.02	Not needed
9.	Motorcycle Repair	1.27	Not needed
10.	Kekenapep Repair	1.30	Not needed
11.	Vehicle Repair	1.43	Not needed
12.	Computer Operation	2.50	Needed
13.	Dry cleaning	2.54	Needed
14.	Masonry	1.32	Not needed
15.	Electrical installation	1.41	Not needed
16.	Tailoring	2.50	Needed
17.	Bridal makeup	1.73	Not needed
18.	Bead making	1.71	Not needed
19.	Bag making	2.50	Needed
20.	Shoe making	2.50	Needed
21.	Aluminum Door/window installation	1.31	Not needed
22.	Oil palm processing	1.37	Not needed
23.	Phone Repair	1.23	Not needed
24.	Confectionary and baking	2.52	Needed
25.	Photography and video coverage	1.39	Not needed
26.	Computer Repair	1.31	Not needed
27.	Soap making	1.43	Not needed
28.	Printing press operation	1.57	Not Needed
29.	Restaurant Management	2.51	Needed
30.	Generator Repair	1.21	Not needed
31.	Graphic design	1.30	Not needed
32.	Taxi/Bus Transport System	2.51	Needed
33.	Horticulture	1.41	Not needed
34.	Interior decoration	2.11	Not Needed
35.	Domestic gas Refill	1.30	Not needed
36.	Trading	2.87	Needed

*Source:* Field Survey 2015

Mean values < 2.50 are not needed while mean values  $\geq$  2.50 are needed.

The result indicated that hair dressing (mean = 2.50) is a major skill need among the respondents. The finding may be due to the fact that both men and women in the urban areas are paying attention to their physical appearance and beauty. They need hair dressing services. Also computer operation (mean = 2.50) was found to be a skill need among the respondents. This finding may be due to the numerous computer operating/business centres in the study area that offer ready employment to individuals with computer skills. Dry cleaning (mean = 2.54) was also indicated as a skill need. Dry cleaning service has become more lucrative business in most urban areas. It offers ready source of income to practitioners especially in an increasing urban

population of working class where the average family depend on the services of dry cleaners to keep the family clothes and wears clean. The service appear generally acceptable than an in-house maids and servants with its attendant wage bill. Result on Table 2 revealed that tailoring (mean = 2.50) represents a skill need among the respondents in the study area. This finding agrees with previous finding by Matthews-Njoku and Nwaogwugwu (2014) that tailoring and weaving are non-farm livelihood strategy among low income segment of the population. Tailoring seems to sustain the interest of men and women since its skill is affordable and offers a safety net for easy source of income. Also bag making and shoe making (mean =

2.50) were shown as skill needs in the study area. The two skill areas offer easy source of income on a sustainable basis to low income segment of the urban society. Most urban dwellers patronize the service. The result further shows that confectionary and baking (mean = 2.52) is a skill area of need in the study area. This is essential in an age when fast food business is becoming lucrative and baked foods are easy source of food to the urban dwellers. Further result show that restaurant management (mean = 2.51) was indicated as a skill need in the study area. This is evidenced by the increasing number of food vendors in the study area. The busy urban dwellers patronize their service to solve their food need at critical hours of the day. Also Taxi/Bus Transport System (mean = 2.51) was indicated by the respondents as area of skill need. It offers an

easy source of income and engages the greater percentage of young people. The result on Table 2 show that trading (mean = 2.87) was needed by agrarian migrants. However, trading stands out as the skill most needed by majority of agrarian migrants in urban settlements. This is in line with the findings of Bryceson (2002) who observed that trading is prevalent among rural-urban migrants. Migrants due to their lack of complex urban occupational skills and competence to engage in skill intensive jobs, mostly engage in trading to meet their primary motivation of greater economic fortune. Xiaochu Hu (2012) also noted that migrants perceive trading as the quickest, easiest and most practical way to increase their income since the population of urban areas constitutes a large market for their goods.

### 3.3 Challenges Faced by Migrants in the acquisition of Needed Skills.

Results on the challenges of migrants in the acquisition of needed skills were presented on Table 3.

**Table 3: Challenges Faced by Agrarian Migrants in securing needed Skills in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area.**

Challenges	Mean	Remark
1. Poor awareness on skill acquisition opportunities	2.89	Agree
2. High cost of skill acquisition	3.24	Agree
3. Lack of finance	3.00	Agree
4. Security condition of the area	2.29	Disagree
5. Discrimination	2.13	Disagree
6. Corrupt practices	2.24	Disagree
7. Inadequate training centre	2.70	Agree
8. inadequate trainers	2.67	Agree
9. Inadequate training facilities	2.97	Agree
10. Ineffective Skill acquisition programme	3.12	Agree
11. Poor targeting of skill acquisition centres	3.24	Agree
12. Distance of skill acquisition centres	2.90	Agree
13. High transport cost to skill acquisition centre	2.70	Agree

Source: Field Survey 2015

N/B: items with mean value < 2.50 disagreement while items with mean values  $\geq$  2.50 implies agreement.

It was found that poor awareness on skill acquisition opportunities (mean = 2.89) constituted a challenge. This implies that when people do not have the knowledge of opportunities available for them, they are likely to remain handicapped. The result further shows that high cost of skill acquisition (mean = 3.24) and lack of finance to afford the expensive skill acquisition programmes (mean = 3.00) are setbacks. It is obvious that skill training demands financial commitment. Often times these migrants hardly earn enough for survival and may not afford the financial obligation for registration in skill training centers in their new areas of residence. Result on Table 3 also reveals that inadequate training centers (mean = 2.70) was indicated by the respondents as among the challenges faced by the migrants in securing needed skills in the study area. When skill training centers are few, it becomes

highly competitive for prospective beneficiaries to enroll and participate in the skill training. Also the result shows that inadequate trainers and inadequate training facilities (mean = 2.67 and 2.97) respectively were indicated as challenges in securing skills in the study area. Where either the trainers or training facilities are limited, such centers might become incapacitated to render needed services to the recipients. It was further indicated in Table 3 that ineffective skill acquisition programmes (mean = 3.12) was a challenge to acquiring needed skills by the respondents. This result is critical when such skill offers do not meet the interest of the people especially if it follows a top-down approach. Also it was revealed that poor targeting of skill acquisition programmes (mean = 3.24) was among the challenges faced by the respondents in the study area. Appropriate targeting is crucial for effective skill

training. Other results include distance of training centres (mean = 2.90) and high cost of transportation to skill acquisition centre (mean = 2.70) as challenges in skill acquisition by migrants.

Generally, the findings in Table 3 are in line with the observation of Tacoli (2002) who noted that migrants in urban areas often experience challenges in acquiring new skills.

### 3.4 Relationship between Socio-economic Characteristics and Skill Needs of Agrarian Migrants in the study Area.

**Table 4: Chi-square analysis showing relationship between skill needs and socio-economic characteristics.**

Variable	df	$\chi^2$	p-value	Remarks
Gender	1	.170	0.680	Not Significant
Age	3	14.237	*0.003	Significant
Marital status	3	13.209	*0.004	Significant
Occupation	6	15.265	*0.018	Significant
Length of residence in PHALGA	3	10.686	*0.014	Significant
Educational level	3	10.447	*0.015	Significant

*Source:* Field Survey 2015

N/B: P-values  $\leq 0.05$  are Significant.

Result on the relationship between socio-economic characteristics and skill needs of agrarian migrants in the study area were presented on Table 4. From the Table, age significantly influenced the skill needs of agrarian migrants ( $p = 0.003$ ). Younger migrants have multiple skill needs and are interested in relatively more complex skills than the older migrants who were more interested in fewer and less complex skill activities. This confirms the opinion of Bihis-Tolentino (1996) who noted that age affects a person's eagerness to learn, receive new ideas and looking for ways to be productive. Also, marital status showed significant relationship with skill needs ( $p = 0.004$ ). This indicates that singles showed greater diversity of interest whereas married individuals were more definite about their skill needs. Also occupation of the migrants had a significant relationship with their skill needs ( $p = 0.018$ ). The finding indicates that respondents were more interested in skills related to their current occupation. Furthermore, result show that length of residence significantly influenced skill needs of the respondents ( $p = 0.014$ ). This implies that those with higher length of residence were more definite about their skill needs. This could be because of their longer experiences in several skill activities in their bid to survive in the urban setting. Educational level also showed significant relationship with skill needs ( $p = 0.015$ ) implying that respondents with higher educational qualification showed interest in more complex and knowledge intensive skills.

#### Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, it was concluded that agrarian migrants in the study area have a wide range of skill needs with trading as their most common interest. Also, they were faced with several challenges in their bid to access their skill interest. It was recommended that:

- Non-governmental organizations, philanthropic organizations government agencies and groups should mount accessible skill acquisition programmes with sufficient trainers and training facilities in low-income urban settlements to enable greater numbers of migrants benefit.
- Simplified training for traders on business management and profit maximization should be included in skill acquisition programmes as this is in line with migrants skill needs and would improve their income and living condition.
- Sensitization and publicity on various skills training programmes should be carried out to enable agrarian migrants become aware of available skill acquisition opportunities and alternative skills should be emphasized to promote diversification of livelihood activities amongst agrarian migrants in urban settlements.
- Also proper orientation on livelihood alternatives should be given to migrants with available skill acquisition and funding to improve the quality of their lives and economic wellbeing.

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