

## Assessment of Human Capital and Social Development in Ibipolo Community, Port Harcourt

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**ABSTRACT:** Urbanization and industrialization have led to rural-urban migration of workers, especially the low income earners. By their influx, shanty towns develop, where the conditions are perplexed with poor road networks, lack of good drinking water and inadequate sanitary conditions. These conditions have caused decrease in the level of human capital and social development of many communities. This study is a sociological analysis of urban problems, focusing on the socio-economic and social amenities as they affect human capital and social development of residents of Ibipolo. The paper adopts a qualitative and ex-post-facto design approach. The population of the study consisted of 70 household heads. Instrument for the study was a questionnaire. Findings indicated higher number of informal workers as residents; lower level education population and high rates of capital crimes. Basic social amenities as public water supply, health care facilities, and schools are non-existent. Unsanitary conditions in the community typify prevalence of health challenges. It is recommended that, government adopt a more equitable distribution of social infrastructures in order to improving the physical quality of life of citizens. Update the national habitat policy to accommodate the low-income earners. Increase human capital and social development opportunities for the citizens.

**KEYWORDS:** CRIMES, Community, Human Capital, Social development.

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### INTRODUCTION

One of the problems facing cities, including Port Harcourt is inadequate housing. Urbanization and industrialization have led to rural-urban migration of workers, especially the low income earners. By their influx, shanty towns developed, where the conditions are perplexed with; poor road networks, lack of good drinking water, inadequate sanitary conditions, non-availability of social amenities and exacerbated by high crime rate. These conditions faced by the lower class in the society have caused decrease in the level of human capital and social development of the communities. In Rivers State, Port Harcourt City Local Government Area (PHALGA), there are several of these shantytowns called “waterside residence”. Ibipolo, popularly known as “Abuja waterside” is one of such semi-urban shanty communities located along Creek road, Town, Port Harcourt. Slums are found more in urban areas where poverty, informal economy, poor urban planning and other factors exist. Slums are highly populated, made up of densely housing units, poor quality deteriorating buildings and poor living conditions.

The culture of slums varies in many respect. However, there are dominant social factors in all; namely – poor sanitation/health, deviant behaviour and crime, poor neighbourhood facilities etc. According to Satterwaite and Mitlin (2013), shanties entail three interrelated components (a) infrastructure components e.g. sanitary, roads, electricity etc. (b) service components e.g. schools, hospitals, sewage disposal and (c) consular services components e.g. public buildings, public space, economic programmes. Demographically, there is an increasing quest for social infrastructures for residents in the urban centre. An increase in the economics and demands is equally increasing concerns on education, consumption, health and economic production. Environmental issues such as sanitation/waste management, potable water are equally growing.

Human capital as well as social development is crucial in the development of communities. By human capital, it is referred to as the fact that, “education derives the marginal productivity of labour and marginal productivity derives earnings and correspondingly, the value of investment in education is defined by the lifetime earnings of educated labour” (Marginson, 2017, p.3). Social development on the other hand is understood by Sharma (2019) as embodiments of objectives which include equality, social justice/inclusion, group voice and general participation. Gore as quoted by Sharma identified social development as “a process of bringing about totality of the socio-economic, political, social and cultural development of the society” (p. 8). The intertwine of human capital and social development ensures that, education triggers personal upliftment, career advancement and national growth, which ensures changes in living standards, reduce poverty, increase employments opportunities as well as social justice. They equally influence improved health, security awareness, and the upliftment of less privileged members of the society.

In all ramifications, development holds serious possible role for the future of humanity. Human capital management is however how a government and organisations may project a scheme at developing people as more productive workforce. Citizens require

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skills, work experience, education to improve and increase economic activities and income. Social development is defined as the art of improving the wellbeing of members of the society so as to reach their potentials as responsible citizens (Nwakanma et al., 2020). There is a linkage between slums residence and the human capital/social development of the people to make positive choices and increase the level of their wellbeing. According to Ita (2020), Nigeria as a country has not invested in her budget on social development, which is imperious to human development. This would help in the provision of good educational facilities, essential health services. Adelakun (2011) stressed that Nigeria with enormous resources is unable to reach its peak in the health, security and educational sectors. Low income earners live in slums. There are not enough housing facilities, less educational facilities, increased level of unemployment, inadequate healthcare structures, problems of crime management and inadequate public amenities to accommodate the teeming population of the city. Therefore, many citizens faced with these challenges sort to live in slums, popularly called – waterside.

Oil and gas generated within the Niger Delta region is generating mixed effects on local communities, as a result of spillages and environmental degradation, leading to community crisis and social unrest, unemployment and associated underdevelopment of communities (Ite et al., 2013; Ukeje, 2001). The process of enhancing economic skills and advancement in education remains critical for economic development, especially in under-resourced communities. According to Putnam (2000) lack of development programmes which ought to build social cohesion and support vulnerable groups, create networks for social vices and hamper collective action for social progress.

Ibipolo is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-Christian sect community, located at the centre of the Port Harcourt City. The Port Harcourt City has a population estimate of 774,600 (National Population Commission 2022 census estimate), in a 98.49km<sup>2</sup>. The community is by the Port Harcourt Correctional Centre, accessible through the Nembe Jetty. It is a low-lying coastal semi-urban area, vulnerable to flooding and rising sea levels.

This research is a sociological analysis of urban problems, specially focusing on the socio-economic, sanitation, criminality as well as social amenities as they affect the human capital and social development of the residents of Ibipolo. However, concerning human social development in Ibipolo community, there are no known research based evidences to buttress this. Hence, this study is to fill the gap and give feedback on the effects of how human/social development is addressed in Ibipolo community.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Rivers State in which Ibipolo community is located, is well known for abundant natural resources, particularly oil and gas. Despite the economic potentials generated, Ibipolo as one of the communities, faces significant challenges in the aspects of human capital and social development. The Port Harcourt industrial activities is yet to translate enough investments in social infrastructure (education, healthcare, employment etc.) for communities including Ibipolo. By this, residents face enormous obstacles in achieving economic mobility such as, insecurity, unavailability of social services, hence perpetuating cycles of poverty and social marginalization. These limitations are relative to the programmes of the Federal, State and Port Harcourt City governments on human/social development on communities. This divide associated with the inequalities of social amenities, lack of economic opportunities, insecurity, no educational structures and healthcare and more, inhibit the formal development of Ibipolo community.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the current levels of education and skills access in Ibipolo community?
2. How does the provision of quality social infrastructures influence social and economic well-being of residents in Ibipolo?
3. How does crimes challenge economic and social empowerment of Ibipolo community?

### **Review of Literature**

The problems of informal settlements are physical, social and economic. Arimah (2006) noted that sub-Saharan Africa's 62% of urban population live in shanties. That by their numbers, their living conditions pose a threat to city managers, seeking finance, framework and capacity to award basic services. Bloom et al. (2008) affirmed the squatting population to be identified with threats and crime. Marx et al. (2013) reported that, slums are more in sub-Saharan Africa than other places in the world with a representing dwellers of 62% of the urban residents.

Living location depict availability of standard in social amenities. As observed by Cities (2021) the areas are risky, situated on slopes, along water/railways, flood plain and overcrowded building made of structures with non-permanent materials. It is further characterized by neglect, lack of services leading to deprivation and vulnerability to low income. In the view of Omolara (2017) an accelerated positive result in education, health and socio-economic levels must be of paramount importance to government as platform for opportunities to life values. The citizens are the wealth of a nation, hence creating an enabling environment to live and work is the basic responsibility of government. "Watersides" residence lack tenure occupancy, no town planning permit/building regulations, and no environmental policies, thus generally social exclusive. Infrastructural development could be the role of government at deliberate improvement of social amenities to raise economic growth and living standard.

Human/social development has implications for sanitation and public health. It reduces general illnesses and diseases from amongst the people. Every human deserves a decent standard living condition in the society, devoid of public health challenges. The

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environment all round deserve a clean, maintained, natural public space as people's needs. According to Factsheets (2021), about 2.3 billion people lack access to proper sanitation, 71% on clean drinking water, while 26% of deaths in 2019 were caused by communicable diseases. In the study of economics of slums in the developing world, Marx et al. (2013) noted that, in slums the effects of overcrowding affect health and are pushed to the limit by lack of water and sanitation facilities. No source of good water, no garbage collection, but rather thrown into ditches, open toilet sites (next to residential buildings), all these leading to direct exposure to bacteria, contaminated water and general unsanitary living conditions.

In a study of cities and inequalities, Vitale (2024) revealed that, cities are the basis of economic growth and source for investment and numerous opportunities. It is also a place where there is an increasing cases of inequalities between the rich and the poor. This the study noted is as a result of increasing food and energy prices, cost of living, high cost of housing etc. This therefore create a tendency for populations in search of better opportunities to move to smaller housing units in the suburbs.

Abdu (2017) study on human development index in Nigeria revealed that, generally, longevity, school enrolment, health conditions, access to clean water and improved sanitation have all improved. She concluded that there are obstacles such as poverty and inequalities raising criminality and insecurity in most societies. On socio-economic issues, Uhbogbo et al. (2013) identified education as pivot to the standard of living and a panacea for economic growth, stability in government and structural development. Ogbeide and Agu (2015) study on human development in Nigeria revealed that, unemployment is on the increase from 21.1% in 2010 to 25% in 2012. This, the study relates to poverty, which is determined by the level of income of the citizens.

Without adequate security, there could be no development in a community. Social development affects crime, hence, Rawlinson (2004) observed that it reduces strains and motives for crime and deviant behaviour. He attributed crime to the feelings of deprivation and marginalization, lack of jobs and lack of social infrastructure as a way of seeking comfortable way of life. Crime is associated with neighbourhood patterns, such as disorganization and lack of social control. The variables of social progress of development of societies as dependent upon urbanization and industrialization. According to Adelakun (2011) modernization identified education as a transfigure of a person's educational value. An indication that more exposed citizens increases the modernity level of the society. Rauf et al. (2017) examined human capital and social development in Pakistan and discovered that to invest in education and healthcare contributed to the development of human capital. It turns out that social indicators like poverty and gender inequality reduced due to higher incomes and better living standards. An assessment in developing countries by Heshmati (2019) highlights the benefits of acquired skills in the workforce. It reduced unemployment, poverty for individuals and income for families. A study by Chen et al. (2018) on human capital and social development in East Asia found the elements of education and healthcare to play a major role in driving economic growth and social progress. This is because of improved health outcomes for individuals and families.

Simola (2018) examines the role played by human capital in social development in Australia and New Zealand. Findings indicated education and skills development is enhanced by a better workforce and economic growth. By this, individuals can address key challenges as poverty, inequality and exclusion. Another major work on human capital was undertaken by Hanushek and Woessmann (2019) in Central and Eastern Europe. The study found a correlation between investments in education and healthcare to have led to improved income, political stability, and equality. Human capital development foster social development and long-term economic growth.

The framework for studying human capital and social development in Ibipolo is Human Capital Theory and Social Capital Theory. These theories provide insights to skills, knowledge, social relationships and resources impact on individuals and community advancement.

**Human Capital Theory:** According to Backer (1993) a human capital investment in education, skill acquisition and healthcare help improves an individual economic productivity. This in turn impact on the community positively.

**Social Capital Theory:** Putnam (2000) emphasises the relevance of the interconnections of trust, cohesion, economic and social development. In small and rural communities, the level of social interchange provide a strong support system and economic resources.

The application of the theories to the Ibipolo community relates that, with education and healthcare of individuals taken seriously, community members could attain higher levels of knowledge, skills, and fitness and hence contribute to the needed skilled labour to support local economic activities. On the other hand, the citizens will be eager to engage in community affairs both in government and local associations. This could help strengthen social bounds and collaboration in issues of projects development in communities. Ibipolo community members as citizens deserve good habitation, education, security, healthcare services as others. This is because, they are citizens of the state and participate in all other national issues, such as elections, census and pay taxes.

## METHODOLOGY

The research adopts a qualitative and ex-post-facto design approach using an in-depth review of extant literature. The population of the study consists of 70 household heads of Ibipolo community members. The main instrument used for the study is a questionnaire tagged: Questionnaire on Multi-Disciplinary Human Capital and Social Development (QMDHCSD) with three sub-sections, namely; social demographic data, human resource profile and crime and deviance profile.

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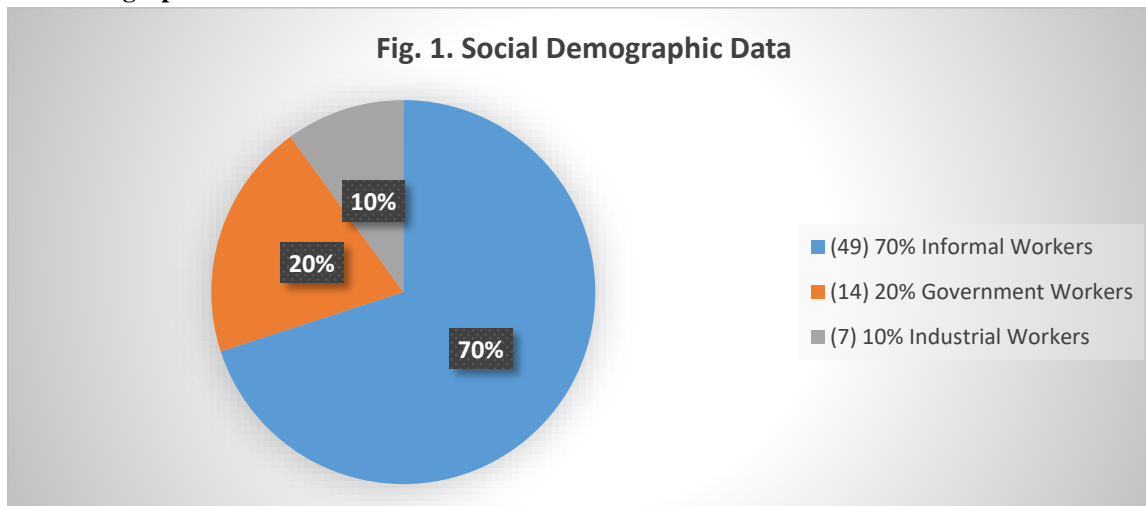
Purposive sampling method was adopted as the population was reasonable in size. Equally, the respondents all met the criteria as residents and head of respective families in the community. This gave all households equal opportunities to be represented in the study and have a viable view to their communal life. The questionnaires were administered and collected on the spot by the researcher. Oral interview was conducted on 10 household heads, representing the study's sample.

### RESULTS

**Research question one:** What are the current levels of education and skills access in Ibipolo community?

The research revealed the following:

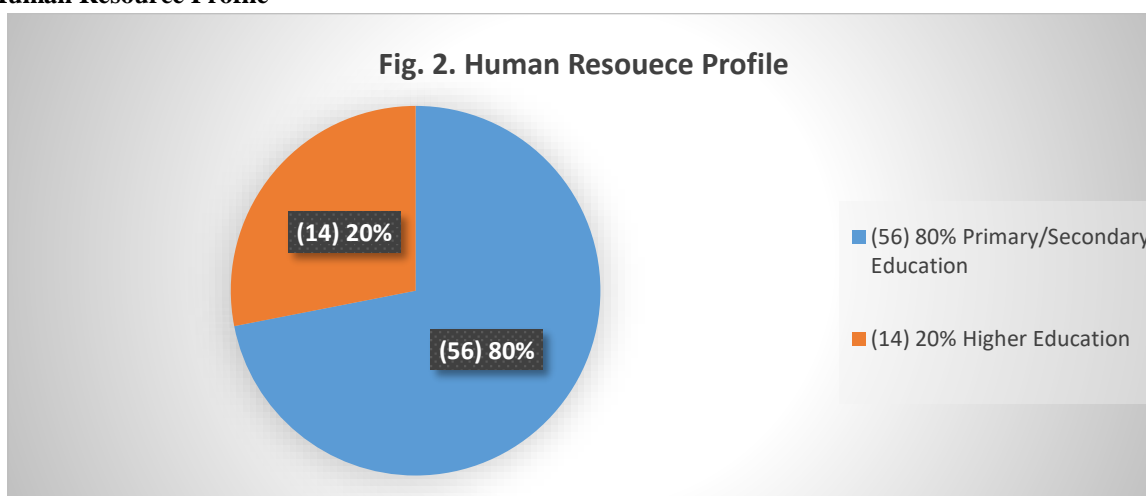
**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Data**



Demographic data reflects that the Ibipolo community members are predominantly informal workers who do not have access to a reasonable and safe living condition in Port Harcourt. From the pie chart above figure one, 49 (70%) of residents are informal workers, about 14 (20%) persons are industrial workers and only seven (10%) are working with government agencies. Their human resource profile reflects the nature of human capital/social development in Ibipolo community. Socio-economic nature of the settlement requires much of vocational skills training to engage the youths in the area of plumbing, event planning, repairs as most of them are not gainfully employed.

**Research question two:** How does the provision of quality social infrastructure influence social and economic wellbeing of residents in Ibipolo?

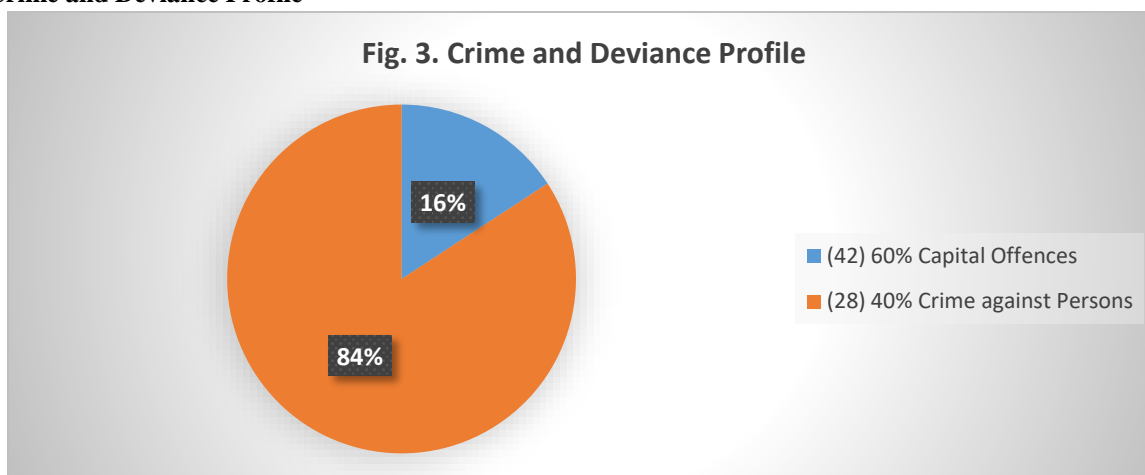
**Table 2: Human Resource Profile**



The chart above display the human resource profile of residents, with 56 (80%) respondents are of primary and secondary school leavers, while 14 (20%) are of Diploma and Bachelor's degree. By their level of education, which is mainly primary and secondary school levels, they do not have basic profession to enable improve their employability status.

**Research question three:** How does crime challenge the economic and social empowerment of Ibipolo community?

Table 3: Crime and Deviance Profile



The chart above demonstrates crime and socio-infrastructure development of the community. Indicated above are major crimes of the area as robbery and cultism is supported with 42 (60%) respondents indicating as the most disturbing, while crimes against persons are only 28 (40%) persons in response. Living in slums invoke a variety of risks. Crime and deviance behaviour impact seriously on the community. Criminality is high, as most resident faces heinous crimes as armed robbery, cultism. Crime against persons experienced are child abuse, domestic violence. Victimless crimes exist as drugs abuse, alcoholism and prostitution. Adults and young persons, indulge in crime. The security agencies are not responding to their issues because of lack of road network and quick disappearances of culprits by the terrain. Crime here is attributed to unemployment and rising poverty rate. Because the growing fears, and absence of the law enforcement agents, they have formed vigilante group to secure themselves.

## DISCUSSION

Ibipolo residence and its socio-infrastructure development is nothing to write home about. The community does not have network of motor-able roads. Security patrols cannot access the community for constant checks. Social amenities such as public water supply, health care facilities, basic schools (primary/secondary) are non-existing. Hence, they are trapped in a low-human capital development process. The government are not ready to develop the areas as there are no formal land titles. There are several threats to demolish the area, hence dwellers lack the zeal to improve the quality of what they have there. It is thereby regarded as a transitory residence.

The result of social demographic data made more of informal workers is consistent with Heshmati (2019) findings that labour skills reduced unemployment and poverty for individuals as well as family members. According to Simala (2018) education and skills development enhanced economic growth. Findings from human resource profile is in tandem with the Omolara (2017) that education generate opportunities for life values. While Uhbogbo et al. (2013) collaborate the fact that education raises standard of living and a solution to economic growth. On crime and deviance profile, study outcome are consistent with Bloom et al. (2008) that squatting population is associated with threats and crime.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings it is recommended that,

- a. Government adopts a more equitable distribution of social infrastructure in order to improving the physical quality of life of citizens.
- b. Increase the opportunities for employment for the teaming population.
- c. The decentralization of planning at the grass root level to enable active participation of the people's welfare.
- d. Government to update the habitat policy of the nation to increase access to all irrespective of social status, income level, ethnic group etc.
- e. Security issues have to be dealt with to usher in meaningful development in to communities.
- f. Conditions of the slums could be upgraded both social and physically, as part of urban development to meet the human capital and social development of the society.
- g. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) need to focus on the human capital and social development needs of the waterside residents, so as to improving their welfare.

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### CONCLUSION

Port Harcourt City is the home of multi waterside communities. The city government is vested with numerous responsibilities in human capital and social development of the citizens. The challenges of social development are high, being the drive to eliminate socio-economic obstacles, increase the quality of life, and reduce poverty, crime, conflicts, and public health challenges. At the end, create a reasonable living standard for the city people. The low investments in human capital of persons, may infringe on the poor economic growth of the community and city. This is because, there is a great interrelationship between human capital workforce and economic growth. There is need to improve upon the level of school enrolment in the community with the establishment of primary and secondary institutions within. If the educational development levels are prioritized in Ibipolo community, it could generate growth and development and empower youths. Government at all levels can fight crimes by providing roads that accesses the community for effective police patrolling. In all, Ibipolo community members can be utilized regardless of their social position and location, by creating an inclusive city with a balanced social culture. These can be addressed seriously through the creation of strategic policy instruments and more commitment in generating a comprehensive human capital and social development processes.

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