



## ASSESSING THE RELOCATION OF ADEKUNLE AJASIN UNIVERSITY TO AKOKOLAND ON TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN ONDO STATE

 **Gabriel Olusola OWAGBEMI<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Sociology, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo, Nigeria  
Email: [angel.gabreal@yahoo.com](mailto:angel.gabreal@yahoo.com)



### ABSTRACT

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This study investigates the impact of relocation of Adekunle Ajasin University (AAU) on transportation system and its effects on the socio-economic life Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from randomly selected respondents numbering three hundred and eleven. The quantitative data collected were analysed with statistical package for the social sciences, while the quantitative data was analyzed using content analysis. Findings revealed that transportation business has recently experienced changes. Most of the respondents (70.4%) agreed that 'Okada' transportation-system became a booming business with the relocation of AAUA. The teeming population of students and staffers had impacted positively on socio-economic activities in Akoko-land. Majority of the respondents 72.7% agreed that the increase in the number of 'agolo' buses (as taxi cabs) and 'Okada' motorcycles has made inter-town movements easy for most people. 64% agreed that improvement in the transportation sector in Akokoland has alleviated the negative impact of poverty on many youth. The study recommends that Government should intensify rural development by increasingly making the presence of Government visible through citing educational institutions, cottage industries.

**Contribution/Originality:** This study is one of very few studies which have investigated the effect of relocation of higher institution of learning on rural transportation and rural development. The paper's primary contribution is finding that siting of higher institution of learning in rural area brings about socio-economic development.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the mostly used strategies at inducing developmental elements into human societies globally is the provision of infrastructure, this can be either physical, social or institutional in nature (Akinyosoye, 2010; Ocheni and Nwankwo, 2012; Oyesiku *et al.*, 2013). The level of development of every community depends on its ability to attract government's attention and, consequently, concession. The amount of available infrastructure in any society determines the level of its development as this becomes the pulling factors which attracts people into such society. The siting of higher institution of learning in Nigeria has been established to have contributed to the overall development of the host community (Ali, 2010; Ehinmowo and Eludoyin, 2010; Oke *et al.*, 2012; Fatoki, 2017). This is evident in the increase number of students, staffers and investors which usually come in as a result of the citing of the institution, the concomitant effect of which can be seeing in the infrastructural development. The available

infrastructure determines the socio-economic well-being of the members of such society (Ayobami, 1977; Brennan *et al.*, 2004). That is why it takes political lobbying, political affiliation with the ruling party, agitations within society, for government's attention to be drawn or cite a university in any community. Immediately this is achieved, it becomes inevitable for such society to experience tremendous socio-economic development (Fatoki, 2017).

The siting of higher institutions of learning is often a deliberate options or way of injecting life into a rural area. That is why it has not always been easy politically for any Government to readily decide on where to site an institution of higher learning without being made to face with varying challenges, as every community would so much lobby to have such an institution sited in its locality for far-reaching benefits.. Since the relocation of Ondo State University (OSU) now Adekunle Ajasin University (AAU) from Ado-Ekiti to Akungba-Akoko in 1999, there has been a tremendous transformation in socio-economic life of its host community. The relocation was a giant stride towards propelling development in Akokoland in Ondo state. Before the relocation, the pace of development in Akokoland was very slow, because successive governments in the State did not give much attention to the area. The level of infrastructural development was so poor, there was no major Government-establishment which could boast of over a hundred (100) employees. The government-owned existing institutions before AAU's relocation, were only public primary and secondary schools.

The relocation came with a massive influx of people, among which are: the regularly increasing number of students applying for and those already granted admission into the university on a yearly basis; members of staff who reside in the host-community and its environs and, some investors who now see Akokoland as a 'fertile' land to invest. The University which started with just 5 Faculties - Arts, Education, Law, Sciences, and Social and Management Sciences - with a compact student-population, now has 6 Faculties - Agriculture, Arts, Education, Law, Social and Management Sciences. Invariably, the increase in the number of the Faculties has a concomitant effect on the increasing number of students being admitted every year. The increase in the student-population also has a direct link with the socio-economic development of most of Akokoland. After seventeen (17) years of AAU's presence in Akokoland, it is very imperative to consider the level of development the institution has brought to its host-community and environs, so as to know if the strategy of siting any institution of higher learning in the rural areas ultimately bring about the rapid development of such area.

Transportation is an integral part of the economic sector of a society (Boopen, 2006). It is a lifeline of the economy system and it shows a picture of how buoyant a society is Olubomehin (2012); Uma *et al.* (2014); Owoputi (2016). Findings have shown that transportation in rural communities are characterised by roads with unpaved surface, narrow with, circuitous alignment and with low quality bridges, they are either clad with potholes, such subsurface road are hardly passable during the rainy season when vehicle get struck in mud or when the improvised bridges get swept away by flood; transportation take place in the vicinity of villages which involve short distance and small load trips (Ogunsanya, 1988; Adesanya, 2000; Afolabi *et al.*, 2016). Scholars have also established the interconnectedness between transportation and economy (Aderamo and Magaji, 2010; Afolabi *et al.*, 2016). Some other studies have also shown that adequate and reliable transportation system is essential for the social and economic development of rural areas and a pre-condition for the full participation of rural societies in the benefit of national development, most especially in the developing countries (Camemark, 1979; Carapetis *et al.*, 1984; UNDP, 2010).

## 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Over the years, the Nigerian Government at all levels, have made concerted effort towards improving the life of rural dwellers. This they have done by siting cottage-industries, higher educational institutions, and the construction of roads in these rural areas. Once these efforts are made, even if mere tokenism, the Government expects it to translate into development. However, Ikotun (2002) noted that in spite of the colossal amount of money that have gone into implementing rural development programmes and the proliferation of rural

development agencies, one after the other, not much impact has been made. There have been several attempts by Ondo State Government (ODSG) towards injecting element of infrastructural development into some rural communities in the State, this include; the establishment of the Tomatoes processing Factory in Arigidi-Akoko, Ceramics Industry in Ifon-Ose, Oluwa Glass Factory in Igbokoda, and Oil Palms Mill in Okitipupa. The siting of these factories was a deliberate attempt by the Government towards impacting positively on rural communities, but government-owned establishments had become moribund, serving as an abode for rodents and dangerous animals while some are either abandoned or functioning very below capacity. The lofty motives behind such efforts by Government have been defeated and even, creating more social problems than hitherto. Despite this failure, the importance of rural development can never be over-emphasised. This is evident as the ODSG employs every available opportunity of making the rural communities in the state attractive, especially to foreign investors.

There are several studies on road transportation and development ; [Olubomehin \(2012\)](#) Road transportation as lifeline of the economy in Western Nigeria, 1920 to 1952; [Tunde and Adeniyi \(2012\)](#) Impact of Road Transport on Agricultural Development: A Nigerian Example; [Ibok and Daniel \(2013\)](#) the Impact of Rural Roads and Bridges on the Socioeconomic Development of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria; [Aderamo and Magaji \(2010\)](#) Rural Transportation and the Distribution of Public Facilities in Nigeria: A Case of Edu Local Government Area of Kwara State. The studies mentioned above show a strong relationship between road network development, distribution of public facilities and development in the areas. In this study, apart from testing the reliability of findings in the context of Nigeria, the siting of government establishment such as University in the rural area was examined in relation to transport expansion and rural development.

### 3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this work is to examine the impact of relocation of Adekunle Ajasin University (AAU) on transportation system in Akokoland. Other objectives are:

1. To ascertain the change in transportation system to what it was before the relocation of AAU to Akokoland;
2. To investigate the impact of influx of AAUA students on transportation business in Akokoland; and,
3. To examine how the present state of transportation system in Akoko-land has impacted on the socio-economic life of the people in Akokoland.

### 4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 4.1. Modernisation Theory and Rural Development

In an attempt at inducing developmental elements into rural societies by the developing countries of the world, one of the mostly used strategies is the provision of infrastructure. This can be either physical, social or institutional in nature. The theoretical proposition of infrastructural approach to rural development, is predicated on a modernization theory “trickle-down theory of development” postulated by [Hirschman \(1956\)](#) (cited in [Oguzor, 2011](#)). This theory sees growth/development being trickle down from the core to the periphery to ensure a balanced development without an area being worse-off either rural or urban. In his submission ([Perroux, 1950](#)) stated that “growth does not appear everywhere at the same time; it manifests itself in points or poles of growth with variable intensities; it spreads by different channels and with variable terminal effects for the economy as a whole”. Also, [Obateru \(2006\)](#) recognised a growth pole to be a point which centripetal forces are attracted and from which (in time) centrifugal forces emanates throughout the field of influence of the set of activities constituting the pole.

The relocation of Ondo State University now AAU to Akungba-Akoko in 1999 by the ODSG was a deliberate act at transforming Akoko community. The impact of the presence of AAU have cut across every facet of Akoko-

community. This can be evaluated from the angle of the level of development AAU has brought to the Akoko-community, most especially the transportation-sector. Modernisation theory, therefore, conceives of development as a normative model adopted from the US and Europe; and, it is a systematic process which has to move in a sequence. It imposes Western-values and policies on the developing nations which, later, result in political, social and cultural change. It, also, identifies lack of industrialisation as the main problem of under-development in developing countries. It uses differing value systems and ideas and immaturity of systems, peculiar to the Third-World countries, as key-points in explaining inequality in the world system. Its scope of analysis is the nation-state. It takes modern technology into consideration and identifies it as the major instrument through which development can be effected in any society (Chase--Dunn, 2000).

The theory is criticized for failing to consider the rural population as the centerpiece in initiating any developmental efforts. By ignoring the involvement and participation of the target community, modernity achieves the marginalization of their commitment, creativity and support of the intervention strategies. The intervention strategy becomes an imposed strategy and such a strategy fails to construct adequate notions of both the causal powers of social structures and the role of human agency in shaping social relations in general. Also, Modernization theory oversimplified view of social change (Coetzee *et al.*, 2007). Human nature has a propensity to resist change in favour of the status quo, special interest and attempt at preserving their cultural elements (Matunhu, 2011). Change is resisted because it brings in elements of uncertainty. The other intriguing weaknesses of the modernisation theory is that it is based on deterministic reason which states that within the linear model of socio-economic development, changes are initiated externally. The determinist reason gives little room for the reciprocal relationship between causation from within the developing region and from outside the developing region. The premise encourages the foreign powers to prescribe the route to Africa's development.

Despite these criticisms, modernisation theory is considered relevant to this work because it explains the mode and the manner of transformation which an external influence like the state government policy of siting of higher educational institutions in a rural community, establishment of cottage industries etc and its complementary positive improvement in socio-economic system can bring development to a rural society. Therefore, citing of higher institution of learning in a rural society is a way of importing some elements of modernity which was believe to be necessary for any rural society who is yearning for development. To this end, therefore, it is imperative to acknowledge the fact that siting of higher educational institutions in any community would go a long way in opening up such community to many other indices of development.

## 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative and quantitative methods of research were employed to elicit information from the respondents who were randomly selected from two Local Government Areas in Akokoland. The Local Government Areas are: Akoko South-West and Akoko North-East Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Ondo State. Three major towns were purposively selected from the two Local Government Areas, and these towns constitute the population of the study. The towns are: Oka-Akoko, and Oba-Akoko from Akoko South-west; and Ikare-Akoko from Akoko North-east. The selection of these towns is predicated upon the fact that they share boundaries with Akungba-Akoko where the university is sited. The sample size for this study is three hundred and eleven (311) respondents and forty (40) IDI participants who were randomly selected from the three purposively selected towns in both Akoko South-west and Akoko North-east LGAs.

Questionnaire Schedule and In-depth Interviews (IDIs) were employed in data-collection. The questionnaire was divided into sections based on the objectives of the study. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive techniques, involving, tabulations, cross-tabulations, means, simple frequencies, and percentages, it also involved descriptive models, and explanatory techniques involving Chi-square analysis. The IDIs conducted were sorted and reported verbatim.

## 6. RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 6.1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The sample of 311 respondents is made up of 196 males and 115 females. Their age distribution of the respondents shows that 60.4% were between the age range of 18 to 37 years. Specifically, 35.4% of the respondents were between the age range of 38 to 57 year., while 4.2% of the respondents were aged within 58years and above. the marital status distribution of the respondents shows that 44.4% were single, 39.5% were married, 12.5% were divorced, while 0.6% were in other forms of status outside the listed. Educational distribution of respondents shows that 10.6% of the respondents had no formal education. 24.4% had primary education, 38.6% had secondary education, 23.5% had tertiary form of education, while 2.9% were involved with other forms outside the listed.

### 6.2. Effects of Relocation of AAUA on Transportation Business

Findings on the impact of relocation of Adekunle Ajasin University on transportation business shows that 62.9% of the respondents agreed that the roads that link Oka, Akungba, Oba, Ikare were not as busy as it is now before the relocation of AAU. This indicates that there are more commercial buses, cars and 'okada' motorcycle plying the road, the road has been opened up to more commercial activities and this has got a corresponding positive effect on socio-economic activities of Akokoland. 57.8% agreed that it took over an hour to come from Oka to Akungba-a journey of 7 Kilometers before the relocation of AAU, but now hardly can one spend more than 15 minutes. The implication of this on transportation business is that traveling on bad roads consumes more fuel, but when roads are good it shortens the hours of traveling and the motorists also have more money to save. This also implies that both motorists and commercial vehicle operators feared well now than before. 68.2% agreed that the number of 'Agolo' commercial bus and 'Okada' motorcycle routing the axis of Oka-Akungba; Akungba-Oba; and Akungba-Ikare has tremendously increased since the relocation of AAUA. 65.9% of the respondents also agreed that the increase in the number of 'Agolo' commercial buses in AKSWLGA has necessitated an increase in the number of petrol-filling stations, this is evident in the fact that between 2-3 kilometers there is one petrol-filling station. 64.9% concurred with the fact that the arrival of AAU has bought about good roads, leading to more people going into the transportation-business and also that the good condition of the roads has necessitated frequent accidents on most of these roads. This implies that transportation-business experienced recent changes of rapid improvement compared to what was on ground before the relocation of AAU to Akungba-Akoko ( $X^2=103.830$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). An excerpt from one of the IDIs shed light on the participant observation of changes in transportation business.

*In about twenty years ago the condition of our roads in Akoko were so deplorable. At times, for almost thirty minutes it would be difficult to count six commercial vehicles moving on the road. Roads in Akungba-Akoko were taking over then by sheep, goats and other domestic animals. But now, the roads are good, passengers are always outside waiting for vehicles to convey them to their different destinations. This has necessitated an increase in the vehicular movement and opened roads to series of fatal accidents within the Akokoland (IDI Male participant, Aged 39 years).*

A respondent put in her words when said:

*The road that runs from Owo through Oba-Akoko, Akungba-Akoko and Oka-Akoko links the southwest with the north. Commercial bus drivers plying this road, most especially, the ones going to the North are always very reckless. There recklessness has opened this road to so many fatal accidents which had claimed several innocent lives.*

In another view extracted from a street hawker in one of the commercial spots along Akungba/Oka-Akoko road, there was another dimension to the ever busy Akungba/Oka-Akoko road. In this case, the respondent said:

*The ever increasing vehicular movement which characterises the Akungba-Akoko/Oka-Akoko road which comes as a result of the relocation of the university has created some commercial spots on this road. These spots have become the commercial hobs for road hawkers (majority of whom are youths) who sell for commuters whenever they have a stop-over at these spots. So, one of the effect of relocation of university on transportation system is the creation of 'culture' of road-side hawking among the youths.*

Majority of the respondents (70.4%) agreed that Okada transportation-system became a booming business with the relocation of AAU; and, this has directly become a means of survival for the 'army of unemployed youths in these communities. 52.1% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that there was no 'Agolo'-type transportation-system before the relocation of AAU. A little above average of the respondents (54.7%) confirmed that the usage of lorry as a means of transportation was visible before the relocation of AAU. Lastly, 56.9% of the respondents affirmed that bicycle was very popular among indigenes before the 'arrival' of AAU. These findings imply that the mode of transportation within Akokoland before the relocation of AAU has experienced a tremendous change as people now use 'Okada' motorcycle as a means of commercial transportation. Also, the use of bicycle within and between the towns in Akokoland has been drastically reduced. The chi-square test on the improvement in transportation business shows that 69.1% of the respondents agreed that transportation-business has improved significantly since the relocation of AAUA. Lastly, 67.2% of the respondents agreed that the regularly increasing presence of students necessitate Government's effort to constructing and rehabilitating roads in Akoko South West Local Government Area (AKSWLGA) especially. This implies that the presence of students has impacted positively on the transportation-business in the town and the road system ( $X^2=81.315$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Another interviewee reported thus;

*There was never a time transportation business booms as it is now in the history of Akokoland. This is because most youth that were unemployed before now have taken to 'okada' motorcycle riding and 'agolo' small bus transportation business. This has really kept them busy and also diverted their attention from criminal and anti-social activities like stealing, burglary. But there is something new I observed, the proliferation of motor parks which is as a result of booming transportation business has opened up a new dimension of hooliganism in Akokoland. Time without number, fighting has erupted among the factions of National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW). The result of which has always led to the death of commercial drivers, destruction of properties worth millions of naira and the disturbance of public peace. It takes the combine efforts of police and army to restore peace whenever this happen. Before now, Akokoland has never experienced this form of hooliganism among the youth and drivers (IDI Male participant, Aged 43years).*

Furthermore, majority (72.7%) of the respondents agreed that the increase in the number of 'agolo' buses and 'Okada' motorcycles has made inter-town movements easy for the people and petty-traders and this has impacted positively on socio-economic activities in Akokoland. Meanwhile, 64% agreed that the rapid improvement in the transportation-business in AKSWLGA has removed many youths from poverty as most of them now go into the transport-business. Following the same trend, 72.3% concurred that so many unemployed youths are now into transportation-business, using Agolo and Okada as means of livelihood. 71.7% agreed that the availability of Agolo and Okada has made the movement of agricultural products from the farm-settlements to the towns easier.

## 7. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Evidently, the relocation of AAU to Akungba-Akoko has impacted positively on roads and the transportation-business which has also reflected positively on the transformation of the socio-economic milieu of Akokoland in many positive ways. One important way in which the transformation has manifested is, in its provision of a new line

of business for the people-that is, road-transport business. Although motor-transportation was already a part of the economy of Akoko-people before the relocation of AAU, there were a few transport-outfits owned by individuals. However, from 1999 onwards, there has been an expansion in the transport-business as more individuals were involved. The people's entry into the transport-business has in no small measure added vitality to the economy of AKSWLGA, in particular. An increase in the number of buses and cars operating within and those passing through the LGA coupled with the improved condition of roads has led to an increase in the rate of road accidents some of which had claimed lives; the proliferation of motor parks across Akokoland has created a new form of hooliganism among the youth and this usually claim lives and properties; movement within the area has become easy for traders, civil servants and farmers. The increase in the demand for petrol by the transporters has necessitated the springing up of more petrol-filling stations;. Improvement in the transportation-sector of the community economy has made the movement of farm-produce to the markets easier than what it used to be. Generally speaking, therefore, the relocation of the AAU to Akungba-Akoko has positively touched every facet of human life. The socio-economic life of Akoko-people has tremendously improved, while there has been massive infrastructural development all over the area, even though this. It is, therefore, suggested that Government should focus more attention on rural development by intentionally making the presence of Government visible through siting of higher institutions of learning, government should always organise sensitisation programmes for the members of NURTW on how to amicably handle their conflicts so as not to degenerate into fracas, at the same time, speed breakers should be constructed within each community so as to reduce reckless speeding among the drivers while road signs should be mounted at every dangerous spots of the road. Doing this would make the rural communities more habitable and it can also curb the movement of people from the rural areas to the urban centers in Nigeria.

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