Full Length Research Paper

Socioeconomic Development of Rural Areas in Nigeria Using the Growth Pole Approach: A Case Study of Delta State University in Abraka.

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This empirical study focuses on the socio-economic impact of Delta State University (Delsu) on Abraka community in Delta State, South-south Nigeria where the administrative office of the University's three (3) campuses is located. Primary data were collected through the use of 200 copies of questionnaires as well as oral interview. The establishment of the university in 1992 has precipitated rapid population increase in Abraka town which hitherto was a relatively unknown agrarian community where only peasant farming was the major source of livelihood. However, due to the speedy development brought about by the location of Delsu, the area has assumed the status of an urban centre in terms of overall development and this has been officially recognized by the state government. These include education, land use, housing, transportation, trade and commerce and other essential services caused by increased spatial interaction among dwellers. The developmental stride have also its negative consequences which include demand induced inflation, high cost of living, increase in criminal activities such as kidnapping among others which was largely unheard of in this community several years ago. The study concludes that citing a tertiary institution in a geographic environment is a stimulus for the rapid growth of the area but the adverse effects of development should be properly monitored.

Keywords: Socioeconomic Development, Growth, Pole, Delta State University, Abraka.

INTRODUCTION

Growth points (GPs), growth poles (GPs), small towns (STs) or growth centres (GCs) as they are variously named in literature are defined as centres with strong resource base that can initiate a cumulative causation process that culminate in continuous and sustainable development (Manyanhaire, Rwafa and Mutangadura, 2011). One of the contentious issues plaguing accelerated development in most developing countries is in the location of public and private utilities. This have caused serious controversy between government and citizens who felt state facilities that engender development should be spread based on need of an area instead of being based on political reasons.

Currently, some states in Nigeria are at the verge of re-engineering development through the ideology of the growth poles. For Instance, Imo State University located in Owerri, the state capital that is already developed based is being relocated to Orlu, a small

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town in order to develop the area. This is because the government of the day realizes that the location of the state university in that area would facilitate rapid socioeconomic development through creation of employment opportunities for both skilled and unskilled labour thereby pulling population to the area. This will in turn help to boost trade and commerce in the local economy, increase land use patterns to sustain the utility that has been established.

Delta State University popularly called Delsu, formerly a faculty of education campus of the defunct Bendel State University, Ekpoma in the 80's has grown to a full fledge university since 1992 following the creation of Delta State in August 29, 1992 out of Bendel State by the General Babangida administration. The university currently operates five (5) academic faculties (Science, Social Science, Arts, Education, Basic Medical Sciences) and four institute programs (Institute of Science and Laboratory Technology (ISLT), Institute for Continuous education (ICE), Institute of computer science technology (ICST) and Centre for Niger Delta Studies (CEND) in Abraka; two faculties (Law and Engineering) in Oleh campus and two faculties in Anwai campus (Management Sciences and Agriculture) with a student population of about 36,000 as at 2010 (www.deltastate.edu.gov.ng).

The population of Abraka has increased from 5,006 in 1985 to 15, 375 in 1991 (NPC, 1991) which is an increase of 207%, and by the end of year 2003, the population has grown to 66,738 (Efe & Aruegodore, 2003). Presently, the population of Abraka is projected to be 89,940 using an annual growth rate of 3.8% (Ojeh, 2011).The rapid population growth is a function of the location of Delta State University in the area which has attracted skilled and unskilled labour. There has been an increase in socio-economic activities over the years as well as an intensive pressure on marginal lands in Abraka.

Study Area

Delta State University, Abraka is located in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria popularly referred to as the Niger Delta region. The choice of the University for this study is borne out of its developmental impacts on Abraka community as well as its long years of establishment (20 years) as a full fledge ivory tower. Delta State University has three campuses in Abraka, one in Oleh and another one in Anwai. Abraka lies between latitude $5^045`$ and $5^050`$ North of the equator and longitude 6^0 and $6^015`$ East of Greenwich meridian. It is bounded on the north by Edo State's Orhionmwon Local Government Area. Abraka is bounded by Ukwuani and Ughelli North Local Government Areas to the east and south respectively. It is bounded on the west by Agbor plain. Abraka has a

total area of approximately 164sq.km (see Figure 1). The present topography consists of rolling lowland plain generally above 45m above the sea level. Viewing Abraka physiographically, it was observed that the land slopes gently to river Ovwuvwe in the south, river Ethiope in the north and Agbor plain in the West.
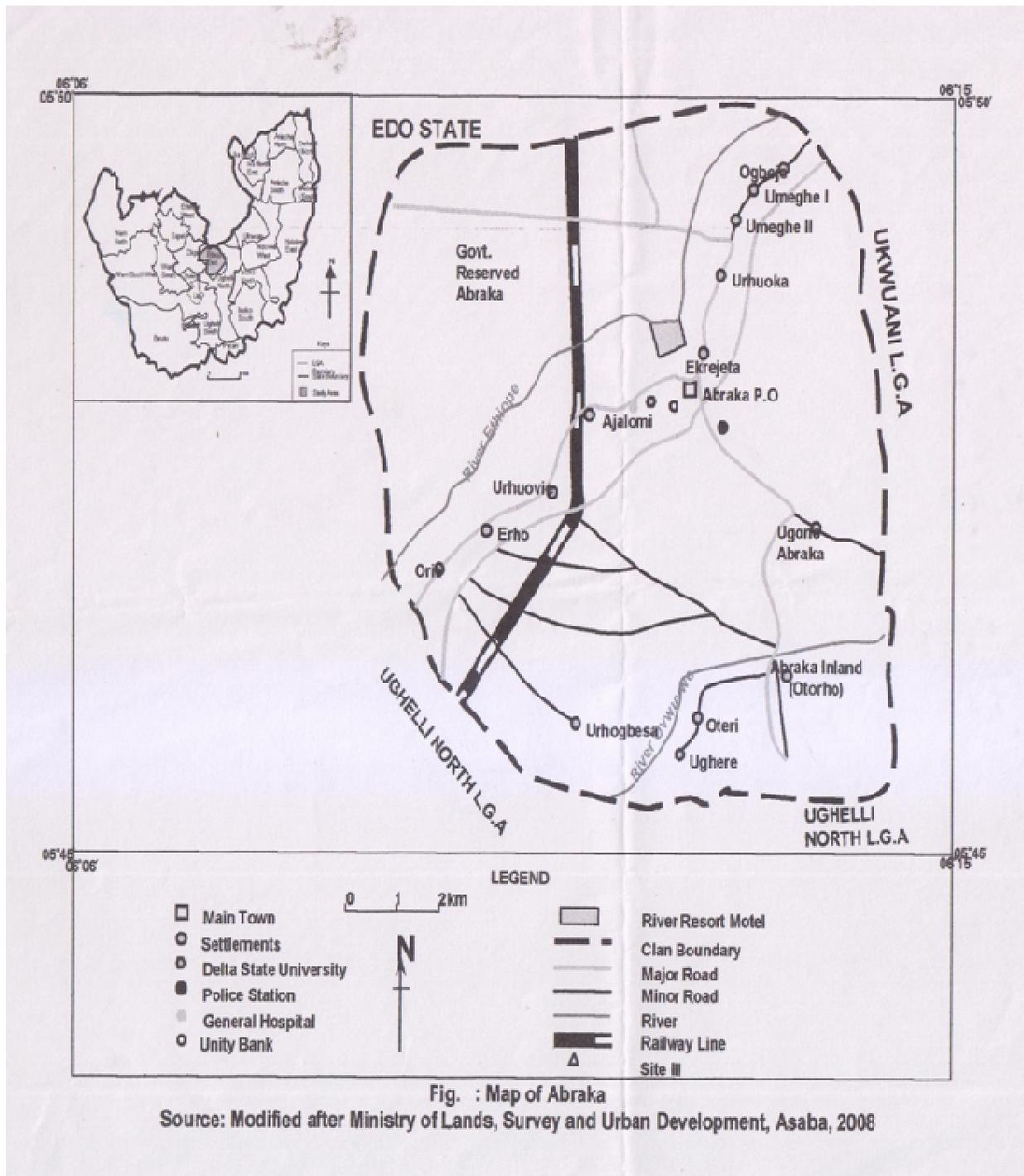
Abraka falls within the equatorial climate belt of the world and tropical rainforest belt of Nigeria with mean temperature of 30^0C. Abraka experiences heavy and torrential rainfall amount throughout the year. The annual rainfall amount of Abraka is 3,098mm with mean monthly rainfall ranging from 25.8mm in December to 628.9mm in September (Efe, 2006). Abraka experiences double rain maxima and August break.

Conceptual Issues and Implications:

The term growth point (GP) means increasing in size both in number of facilities, building and services provided at an identified centre. Thus, once a centre has been established there should be an observable change in spatial structure and pattern. One would assume that the spatio-temporal expansion is development. It quickly reminds one of the links between growth and development. Whilst the word growth implies expansion development implies quantitative growth and the quality of growth introduced to the selected centres. Thus, these terms are commonly used interchangeably in rural planning (Manyanhaire, Rwafa and Mutangadura, 2011).

A theoretical tracking of the concept of growth centres links it to a Frenchman, François Perroux who proposed the Growth Centre Theory in 1958. His ideas were a synthesis of the fusion of the various central place and core periphery theories that took centre stage about the same time. The core is the centre of development. It is characterized by an increase in economic activities and development of the spatial structure, a process known as morphogenesis. The initial triggers include; water supply raw materials, energy and a threshold population size capable of consuming services and goods. Some of the centres developed due to a 'Historical accident' which triggered the cumulative causation process. Cumulative in this sense means accumulation of wealth in a geographic space with a multiplier effect.

The multiplier effect in this sense implies the expansion of economic activities driven by increased consumption. These features were supposed to be manifested at the identified points of growth. The general weaknesses of the theories as reflected in literature are over simplification of the development process as a linear process with discernible stages of development. It assumes rapid spatial expansion in terms of the built up area and has limited reference to

Fig. : Map of Abraka

Source: Modified after Ministry of Lands, Survey and Urban Development, Asaba, 2008

the qualitative development aspects. The cyclic natures of depressions, crisis and booms that characterize capitalist economies have not been explored. In this context, the African capitalist economy is more defective as compared to the developed world and most likely to experience severe shocks in the case of an economic crisis of the current proportions in Nigeria.

The growth pole strategy was also perceived as a vehicle to reduce rural urban disparities and to better understand the interdependences between the development zones (Douglass, 1998). The growth pole needed an identifiable resource base capable of stimulating specific production and marketing activities (Mutizwa-Mangiza and Helmsing 1991). Growth centres were also historically viewed as central places

at the bottom end of the central place hierarchy which contributed directly to the basic economic and social needs of agricultural producers. In performing this function growth poles concentrate on the provision of infrastructure, collecting and marketing of agricultural inputs, basic agro-processing facilities, social services and low order consumer goods. There are a variety of definitions but the focus of this paper is the development points established for the purpose of propelling growth. Definitions are quite illusive and are very much determined by professional inclinations. The controversies surrounding the explanation of this term in literature are identified with the regional-economic-planning matrix. Thus, recognizing this inherent limitation this paper used the terms poles, centres, small towns, rural towns or generally as service centres interchangeably.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study made use of data from primary and secondary sources. The primary data was generated via oral interview and the administration of 200 copies of questionnaire to respondents in the study area. The secondary data were from published government gazettes. To ensure unbiased representation, the simple random sampling technique was used to distribute the 200 copies of questionnaires in the three (3) major quarters in Abraka; Viz- Abraka P.O (Urban), Ekrejeta and Urhuoka. 100 copies of the questionnaire was administered in Abraka P.O (Urban) because of the population of people in this core area being very proximate communities of the Delsu's campus 1 and 2 while 50 copies of questionnaires each were administered at Ekrejeta and Urhuoka respectively.

The questionnaire was designed to elicit information on demographic characteristics of respondents; their socio-economic characteristics featuring questions on occupation, monthly income, ownership of landed properties, language spoken, length of stay in Abraka, crime experiences/perception of respondents among others. Generated data was analyzed using both descriptive (simple percentage was deployed) and inferential statistics (the SPSS version 17 of analysis of variance was deployed).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 reveals that 65% of the respondents were male while 35% were female. This is because the male folks are more occupationally migratory than the females. Most of the respondents are in their forties (24.5%), and late thirties (15.5%) and were married

(62%) at the time of study while singles were (35%). The study shows that there is very low level of divorced (1%) and widowed (2%) people in Abraka. Table 1 also reveals that 90% of the respondents are Christians while 10% were Muslims. This is largely as a result of the location of the study area in the southern part of Nigeria mainly dominated by Christians.

The ethnic composition of the respondents indicates that the area is dominated by the Urhobos (26.5%), Ukwuanis (19.5%), Ibo (13%), Isoko (11.5%), Ika (10.5%), Yoruba (9.5%) and the Hausas were merely (2.5%). This composition confirms the multi-ethnic diversity of the Niger area as well as the people's willingness to accommodate others. Abraka is one of the 25 kingdoms of Urhobo land sharing close boundaries with the Ukwuani nationals of Ndokwa land. Majority of the respondents were indigenes of the town who came back to the area along with other labour migrants (skilled and unskilled) in the last 15-20 years as a result of the presence of Delta University and available job opportunities.

The study also reveals that 43.5% of the respondents had obtained bachelor's degree while 27% had a postgraduate degree, school certificate (18.5%) and primary school certificate (7.5%), while 3.5% indicated not having a formal education (Table 1). If the figures for those with bachelors and postgraduate degrees are added together, this will give (69.5%) which is indicative of a high literacy level in Abraka. The presence of the University with its various degree and diploma programs have had a positive influence on the indigenes who took advantage of the programs via weekend degree, diploma and sandwich outlets.

Table 1 also shows that among the respondents, 23% have been living in Abraka for 16-20 years, 22% have been living there for between 0-5 years. 18.5% responded that they have lived in Abraka for between 6-10 years, 13% have lived there for over 20 years while on 12.5% responded that they were born there. This shows that the bulk of the inhabitants of the town also came in after the establishment of the university and this has helped to swear-up the population of the town. The oral interview granted to some of the respondents disclosed that there have been several cases of intermarriages between the different ethnic nationalities found in the area except with those of the Hausa origin. The demographic characteristics of Abraka have far reaching impacts on the socioeconomic activities of the study area both positively and negatively (see table 2 and 3).

Table 2, shows that occupationally, majority of the respondents are made up of non-academic staff of Delta State University (31%), teachers of the various government-owned and privately owned schools in the town (16.5%) and academic staff of Delta State

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Sex	Male	130	65
	Female	70	35
Age (years)			
	Below 20	0	0
	20-24	11	5.5
	25-29	12	6
	30-34	17	8.5
	35-39	31	15.5
Religion	40-44	49	24.5
	45-49	36	18
Marital status	50-54	24	12
	55-59	14	7
	60+	6	3
Ethnic Nationality			
	Christianity	180	90
	Islam	20	10
	ATR	0	0
	Single	70	35
Level of Education	Married	124	62
	Divorced	2	1
	Widowed	4	2
Length of stay in Abraka			
	Urhobo	53	26.5
	Isoko	23	11.5
	Ukwuani	39	19.5
	Ijaw	7	3.5
	Itsekiri	7	3.5
	Ibo	26	13
	Yoruba	19	9.5
	Hausa	5	2.5
	Ika	21	10.5
	Others(specify)	0	0
	Postgraduate degree	54	27
	Graduate degree	87	43.5
	School certificate	37	18.5
	Primary school cert	15	7.5
	No formal education	7	3.5
	Born there	25	12.5
	0-5years	45	22.5
	6-10years	37	18.5
	11-15years	19	9.5
	16-20years	46	23
	20years +	26	13

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2012

University (12.5%). This is because in Delsu, as in other universities, non-academic staff are more in number than academic staff because both skilled and unskilled labour is needed which on people with requisite academic skills are employed as lecturers. From personal observations of the researcher as at the time of this study, Abraka has about five government-owned primary/secondary schools and about ten privately-owned primary/secondary schools who have many teachers in their labour force taking advantage of the many of graduates from Delta State University who pick up teaching jobs in these schools awaiting the

Table 2: Socioeconomic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Occupation	University staff (academic)	25	12.5
	University staff (non-academic)	62	31
	Teacher	33	16.5
	Banker	19	9.5
	Artisan	12	6
	Driver/Okada Operator	20	10
	Unemployed/housewife	11	5.5
Monthly Income	Trader	5	2.5
	Farmer	10	5
	Clergy	4	2
	Below ₦20,000	31	15.5
Types of house lived in	₦20,000- ₦40,000	77	38.5
	₦41,000- ₦60,000	35	17.5
	₦61,000- ₦80,000	22	11
	₦81,000- ₦100,000	5	2.5
Age of House	₦101,000- ₦120,000	7	3.5
	₦121,000- ₦140,000	6	3
	₦141,000- ₦160,000	2	1
Home ownership	₦161,000- ₦180,000	3	1.5
	₦181,000- ₦200,000	7	3.5
	₦200,000 +	5	2.5
	Bungalow	15	7.5
	3-bedroom flat	65	32.5
	2-bedroom flat	50	25
	Self-contain	27	13.5
	Room and Parlour	40	20
	Single room	3	1.5
	0-5 years	123	61.5
	5-10 years	83	41.5
	10-15 years	15	7.5
	15-20 years	9	4.5
	20 years +	0	0
	Own my house	45	22.5
	On rent	155	77.5
Rent paid per annum In Abraka.		Current Price Range [Naira (₦)] Depending on the location/facilities	
	Bungalow	₦350,000- ₦500,000	
	3-bedroom flat	₦200,000- ₦300,000	
	2-bedroom flat	₦150,000- ₦200,000	
	Self-contain	₦120,000- ₦150,000	
	Bedsitter (single room)	₦55,000- ₦80,000	
	Room and Parlour	₦25,000- ₦35,000	
	Favourable climate	56	28
What brought you to Abraka	Job opportunity	87	43.5
	Education	50	25
	Market	4	2
	Others.	3	1.5

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2012

Table 3: Severity of Crimes as perceived by Respondents in Abraka

Type of crime	Order of severity on a 4-point scale			
	Very severe (4)	Severe (3)	Not severe (2)	Crime free (1)
Stealing	20	60	79	41
Armed robbery	40	80	55	25
Snatching of car/motor cycles	25	35	80	60
Murder/kidnapping	20	90	50	40
Rape/prostitution	25	85	30	60
Fraud	20	32	65	83

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2012

call-up for the one year compulsory national service (NYSC).

Other occupations of the respondents are driving/ Okada operator (10%), banking (9.5%), artisans (6%), farmers (5%), traders (2.5%), and clergy (2%). This implies that the presence of Delta State University have brought about other viable socioeconomic activities that the people are engaged in. Abraka have five of the newly consolidated banks in Nigeria. Viz; Ecobank (which recently acquired Oceanic International Bank Plc), Mainstreet Bank, Keystone Bank, Unity Bank, Zenith International Bank and the United Bank for Africa (UBA) and three microfinance banks (Macrod Microfinance Bank, IC Global Microfinance Bank and Lapo Microfinance). Respondents confirmed from oral interview that there were only one commercial bank (Unity Bank) and one community bank (Oriarovie Community Bank which was bankrupt in 2006 and currently out of business) as at the time delsu was established in 1992. Also there are many campus shuttle drivers and Okada men in the town who are engaged in transportation of the students and staff of delsu as well as the host community. Abraka has many artisans, traders from neighbouring towns and villages and church denominations with clergymen serving at diverse capacities. It is evident that only 5.5% of the respondents are housewife/unemployed.

The study sought to know respondent's economic status by allowing them give a rough estimate of their monthly earnings (see table 2). The result shows that 38.5% indicated earning between N20,000-N40,000 per month. The high percentage of respondents in this income bracket is as a result of the artisans, drivers/Okada men, traders etc who put their monthly income at this range. Also the vast majority of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled non-academic staff of the University and school teachers in the various schools in town earnings falls within this range. 17.5% of the respondents earned between N41,000- N60,000, 15.5% earns below ₦20,000, 11% earns between

₦61,000- ₦80,000, 3.5% earns ₦101,000- ₦120,000 and ₦181,000- ₦200,000, 3% earns between ₦121,000- ₦140,000, 2.5% earns between ₦81,000- ₦100,000 and above ₦200,000. Most of the academic staff respondents earns from ₦120,000 to above ₦200,000.

This study reveals that 32.5% of the respondents lived in 3-bedroom flat, 25% in 2-bedroom flat and 7.5% in bungalows. These classes of respondents are among the high income earners in the study area who enjoy modern facilities such as pipe borne water, water closet, electricity in their houses. Some are personally owned while few are university owned apartments for senior staff. 20% of the respondent lives in a room and parlour shelter arrangement, 13.5% in Self-contain housing and 1.5% in a single room housing arrangement (see table 2). The presence of the University has necessitated properties owners to build houses with modern indoor sanitary facilities but in most of the houses visited during the course of this study, there were virtually no facilities for environmental sanitation. Refuse bins and other domestic waste are seen littered within and around residential abodes. Modern housing structures is speedily taking over the entire town especially in the core areas and as such 61.5% of respondents lived in houses between 0-5 years of age, 41.5% lived in houses between 6-10 years, 6% lived in houses between 11- 15 years, 4.4% lives in houses built between 16-20 years ago while 1.6% of the respondents lived in houses that were built over 20 years ago. Most of the people living in the older houses, either do so because they personally owned or inherited the house or because of their income status. Okada men, traders, artisans like tailors, market people are more prone to live in the older houses most of which are without modern facilities and as such dwellers resort to the use of public facilities (shared pit toilet) or open field or in some cases stream for convenience.

Table 4: One-Sample Test

| Crimes | Test Value = 0 | | | | | |
| | T | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
					Lower	Upper
Stealing	3.951	3	.029	50.00000	9.7239	90.2761
Armed Robbery	4.264	3	.024	50.00000	12.6825	87.3175
Car/Bike Snatching	4.027	3	.028	50.00000	10.4855	89.5145
Murder/Kidnapping	3.397	3	.043	50.00000	3.1557	96.8443
Rape/Prostitution	3.573	3	.037	50.00000	5.4647	94.5353
Fraud	3.438	3	.041	50.00000	3.7176	96.2824

Source: Author's analysis, 2012

Table 2 also shows that 77.5% of the respondents are rented apartments while 22.5% of the respondents owned their houses. The oral interviews that about 35% of those in rented apartments have bought at least a parcel of landed properties for their building some times in the future.

Table 3 shows in order of severity how the respondents rated the different types of crimes that have been reported in Abraka for about a decade. These variables and their frequencies of occurrence in order of severity were further subjected to statistical analysis to ascertain the crime levels using the SPSS 17.0 version of one sample t-test and result presented in table 4.

The t- values as shown in table 4 implies that armed robbery is more severe in the study area, followed closely by car/ bike snatching, stealing, rape/prostitution and fraud. Cases of murder/kidnapping are largely new types of crimes experienced in the area but oral interview report confirms kidnapping crime is causing tension in the town since they started occurring four years ago. To reaffirm this, a business woman, the wife of a prominent transportation company owner was kidnapped at her shop in the core areas of the town in December 2008. Two years after in December 18, 2011, armed robbers attacked and robbed two professors at the Senior Staff Quarters within the main campus and similar incident was repeated in March 2012 when kidnappers invaded two campuses, kidnapped the wife of a prominent political leader and a serving commissioner and a lecturer in the faculty of social sciences. To show their grievances' about the kidnapping of their colleagues, the local union in charge of academic staff welfare subsequently went on a one-week strike to protest insecurity in the town.

Similarly, the presence of the University has caused the prices on houses, landed properties to skyrocket out of the reach of the ordinary citizens. A bungalow which cost less than a ₦100, 000 per annum on rent before the establishment of the university in 1992 now goes for between ₦350,000- ₦500,000. More so, a 3-bedroom and 2-bedroom flat residential rental apartment which cost less than ₦70,000 and ₦50,000 respectively before the establishment of the university now cost as much as between ₦200, 000- ₦300,000 and between ₦150,000- ₦200,000 respectively. Earlier these houses were offered freely or at a very low amount to occupants who were begged to accept to dwell in them in order to maintain the outdoor environments. There was nothing like self-contain and bed-sitter apartments in Abraka before the establishment of the institution. These types of accommodation were newly introduced to cater for single workers and students of delsu. The most popular housing type at the reach of the masses before the establishment of delsu was the room and palour type. The rent paid by occupants was about ₦800-₦1,000. These types of accommodation now go for between N25,000- N30,000 per annum, an increase of over three thousand percent.

The study also found out the pull factors that attracted the respondents to Abraka (see table 2). Job opportunities (43.5%) and favourable climate (28%) are the major attractors of population to the study area. This is closely followed by education (25%), market (2%) and others (1.5%).

CONCLUSION

This study is an attempt on identifying and determining the place of Delta State University as a growth pole on the socioeconomic development of Abraka which has attained the status of an urban centre both in population and socio infrastructure. The study asserts

that the location of Delta State University in Abraka have had positive and negative consequences on the historical evolution of the town from purely an agrarian community with population of less than 6000 inhabitants living a subsistence life to its present status as an urban environment having a population in excess of 80,000 with modern buildings, facilities and improved standard of living. Though the town has witnessed several positive developmental projects as a result of the presence of the university, there are some negative impacts which is evolving on a daily basis and varies from high cost of living as a result of demand-caused inflation in both housing and food items, stealing, kidnapping and murder.

The negative impact of the university on Abraka town is heightened by the problems of massive unemployment and youth restiveness in the Niger Delta region. The positive impacts of the University on Abraka town and its environs can be sustained if measures are put in place to forestall peace and security and employment of the teaming youths roaming the streets without jobs.

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