Evaluating the Bridge Construction Impacts on Livelihood Resilience and Social Inclusion in Mugbagba, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

Adeyemi Olabisi Omowumi, Ayeni Foluso Olayinka, Adelana Joel Oluwasogo

Department of Urban and Regional Planning, School of Environmental Studies, The Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State. Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impacts of bridge construction on livelihood resilience and social inclusion in Mugbagba, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. The project, intended to improve urban mobility and mitigate flooding, also had significant socio-economic implications for informal workers, traders, and low-income residents in the area. Using a mixed-method approach, data were gathered from 180 respondents through questionnaires and key informant interviews. Findings revealed that while 72.2% of respondents reported improved access to markets and services, only 35.6% experienced both income growth and enhanced accessibility. Furthermore, over 50% of respondents reported some form of livelihood disruption, and only 10% were engaged in the planning process, indicating a low level of community participation. The results underscore the uneven distribution of project benefits and the limited capacity of vulnerable groups to recover from displacement or income shocks. The study concludes that urban infrastructure can foster inclusive development only when paired with equity-focused planning and post-construction support systems. Recommendations include participatory design, livelihood restoration frameworks, and continuous post-project monitoring.

Keywords: Bridge Infrastructure, Livelihood Resilience, Social Inclusion, Urban Mobility, Informal Economy, Community Participation, Ado-Ekiti, Mugbagba

INTRODUCTION

Infrastructural development is increasingly recognized as a key determinant of urban transformation and socio-economic well-being, particularly in developing countries. Among the various types of physical infrastructure, bridge construction has emerged as a critical enabler of spatial connectivity, access to services, and economic interaction (World Bank, 2020). In urban settings, bridges can eliminate geographic barriers and integrate fragmented neighborhoods, potentially reducing travel time and boosting productivity. However, the extent to which such developments enhance inclusive and sustainable livelihoods remains a subject of debate in urban planning discourse (UN-Habitat, 2022).

Ado-Ekiti, the administrative capital of Ekiti State, Nigeria, has witnessed significant infrastructure expansion in response to increasing urbanization and population pressure. The Mugbagba area, located within the central urban fabric of the city, was identified as a congestion hotspot due to its topography and poor drainage, which historically limited economic access and community mobility. In response, a new bridge was constructed to improve transportation flow, particularly across flood-prone zones, and to open up access between Mugbagba and other commercial districts such as Ajilosun and Atikankan (Ekiti State Ministry of Works, 2023). While early outcomes suggest traffic decongestion, deeper socio-economic implications for low-income households, women traders, and informal workers remain under examined.

Infrastructure is not merely a physical transformation, it is a social and economic force that can either reinforce inequality or mitigate it, depending on how inclusively it is planned and implemented (Akinmoladun & Oluwoye, 2007). In many Nigerian cities, urban infrastructure disproportionately benefits middle- and upper income groups, while lower-income residents often face displacement, disrupted livelihoods, and exclusion from decision-making processes (Ogu, 2000). This issue is especially pressing in places like Mugbagba, where a large segment of the population engages in informal economic activities that are highly sensitive to spatial and policy

shifts.

The concept of livelihood resilience, the ability of individuals and communities to withstand and adapt to socio-economic shocks has become a useful framework in evaluating the true benefits of urban development. When infrastructure investments like bridge projects are assessed through this lens, attention shifts from short-term accessibility gains to the long-term stability and adaptability of vulnerable populations (Chambers & Conway, 1992). In the Mugbagba context, it becomes important to assess not only whether the bridge improved road conditions, but whether it enhanced job access, sustained small businesses, and reduced vulnerability for the poor.

A further dimension is social inclusion, which emphasizes equitable participation in decision-making and access to benefits. Research has shown that when communities are meaningfully engaged in infrastructure projects, they are more likely to derive lasting benefits and safeguard shared resources (Olawale & Ajayi, 2016). However, top-down planning in Nigeria often neglects community engagement, resulting in skewed outcomes that favor a minority of urban residents. Preliminary interviews in Mugbagba suggest that many local stakeholders were unaware of the bridge plan until construction began, which may have limited their capacity to prepare for the resulting spatial and economic shifts.

This study therefore investigates the impact of the Mugbagba Bridge not just in terms of connectivity, but through the broader lenses of livelihood resilience and social inclusion. Specifically, the research examines how different socio-economic groups have fared in terms of income stability, access to trade and services, and involvement in planning. By taking a more nuanced, equity-focused approach, this paper contributes to urban planning literature in Nigeria and offers practical insights for state authorities and urban development partners seeking to ensure that infrastructure projects promote inclusive urban growth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Infrastructure and Urban Development in Nigeria

Infrastructure plays a foundational role in shaping the economic, social, and environmental dynamics of urban spaces. In the Nigerian context, rapid urbanization and population growth have intensified the demand for resilient and inclusive infrastructure (Ogun, 2010). Bridges, as transport infrastructure, are essential for improving accessibility and enhancing mobility, particularly in terrain-constrained areas. However, the spatial benefits of infrastructure are often unevenly distributed across income groups and locations (UN-Habitat, 2016). The Nigerian experience reveals that while bridges are commonly built to address traffic congestion or flooding, they often fail to account for the lived realities of vulnerable populations residing in informal settlements or economic peripheries (Adebayo & Ajayi, 2015).

Bridge Infrastructure and Livelihood Outcomes

The impact of bridge construction projects have been associated with a variety of livelihood outcomes which can result into both positive and negative effects on individuals in urban cities.

Positive Livelihood Outcomes:

*Bridge project have been found to improve access to variuos economic opportunities in the sense that bridge construction can stimulate economic development by connecting previously isolated areas to commercial centers, facilitating the movement of goods and people. It can reduce transportation costs and increase the profitability of small businesses. In rural India, for instance, bridge construction significantly boosted women's participation in market activities by reducing travel time and increasing security (Baruah, 2015).This can benefit both men and women engaged in various occupations, such as small business owners, transport workers, and traders.

*Bridge construction projects can improve access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and markets for individuals of all income levels, leading to improved quality of life.

*The creation of employment opportunities: bridge construction projects create job opportunities for local

residents, offering income sources for both men and women with different skills.

*Disaster resilience: Well-constructed bridges can enhance the resilience of a city's infrastructure, improving its ability to withstand natural disasters like floods or earthquakes.

Negative Livelihood Outcomes:

*Settlement displacement and loss of livelihoods: Bridge construction projects may result in temporary or permanent displacement of communities from their settlements. It can also cause disruption of existing livelihoods, particularly for marginalized groups and low-income individuals like street traders, motorcyclists, and artisans who rely on informal or temporary work arrangements if no mitigation mechanisms are in place (Salau & Olaleye, 2015). In Nigerian cities, informal economic actors are often the most exposed to these risks due to weak institutional protections and exclusion from formal project designs (Ibem & Aduwo, 2012).

*Gender disparities in employment: Women may face barriers in accessing employment opportunities in the construction sector due to gender stereotypes, lack of training, and discriminatory practices. This can exacerbate existing gender inequalities in income and occupational status.

*Environmental degradation: The construction of bridges can lead to environmental impacts such as pollution, deforestation, and habitat destruction, affecting the livelihoods of those dependent on natural resources for income, such as farmers, fishermen, and artisans.

Disaggregation by Gender, Occupation, and Income:

*Gender: Women may experience disproportionate impacts from bridge construction, since they are more likely to be affected by loss of livelihoods, limited access to employment opportunities, and increased care responsibilities due to disruptions in infrastructure and services.

*Occupation: Different occupational groups may experience varying outcomes from the bridge construction. For example, the skilled laborers involved in construction activities may benefit from increased demand for their services, while the informal workers such as street vendors may face challenges due to changes in traffic patterns and access to customers.

*Income: The average individuals with low incomes are at a higher risk of negative livelihood impacts from bridge construction, as they may lack the resources to adapt to changes in their environment, access alternative income sources, or cope with increased costs of living.

Overall, the impact of bridge construction on livelihood outcomes in urban cities is complex and multifaceted, requiring careful consideration of the diverse needs and vulnerabilities of different groups in society to ensure inclusive and sustainable development(Salau & Olaleye, 2015).

Social Inclusion in Urban Planning

Social inclusion in planning refers to processes that ensure that all members of society, especially the poor and marginalized, have equitable access to infrastructure and participate in decisions that affect their environment. According to Ogu (2000), most infrastructure development in Nigeria operates on a technocratic and top-down model, where local communities are passive recipients rather than active stakeholders. This exclusion often leads to resentment, misalignment of priorities, and underutilization of projects. Inclusive planning involves participatory needs assessments, public consultations, and the integration of community feedback into project design (UN-Habitat, 2020). Studies in South Africa and Brazil show that infrastructure projects embedded in participatory governance structures yield higher user satisfaction and social sustainability (Turok, 2014).

Vulnerable Groups and Urban Infrastructure

Vulnerability in the urban context refers to the susceptibility of individuals or groups to adverse outcomes due to socio-economic status, gender, or informal employment. Women, for instance, often face mobility constraints that limit their access to employment, education, and health services (Cervero & Golub, 2011). The construction

of infrastructure like bridges can either reduce these constraints or exacerbate them depending on design features such as pedestrian paths, lighting, and spatial connectivity. In Ado-Ekiti, informal traders many of whom are women often operate near major intersections and rely on predictable foot traffic for income. When bridge construction disrupts these spaces without alternative arrangements, it can undermine the economic base of these groups (Yoade, 2022).

The Concept of Livelihood Resilience

Livelihood resilience is the capacity of individuals or households to recover from shocks, adapt to change, and maintain or improve their living standards over time (Chambers & Conway, 1992). Infrastructure investments can be a powerful tool for enhancing resilience by improving access to income opportunities, reducing vulnerability to hazards, and creating physical assets. However, this potential is only realized when projects are designed with the long-term well-being of communities in mind. A bridge that improves vehicular access but causes the displacement of roadside businesses may reduce aggregate vulnerability but increase specific individual or group vulnerability (Akinbode, 2013). Hence, infrastructure development must consider not just macro-level gains but also micro-level trade-offs.

Empirical Evidence from Bridge Projects

Empirical studies on bridge impacts in Nigerian urban centers reveal a mixture of outcomes. The Zuba Interchange project in Abuja, for example, enhanced regional mobility but also led to the removal of informal stalls that supported hundreds of low-income households (Umeh & Nnam, 2019). In contrast, the Millennium Bridge in Calabar was praised for its integration of walkways and local markets that preserved livelihoods (Eboh & Okezie, 2013). These studies emphasize the need for context-sensitive planning that incorporates socio-spatial data and stakeholder feedback. They also underscore the importance of post-construction evaluations to capture unintended consequences and ensure infrastructure contributes to inclusive and resilient urban growth.

Study Area Description

Overview of Ekiti State

Ekiti State, located in the southwestern region of Nigeria, was carved out of the old Ondo State in 1996. It occupies a land area of approximately 6,353 square kilometers and is bordered by Kwara, Kogi, Osun, and Ondo States. The state is predominantly Yoruba-speaking and features a mixture of rural and urban settlements. Ekiti's economy is driven by agriculture, civil service employment, and an emerging urban informal sector (NPC, 2006). Despite its relatively small size, the state grapples with infrastructure challenges, particularly in bridging the urban-rural divide and addressing the needs of rapidly growing peri-urban communities.

Profile of Ado-Ekiti

Ado-Ekiti is the state capital and most populous urban center, serving as the hub of government administration, education, commerce, and transport. The city lies between latitudes 7°19′ and 7°29′ N and longitudes 5°3′ and 5°22′ E, with a population estimated at over 400,000. Over the past two decades, Ado-Ekiti has undergone substantial spatial expansion, extending into previously rural areas and converting them into peri-urban residential and commercial zones (Fadamiro, 2002). This growth has outpaced the capacity of many physical infrastructures, resulting in uneven access to urban services and rising socio-spatial inequality.

The city's transportation system is dominated by informal modes such as motorcycle taxis and mini-buses, while street vending and petty trading form the economic backbone for many households. Due to inadequate drainage and poorly maintained roads, several neighborhoods including Atikankan, Ajilosun, and Mugbagba experience chronic flooding and vehicular delays, particularly during the rainy season. Government-led projects, including road dualization and bridge construction, have targeted these problem areas in efforts to enhance mobility and stimulate local economic development (Ekiti State Ministry of Works, 2023).

Focus on Mugbagba Area

Mugbagba is a dense, mixed-use neighborhood situated in the southwestern quadrant of Ado-Ekiti. It is

characterized by compact housing units, unregulated commercial kiosks, and high pedestrian traffic. Prior to the bridge project, the area was one of the most flood-prone parts of the city due to its topography and weak drainage systems. These environmental factors, combined with poor road infrastructure, limited access to nearby markets and institutional facilities, and regularly disrupted economic activities, particularly for informal traders and low-income households (Oriye, 2013).

The bridge constructed in Mugbagba was designed to improve vehicular and pedestrian access across a deep ravine that divided key commercial and residential sections of the area. It includes stormwater drains, pedestrian walkways, and reinforced concrete structures. While it has undoubtedly enhanced physical connectivity, it also altered the spatial layout of the community, leading to the displacement of informal stalls and the rerouting of traffic patterns. These shifts have significant implications for vulnerable populations that rely on fixed routes and foot traffic for daily income.

Mugbagba's population is socio-economically diverse but heavily skewed toward lower-income earners, including market women, artisans, hawkers, and transport workers. Many of these groups lack formal land titles, operate outside regulatory frameworks, and have limited access to institutional support, making them particularly sensitive to infrastructural shocks. Understanding how the bridge construction has affected these populations' resilience, adaptive capacity, and inclusion in the benefits of urban development is therefore central to this research.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method descriptive survey design to evaluate the impacts of bridge construction on the livelihood resilience and social inclusion of residents in Mugbagba, Ado-Ekiti. This design was selected to enable the integration of both quantitative and qualitative data for a holistic appraisal. Quantitative data captured patterns and frequencies of socio-economic changes, while qualitative insights deepened the understanding of lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and perceptions among different socio-economic groups.

Data Sources

The research relied on both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide administered to selected respondents. Observational notes were also taken during site visits. Secondary data were obtained from government publications, urban planning reports, journal articles, and past studies on infrastructure and urban livelihoods in Ado-Ekiti and comparable Nigerian cities.

Population and Sampling Technique

The population of the study consisted of residents and informal business operators within a 1.2-kilometer radius of the Mugbagba Bridge. This area was chosen to capture those directly affected by accessibility shifts, commercial flow changes, and physical displacement. A total of 180 respondents were selected through a purposive stratified sampling method. The strata included: (1) roadside traders and market women, (2) transport workers (e.g., okada riders), (3) household heads, (4) youth entrepreneurs, and (5) elderly residents.

This approach ensured balanced representation across key livelihood categories and demographic groups. In addition, five key informants were interviewed: a market union leader, a local government official, a female cooperative society head, a community youth leader, and a civil engineer involved in the project.

Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (version 25) to generate frequency tables, percentages, cross-tabulations, and means. Inferential statistics such as Chi-square tests and Likert scale analysis were used to explore relationships between social groups and their resilience responses or inclusion levels.

Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed using thematic content analysis, identifying recurrent patterns, contradictions, and community sentiments related to planning participation, economic coping, and spatial changes.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by three experts in urban planning and social geography. A pilot study involving 15 respondents was conducted, and revisions were made accordingly. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.79, indicating a high level of internal consistency.

Ethical approval was secured from the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti. Respondents participated voluntarily and were assured of confidentiality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analyzed data obtained from 180 respondents and 5 key informants in the Mugbagba area. The data are presented thematically under five key domains: socio-demographics, livelihood impact, resilience indicators, inclusion and participation, and perception of bridge outcomes.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	92	51.1
	Female	88	48.9
Age Group	18–30 years	58	32.2
	31–50 years	83	46.1
	51 years and above	39	21.7
Primary Livelihood	Petty Trading	66	36.7
	Artisan/Technician	38	21.1
	Transport Operator	28	15.6
	Civil Servant	24	13.3
	Others	24	13.3
	Total	180	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Respondents were fairly balanced in gender, with a slight male majority. The dominant age group was between 31–50 years (46.1%), suggesting an economically active population. Petty trading was the most common livelihood (36.7%), reflecting the informal economy's significance in Mugbagba.

Impact of Bridge on Income and Economic Access

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Increased income and improved access	64	35.6
Increased income but no change in access	10	5.6
No income change but improved access	66	36.7

No income change or access improvement	20	11.1
Decreased income despite improved access	20	11.1
Total	180	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Interpretation: 35.6% of respondents experienced both increased income and improved access to markets/services, while 36.7% only benefited in access without any increase in income. A notable 11.1% saw no improvement in either domain, and another 11.1% reported that even though access improved, their income dropped. This shows that while access has largely improved, the economic benefit is unevenly distributed among different population groups.

Livelihood Resilience Indicators

Resilience Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Disrupted during construction but fully recovered	48	26.7
Disrupted and partially recovered	52	28.9
Not disrupted but no economic improvement	34	18.9
Still struggling post-construction	38	21.1
Received external support/compensation	8	4.4
Total	180	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Interpretation: About 55.6% of respondents experienced some level of disruption during bridge construction, with only 26.7% reporting full recovery. Meanwhile, 21.1% are still struggling economically post-construction. Just 4.4% received any form of external support. These findings reflect limited resilience capacity among affected residents and underline the lack of structured livelihood restoration mechanisms.

Community Inclusion and Participation

Inclusion Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Aware of project before construction	70	38.9
Consulted by government or contractors	18	10.0
Felt project planning was inclusive	52	28.9
Believed benefits favored elites	40	22.2
Felt project excluded low-income/informal groups	54	30.0
Total	180	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Interpretation: Only 10% of respondents were consulted during planning, and less than a third (28.9%) perceived the process as inclusive. While 38.9% were aware of the project before execution, a significant 30% believed the project excluded low-income groups. These results confirm a gap between planning intentions and perceived fairness.

Overall Perception of Bridge Outcomes

Perception Statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Bridge improved physical connectivity	149	82.8
Bridge improved daily commuting experience	134	74.4
Bridge positively impacted all income groups	65	36.1
Project planning considered community views	34	18.9
Bridge is a worthwhile investment for the neighborhood	121	67.2
Total	180	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Interpretation: Most respondents acknowledged improvements in connectivity (82.8%) and commuting (74.4%), but only 36.1% agreed that the bridge benefitted all income groups. Just 18.9% felt the planning was participatory. These findings highlight the need for more inclusive and equitable infrastructure delivery models.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study set out to evaluate the socio-economic implications of bridge construction in Mugbagba, Ado-Ekiti, using the frameworks of livelihood resilience and social inclusion. The data show that although the bridge has enhanced physical connectivity and market access, the distribution of economic benefits and the ability of affected residents to recover from disruption remain unequal. These findings reinforce concerns raised in the literature about the unintended consequences of top-down infrastructure development.

From Table 5.2, only 35.6% of respondents experienced both increased income and improved access, while 22.2% (combined) reported no improvement or even loss in income. This supports the argument by Akinmoladun and Oluwoye (2007) that economic gains from infrastructure projects tend to favor the better-positioned segments of society, while low-income and informal workers often struggle to convert physical improvements into tangible livelihood gains.

Plate 1: Current Landscape the study area due to the ongoing development

The resilience data in Table 5.3 shows that more than 50% of respondents experienced some level of economic disruption, with just 26.7% fully recovering. This reflects a weak resilience capacity among vulnerable groups traders, artisans, and informal transport workers who lack the buffers (savings, social support, formal recognition) needed to withstand project-induced shocks. These findings are in line with Chambers and Conway's (1992) theory of livelihood resilience, which emphasizes the importance of recovery capacity

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following development interventions.

Plate 2: Trader that lost their shops due to the bridge development

Furthermore, the low proportion (4.4%) of residents receiving external support or compensation reveals a critical gap in social protection planning. Infrastructure that displaces livelihoods without offering recovery mechanisms risks perpetuating urban poverty, as also noted by Ibem and Aduwo (2012). This underscores the need for post-construction recovery frameworks and inclusive project governance.

Plate 3: Displaced Retails shops in the study area

Plate 4: Current Road expansion in the study area

In essence, while the Mugbagba Bridge has physically improved the urban landscape, its benefits are unevenly distributed and resilience outcomes remain fragile for marginalized groups. The data affirm the need for a more equity-driven and community-informed approach to infrastructure planning in Nigerian cities.

Policy Implications

*Prioritize community engagement: Policymakers should engage with local communities throughout the planning and implementation of bridge construction projects to address concerns and ensure that the impacts of the construction are minimized.

*Conduct thorough impact assessments: It is essential to conduct comprehensive social, environmental, and economic impact assessments before proceeding with bridge construction projects. This will help identify potential risks and benefits and inform decision-making that will positively impact on the residents.

*Invest in mitigation measures: Policymakers should allocate resources to mitigate the negative impacts of bridge construction, such as providing support for displaced communities, implementing environmental protection measures, and improving access to alternative livelihood opportunities.

*Ensure equity and social justice: Policies should be designed to promote social equity and inclusive development, ensuring that the benefits of bridge construction are shared equitably among all residents, particularly vulnerable and marginalized groups.

The construction of bridges in urban cities can have far-reaching implications for livelihood resilience, requiring policymakers to adopt a holistic approach that considers social, economic, and environmental factors to achieve sustainable and inclusive development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study has evaluated the impacts of bridge construction in Mugbagba, Ado-Ekiti through the dual lenses of livelihood resilience and social inclusion. While the physical infrastructure has successfully enhanced urban connectivity and access to markets for many residents, the economic and social benefits have not been equitably distributed. Only a minority of respondents experienced both improved access and income, while others suffered disruptions with little or no formal support mechanisms in place.

The findings show that vulnerable groups such as petty traders and informal workers were disproportionately affected, particularly during the construction phase. Many are still struggling to rebuild their livelihoods. In addition, there was a notable lack of meaningful participation in project planning, with only 10% of respondents consulted and less than 30% perceiving the project as inclusive.

These outcomes suggest that while infrastructure can catalyze economic transformation, it must be coupled with participatory governance and social protection frameworks to ensure no group is left behind. Inclusive infrastructure is not just about roads and bridges it is about equitable access, shared prosperity, and sustainable urban futures.

Recommendations

1. **Institutionalize Participatory Planning Mechanisms**

   Local governments should embed community consultation into all stages of infrastructure development. This includes needs assessment, design review, implementation feedback, and post-construction monitoring.

2. **Create Livelihood Restoration Programs**

   For projects that disrupt informal livelihoods, there should be structured support, such as temporary

relocation grants, business resettlement assistance, and vocational training.

3. **Prioritize Equity in Infrastructure Benefit Distribution**

   Future urban projects should conduct social impact assessments that specifically measure impacts across gender, income, and occupational groups. These assessments should guide resource allocation and compensation plans.

4. **Establish a Community Infrastructure Desk**

   A dedicated desk at the local planning office can serve as a liaison between the government and grassroots stakeholders, tracking grievances and ensuring inclusive communication.

5. **Monitor and Evaluate Post-Construction Outcomes**

   Evaluation should continue beyond project completion to measure long-term effects on household income, employment, and access to services. This will strengthen accountability and support adaptive policy learning.

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