Appraisal of the Impacts of Bridge Construction on the Socio-Economic Activities of Residents Along old Garage – Ijigbo Axis of Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

Ayeni Foluso Olayinka, Aruna Kehinde Kemisola, Adelana Joel Oluwasogo, Adeyemi Olabisi Omowumi

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

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ABSTRACTS

This study appraises the socio-economic impacts of bridge construction on residents along old garage - Ijigbo area in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. The bridge was developed to address challenges of poor accessibility, flooding, and traffic congestion in a historically underserved part of the city. Using data collected from 200 respondents through surveys and field observations, the study evaluates changes in mobility, economic activities, property values, and public perception. Results indicate substantial improvements in travel time and commercial vibrancy, with 87% of respondents affirming enhanced accessibility and 71% reporting increased customer flow. However, the project also triggered temporary business losses, rental inflation, and concerns over exclusion from planning decisions. About 18% of residents experienced displacement due to rising rents, and 60.5% believed the project lacked adequate community input. The study concludes that while the bridge has significantly enhanced urban connectivity and economic vitality, its benefits are not uniformly distributed. Recommendations are made for more inclusive planning, livelihood protection, and equitable post-project monitoring in future infrastructure development across growing Nigerian cities

Keywords: Bridge Construction, Socio-Economic Impact, Urban Infrastructure, Ado-Ekiti, Old garage-Ijigbo

INTRODUCTION

The construction of bridges is a crucial intervention in urban infrastructure, especially in developing cities where mobility and connectivity are vital for socio-economic transformation. Infrastructural projects such as bridges serve not only as physical links across geographical barriers but also as catalysts for commercial activity, land development, and social integration (Oyesiku, 2002). In the context of fast-growing Nigerian cities, the need for such infrastructure becomes more urgent due to increasing urban population, traffic congestion, and deteriorating road networks (Adeniji, 2000).

Ado-Ekiti, the capital of Ekiti State, exemplifies a city facing these challenges. In recent years, the city has witnessed significant urban expansion with corresponding pressure on its transport systems. The Old garage - Iligbo axis in particular has historically suffered from poor accessibility, frequent flooding, and traffic bottlenecks conditions that inhibited both residential and commercial vibrancy. construction of a bridge in this area represents a targeted attempt by the government to alleviate these longstanding issues and improve urban movement (Ekiti State Ministry of Works and Transport, 2022).

Bridges, as part of urban transport infrastructure, are often linked with broader socio-economic impacts. They facilitate trade by linking markets, reduce vehicle operating costs, and improve access to schools, healthcare, and jobs (World Bank, 2020). In the Old garage – Ijigbo axis context, the bridge construction is expected to enhance not only physical connectivity but also stimulate economic growth and social inclusion. However, without empirical assessment, it is difficult to determine whether these anticipated benefits have materialized among residents and businesses.

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Despite their potential, infrastructure projects like bridge construction can also bring about unintended consequences. These may include displacement of informal traders, noise pollution, loss of livelihoods, and social exclusion if adequate compensation or relocation plans are not implemented (Akinmoladun&Oluwoye, 2007). The dual nature of such developments offering both opportunities and disruptions makes impact appraisal a critical part of urban planning and public investment processes.

In addition, one of the major criticisms of infrastructural interventions in Nigeria is the lack of meaningful stakeholder engagement. Projects are often initiated with limited consultation, resulting in outcomes that do not align with the needs or priorities of local communities (Ogu, 2000). Understanding the perceptions and lived experiences of affected residents is therefore essential in evaluating the actual impacts of bridge projects beyond their physical completion.

This study aims to appraise the socio-economic impacts of bridge construction on the residents of Old garage – Ijigbo axis in Ado-Ekiti, with particular focus on accessibility, livelihood change, economic activity, and community satisfaction. It provides an evidence-based assessment by collecting primary data from households and businesses in the area. The findings are intended to inform more inclusive and responsive infrastructure planning, especially in secondary cities undergoing rapid urbanization (UN-Habitat, 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Urban Infrastructure and Development

Urban infrastructure refers to the fundamental facilities and systems that support the functioning of cities such as transportation, water supply, energy, and telecommunications. In the context of urban development, transport infrastructure is widely recognized as a key driver of economic growth and social transformation (Adeniji, 2000). Studies have shown that improved infrastructure increases accessibility, reduces poverty, and attracts private investment into urban areas (UN-Habitat, 2016).

Bridge Construction as Urban Strategy

Bridge construction is often a strategic urban intervention aimed at improving movement across physical or spatial barriers, such as rivers, ravines, or congested roads. In Nigerian cities, bridges have become integral to the modernization of transport networks and urban beautification efforts (Onokala, 2012). For instance, the Ikorodu-Lagos express flyover and the Benin-Lagos bypass have improved logistics and business efficiency while also influencing patterns of land use (Eboh & Okezie, 2013).

Socio-Economic Effects of Infrastructure

Several scholars emphasize the socio-economic ripple effects of infrastructure projects, particularly in developing contexts. These effects include job creation, market access, increased property values, and informal business growth (Ogun, 2010). However, such benefits are often unevenly distributed. Vulnerable populations—such as petty traders and low-income households—may suffer losses through displacement or increased cost of living (Adebayo & Ajayi, 2015).

Challenges in Implementation

Despite numerous infrastructural initiatives, many Nigerian bridge projects face issues such as corruption, lack of community consultation, environmental degradation, and inadequate compensation for affected persons (Ibem & Aduwo, 2012). These challenges undermine the socio-economic objectives of the projects and often generate community resistance. Moreover, without mechanisms for post-construction monitoring and feedback, it becomes difficult to evaluate real-world outcomes (Umeh & Nnam, 2019).

Community Participation and Planning

A critical dimension in infrastructural planning is the role of community participation. Participatory approaches allow for inclusive decision-making, foster transparency, and improve project sustainability (Ogu, 2000). In

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contrast, top-down implementations often lead to disconnect between planners and users. Case studies in Ibadan and Enugu have demonstrated that participatory urban projects tend to have higher acceptance and better long-term outcomes (Nubi & Omirin, 2006).

Previous Empirical Studies on Bridge Impact

Empirical studies on bridge impacts in Nigerian cities reveal both positive and adverse outcomes. For example, the construction of the Lekki-Ikoyi Link Bridge led to increased property prices and reduced commute time, but also displaced waterfront communities (Ilesanmi, 2013). Similarly, the Lokoja River Bridge improved interstate commerce but disrupted farming activities during its construction phase (Salau & Olaleye, 2015). These studies underline the importance of contextual, area-specific impact evaluations, such as the present appraisal in Old garage – Ijigbo axis, Ado-Ekiti.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Overview of Ekiti State

Ekiti State is one of the 36 states of Nigeria, located in the southwestern region of the country. Created on October 1, 1996, from the former Ondo State, it is bounded by Kwara State to the north, Kogi State to the northeast, Ondo State to the south and east, and Osun State to the west. Ekiti is predominantly a Yoruba-speaking state with a landmass of approximately 6,353 square kilometers and a population of over 3.2 million people according to the 2006 National Population Census, projected to have exceeded 4 million by 2025 (NPC, 2006; Ekiti State Government, 2022).

Ado-Ekiti is the capital and largest urban settlement in Ekiti State, serving as the administrative, commercial, and educational nerve center of the state. The city lies between latitudes7°19′ and 7°29′ North and longitudes 5°3′ and 5°22′ East, and covers an area of approximately 36.7 square kilometers**,** having expanded from 2.5 sq.km in 1956 and 19.6 sq.km in 1996 due to rapid urban sprawl (Olugbenga & Ifesanya, 2013). Ado-Ekiti enjoys the status of a nodal town**,** being the convergence point for major roads linking other towns and local government areas in the state

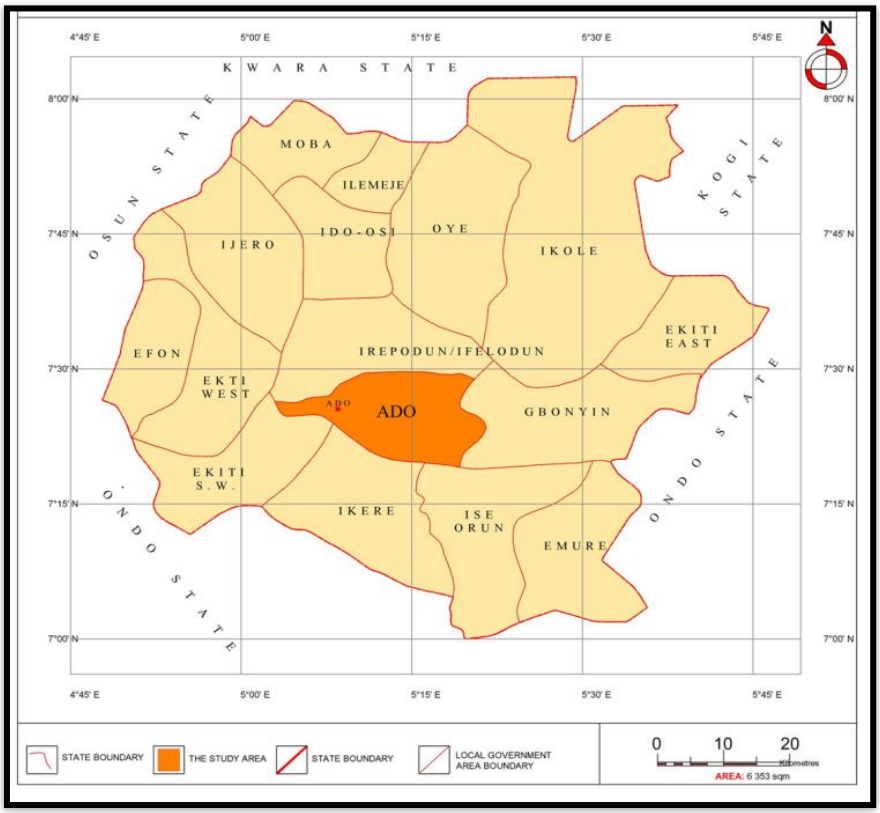

Fig 1: Map of Ekiti Showing Ado Ekiti

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The city's spatial structure is characterized by a central business district (CBD), residential neighborhoods, educational institutions, and traditional quarters. It hosts institutions such as Ekiti State University, Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti, and the State Secretariat. Despite these advantages, Ado-Ekiti faces urban challenges including congestion, inadequate infrastructure, and flooding, especially in low-lying areas like Ojumose, Ajilosun, and Old garage -Ijigbo (Fadamiro, 2002). Recent infrastructure interventions such as road dualization, culvert expansion, and bridge construction are part of the city's urban renewal efforts.

Old garage – Ijigbo axis is one of the oldest and most populous neighborhoods within the urban structure of Ado-Ekiti. It is strategically located within the southwestern quadrant of the city and directly links areas such as Oke-Ila, Atikankan, and Ojumose. The area is mixed-use in nature, comprising residential dwellings, roadside retail outlets, mechanic workshops, religious centers, and commercial banks. The old garage – Ijigbo axis has historically served as a critical node in intra-city connectivity due to its location on one of the main traffic corridors leading into the city's commercial heart.

Before the bridge construction, the area was known for seasonal flooding, severe traffic congestion, and poor drainage, especially during the wet season. These conditions caused significant delays, increased transportation costs, and reduced economic productivity. The bridge project in Old garage – Ijigbo axis was initiated by the state government to address these urban mobility and environmental concerns, aiming to connect communities across a previously inaccessible drainage basin and to integrate the old garage – Ijigbo road more efficiently into the larger transport grid of Ado-Ekiti (Ekiti State Ministry of Works, 2025).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings from the field survey conducted among 200 respondents in Old garage – Ijigbo area, Ado-Ekiti. The analysis is categorized under key themes: demographic profile**,** accessibility and mobility**,** impact on economic activities**,** property values**,** and perception of the bridge project**.**

Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	118	59.0
	Female	82	41.0
Age Group	18–30 years	54	27.0
	31–45 years	86	43.0
	46–60 years	42	21.0
	61+ years	18	9.0
Occupation	Trader	66	33.0
	Civil Servant	40	20.0
	Artisan/Technician	48	24.0
	Transport Operator	26	13.0
	Others	20	10.0
	Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The respondents are fairly distributed across gender and age groups. A significant portion of respondents (43%) falls within the 31–45 age bracket, indicating a predominantly economically active population. Traders and artisans together constitute over half (57%) of the sample, confirming the economic vibrancy and informal sector dominance in the Old garage -Ijigbo area.

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Impact on Accessibility and Travel Time

Response Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Commute time before bridge		
Above 30 minutes	128	64.0
15–30 minutes	52	26.0
Less than 15 minutes	20	10.0
Commute time after bridge		
Above 30 minutes	18	9.0
15–30 minutes	58	29.0
Less than 15 minutes	124	62.0
Improved accessibility (Yes)	174	87.0
Improved pedestrian mobility (Yes)	168	84.0
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Travel time drastically reduced after the construction of the bridge, with 62% now reporting commutes under 15 minutes compared to only 10% before. Furthermore, 87% of respondents affirm improved accessibility, and 84% confirm better pedestrian mobility. These findings confirm the bridge's effectiveness in enhancing intra-urban movement and easing congestion.

Impact on Economic Activities

Economic Indicator	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Reported increase in daily customer flow	142	71.0
Business income increased post-bridge	134	67.0
New businesses opened since bridge	48	24.0
Loss of income during construction	62	31.0
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

There is a significant increase in customer flow and income for many local businesses following the bridge construction. However, 31% reported losses during the construction phase, highlighting the temporary negative impact of infrastructure works on livelihoods. The emergence of new businesses (24%) reflects improved investor confidence in the area post-completion.

Changes in Property and Rent Values

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Increased property value reported	122	61.0
Increased rental cost (Yes)	138	69.0
`Relocation due to rising rents	36	18.0
Total		

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The bridge project contributed to a general increase in both property and rental values. While this reflects improved infrastructure appeal, it also poses a risk of displacement due to gentrification, with 18% of respondents already reporting forced relocation due to rising rents. This points to the need for inclusive urban policies that mitigate such socioeconomic displacement.

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Residents' Perception of the Bridge Project

Statement	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
The bridge improved traffic flow	88.5	11.5
The bridge contributed to economic growth	83.0	17.0
The bridge improved safety during floods	78.0	22.0
The project was community-inclusive	39.5	60.5
The project caused temporary disruption	72.0	28.0
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Overall perceptions of the bridge project are largely positive. Most respondents (over 80%) believe the bridge improved traffic flow and boosted economic activities. However, 60.5% of residents indicated that the project was not community-inclusive, highlighting gaps in consultation and transparency. This aligns with national trends of top-down infrastructure planning lacking sufficient local input (Ogu, 2000).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section discusses the major findings of the study in relation to the existing literature and theoretical perspectives. It emphasizes how the construction of the Old garage – Ijigbo axis bridge has influenced socio-economic dynamics in the area, covering accessibility, economic activities, property values, and public perception.

Improved Accessibility and Mobility

The reduction in commute time and enhanced movement reported by 87% of respondents aligns with global and national studies that identify infrastructure projects—especially bridge construction—as key to resolving urban mobility challenges (World Bank, 2020). Similar outcomes were observed in the Lekki-Ikoyi Link Bridge project, which significantly reduced congestion in Lagos (Ilesanmi, 2013). In Old garage – Ijigbo area, the improved pedestrian and vehicular accessibility facilitated by the bridge has not only resolved prior traffic gridlocks but also enabled smoother interconnectivity between key neighborhoods in Ado-Ekiti.

Plate 1: Ongoing Bridge Construction

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Plate 2: Traffic Congestion due to the current bridge development in the study are

These results support Oyesiku's (2002) position that well-planned transportation interventions contribute to the efficiency of urban systems. The Old garage - Ijigbo Bridge, in particular, has demonstrated that targeted infrastructure in flood-prone, mobility-constrained urban zones can yield significant transportation benefits in secondary cities like Ado-Ekiti.

Plate 3: Ongoing Bridge Development to improve accessibility

Boost in Economic Activities

The findings that 67% of respondents experienced an increase in income, and that 71% saw a rise in customer flow post-construction, mirror outcomes from empirical work on urban economic geography. Ogun (2010)

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observed that improved access stimulates commercial activity by attracting more foot and vehicular traffic. In the Old garage – Ijigbo axis context, the bridge has effectively opened up market linkages and improved access to goods and services, resulting in increased economic opportunities for traders, artisans, and transport operators.

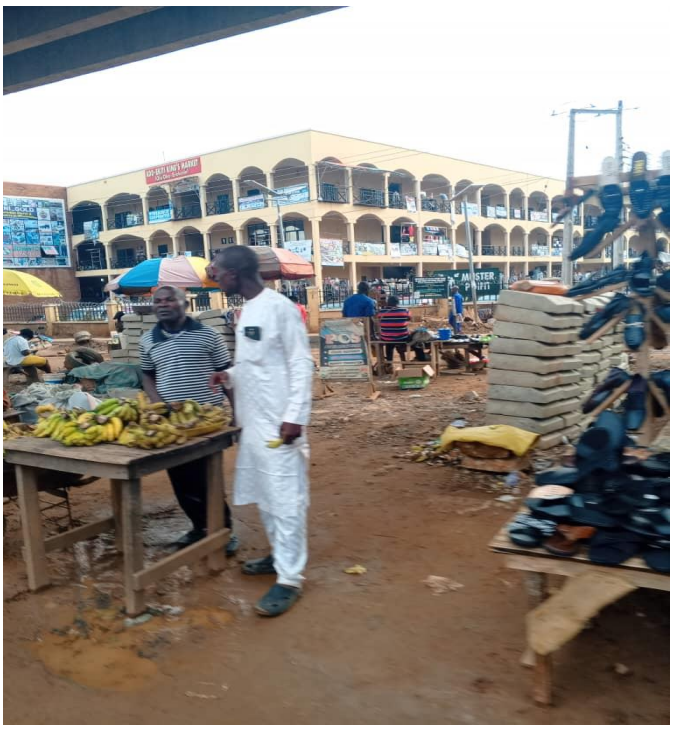

Plate 4: Trading Activities under the bridge

However, the temporary income loss reported during the construction period (31%) echoes the conclusions of Adebayo &Ajayi (2015), who warned that infrastructure projects can have short-term economic costs on informal sector actors, especially when mitigation strategies are not in place. The observed post-construction business recovery further suggests that infrastructure's economic dividends often outweigh transitional disruptions when properly managed.

Property Value and Gentrification Risk

Approximately 61% of respondents reported increased property value and 69% noted rental inflation. This reflects the trend that infrastructure upgrades tend to increase land desirability, a phenomenon observed in urban areas following capital investment (Eboh & Okezie, 2013). While such appreciation is desirable from a planning perspective, the 18% displacement rate recorded due to unaffordable rents is a signal of gentrification—an outcome that aligns with studies from Ibadan and Abuja, where low-income residents were priced out after major infrastructure investments (Umeh & Nnam, 2019).

This raises important equity concerns and calls for policies to protect vulnerable urban populations from displacement, such as housing subsidies or rent control in high-impact zones (UN-Habitat, 2020).

Perception and Public Participation

Though residents largely affirm the bridge's benefits in traffic and economic domains, the study found that 60.5% of respondents felt excluded from the project's decision-making process. This supports Ogu's (2000) claim that infrastructure planning in Nigeria is often technocratic and top-down, lacking meaningful community involvement. Exclusion from participatory processes can reduce public ownership, weaken trust, and lead to resistance—even against well-intentioned projects.

Inclusive infrastructure planning, therefore, is not only a democratic imperative but also a sustainability strategy. Future infrastructure delivery should incorporate public hearings, local consultations, and grievance mechanisms to align outcomes with community expectations.

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CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study has critically appraised the socio-economic impacts of bridge construction on the residents of the Old garage - ijigbo area in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, the findings revealed a generally positive shift in accessibility, economic activity, property values, and resident mobility post-construction. Notably, travel time was significantly reduced, business patronage increased for the majority of traders and service providers, and the neighborhood witnessed renewed economic vibrancy and physical integration with the rest of Ado-Ekiti.

Despite these benefits, the study also identified notable challenges such as temporary business disruption during construction, rent-induced displacement of low-income residents, and lack of community inclusion in the project planning phase. These issues highlight the complexities and dualities inherent in urban infrastructure development—where progress often brings with it socio-spatial tensions.

The appraisal of the Old garage - ijigbo Bridge demonstrates that while infrastructure projects can be transformative, their success depends not only on engineering excellence but also on social responsiveness, community engagement, and equity-sensitive planning. As secondary cities like Ado-Ekiti continue to urbanize, replicable lessons from this case study should inform future planning and policy directions.

Recommendations

Adopt Inclusive Planning Practices

Government agencies and planners must ensure meaningful community participation during the planning, design, and implementation stages of infrastructure projects. This can be achieved through town hall meetings, local advisory committees, and open feedback channels.

Introduce Impact Mitigation Measures

Future bridge or road projects should include proactive support for informal workers and small businesses, such as temporary relocation grants or microloans to offset construction-phase disruptions.

Establish Affordable Housing Safeguards

With rising property values in Old garage – Ijigbo area, there is a need for housing support mechanisms such as rent control, housing cooperatives, or public-private housing schemes to prevent forced displacement.

Strengthen Post-Construction Monitoring

Establishing a post-construction monitoring and feedback system will help track the long-term effects of infrastructure on socio-economic indicators and ensure adaptive policy responses.

Scale Lessons to Other Urban Nodes

The Old garage - Ijigbo experience provides a replicable framework for similar infrastructure investments in other high-density, low-accessibility areas across Ado-Ekiti and Ekiti State at large.

By combining technical delivery with socially sensitive planning, urban infrastructure projects like the Old garage - Ijigbo Bridge can serve as sustainable instruments for inclusive growth and spatial justice in Nigerian cities.

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