



# A Sociological Analysis of Urban Bias and Rural Neglect in Development Policy of Gombe State, Nigeria.

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**Abstract:** Globally, the nexus between urban bias, rural neglect, and development has remained an area of concern stimulating serious academic debate. This paper attempts to use existing knowledge to assess the extent to which the rural areas in Gombe State have been neglected in the developmental policy of the state. Empirical evidence has shown a great deal of over-concentration of infrastructural development projects in urban areas of Gombe State. It becomes disturbing when that is done to the detriment of the rural areas. Unfortunately, this has been the case in Gombe State, since the creation of the state in 1996. The paper captures a glimpse of some aspects of the sociological perspectives on urbanization from three major schools in Sociology. The view that urban bias is the moving force behind needless slowness and inequity in developing countries is assessed and shared. The content analysis research method was adopted for this study. It aligns with previous research that attempted to assess urban bias and rural neglect. The paper relied on secondary data sources. The paper found some facts about infrastructural projects in Gombe State and highlighted this indicating that the rural areas receive less investment in developmental policy than urban areas of Gombe State. Basic social amenities are either lacking or in a deplorable state and thus the economy is least developed. The paper also examines the causes and negative implications of urban bias. It equally examines rural neglect and critiques of urban bias thesis concluding with some evidence of bias towards rural areas of Gombe State and offering some recommendations to policymakers and academic researchers amongst which include the Government to promote farming and rural (re)settlement, also the promotion of export agriculture to empower rural farmers and adopting enforceable policies that will create a conducive atmosphere for rural transformation through agencies.

**Keywords:** *Urban bias, rural neglect, urbanization, development policy, poverty*

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## INTRODUCTION

All countries of the world are becoming increasingly urbanized, which is a global phenomenon that has different expressions across regions and development levels. The quotation below will help us understand the gist behind urbanization:

"One of the most significant changes over the centuries has been urbanization or the shift from rural areas to large cities, urbanization has had important consequences for many aspects of social, political, and economic life (Kleniewski & Thomas, 2019)."

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The three (3) major schools of Sociology offered varying insights to help us understand urbanization. The functionalist argument centers on the relative merit of cities and urbanization; in what ways and to what extent are cities useful to society, and in what ways and to what extent are cities dysfunctional for society? Since when did sociologists begin studying urbanization, the vital question has been the degree to which cities are alienating their residents. German Sociologist Ferdinand Tonnies (1855 - 1936) as quoted in (Gottdiener, Hohle, & King, 2019), raises this question when he wrote about changes that occurred as societies changed from small, rural, and traditional cultures to large, urban, and industrial settings. He said that a sense of community or *Gemeinschaft* characterizes traditional societies, as societies industrialize, people move to urban centers for better livelihood. This he described as *Gesellschaft* and he was quite critical of this development.

Mellor (1975) holds that Louis Wirth agreed with Tonnies that cities have a weaker sense of community feeling and weaker social bonds than do rural areas but also agrees with Durkheim that cities generate more creativity and greater tolerance for new ways of thinking.

On the other hand, the conflict theory as a critical school assumes that a basic conflict exists between society's "haves" and "have-nots". This type of conflict manifests itself usually in urban centers in which the "haves" and "have nots" live very different lives. The rich in the urban areas live in good apartments, earn good incomes, and have access to better healthcare, on the other hand, the "have-nots" or the poor live in dilapidated housing and often barely make ends meet.

Symbolic Interactionism focuses on the nature of urban residents' interaction with each other, the reasons for their patterns of interaction, and their perceptions of various aspects of urban life. The school advanced vivid descriptions of urban life, that urban centers are filled with parks and other public settings in which people from different backgrounds gather and interact in various ways that help foster good understanding among different groups in the city. Having observed the insight of these three schools of sociology, the paper will now focus on urbanization in Nigeria. Nigeria has a long history of urbanization and urban development that distinguishes it from other sub-Saharan countries. Urbanization along with high economic growth appears in recent years to have reduced high levels of poverty in cities, although the reduction has been limited. The promise of urbanization has not yet been realized. Greater urbanization would help increase per capita income, urban employment, and productivity and improve living conditions. Urbanization in Nigeria is often understandably portrayed as poorly managed, inequitably between urban centers and rural areas, but it should be noted that real opportunities exist for urban reforms that can enable more inclusive, productive, and integrated metropolitan areas and towns.

### ***Urbanization***

Urbanization is considered an autonomous process and source of social change. It is also seen as a means of dependence on other workers, on other centers and hinterlands of nations and world society. As quoted by (Aliyu & Amadu, 2017); (Uwasomba & Opayinka, 2020), today, there is no doubt that the world has increasingly become urban and the 20th century witnessed rapid and unprecedented urbanization of the world's population. The global urban population increased from 13% in 1900 to 29% in 1950, and 49% in 2005 and it is estimated that by 2030, 60% of the population, will live in the cities. Almost all or most of this growth will be in lower-income regions of Africa and Asia. Of all the regions of the world, Asia and Africa are urbanizing faster and are projected to become 56% and 64% urbanized respectively by 2050. These countries: Nigeria, India, and China combined are expected to account for 37% of the projected growth of the world population between 2014 and 2050.

### ***Urbanization in the Developed Nations***

Gottdiener et al. (2019) quoted that urban development in the United States at the beginning of the 21st century is defined by multicentered regions resulting from the deconcentration of commercial, retail, and government services in the city center and the reconcentration of these land uses in functionally specialized regional mini-centers. For many years, the study of urbanization in Europe was a relatively predictable affair. This is the oldest part of the globe with fully urbanized societies. In recent years, however, profound transformations have been taking place in Western and Eastern Europe. Shifts in industry to high technology, declines in manufacturing, and growth in the service sector are common to both the United States and Europe.

### ***Urbanization in Developing Nations***

As quoted by [Gottdiener et al. \(2019\)](#), there are dramatic changes that have taken place in the world's urban population over the last half-century as increasing numbers of large cities have appeared in the developing world. In 1950, there were just two metropolitan areas with a population of 8 million or more persons New York and London, reflecting the concentration effects of urban growth in developed nations. By 1970, there were nine metropolitan areas with more than 8 million persons, four in the developed nations (New York, London, Tokyo, and Los Angeles) and five in the developing nations (Shanghai, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Beijing, and Sao Paulo). In 2000, two new metropolitan areas in developed nations were added to this list but surprisingly eighteen new metropolitan areas in developing nations came up. Of the twenty-two metropolitan areas with a population of 8 million or more persons in less developed nations, five (Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, and Lima) are located in South America, one (Lagos) is in sub-Saharan Africa, and three (Cairo, Istanbul and Tehran) are in the middle east. The remaining fifteen metropolitan areas with 8 million or more persons are located in Asia, including six on the Indian sub-continent. Population, estimates by the United Nations for 2030 show further growth in metropolitan regions across the developing nations particularly in Asia.

### ***Urbanization in Nigeria***

As quoted by [\(Aliyu & Amadu, 2017\)](#); [\(Alinno, Sule, et al., 2012\)](#), the pattern, trend and characteristics of urbanization in Nigeria have been alarming. The towns and cities have grown phenomenally high rate of 5% - 10% per annum. In 1995, there were 7 cities with a population of over 1 million, 18 cities with over 500,000 population, 36 with over 200,000 and 78 with over 100,000. By 2020, it is projected that the number of cities with a population of 500,000 and 200,000 respectively will be 36 and 680 assuming annual urban growth rate of 5%. Over the decades, the population of most major cities/towns has increased by many fold. Lagos, Kano, Port Harcourt, Maiduguri, Kaduna, Ilorin and Jos all had more than 1000% increase over the past 5 decades. For instance, Kanos population rose from 5,810,470 in 1991 to 9,383,682 in 2006. Enugu had 174,000 in 1965, 464,514 in 1991 and 712,291 in 2006 while over the same period, Lagos had a population of less than 9 million, 4 million and over 10 million respectively.

It should be noted that managing urban growth and urbanization in Nigeria have become one of the most important challenges of the 21st century. Urbanization has been seen as potential driver of economic development, industrialization, human welfare and structural transformation as it makes cities become engine of growth and sustainable development. To achieve this, measures has to be taken by the government such as amending urban rules to deillegalize the settlement of urban poor to make the settlement recognizable as permanent features of urban life and for the Government to source funds to expend on urban, authorities for proper planning and development ([Abdullahi, Ali, & Musa, 2023](#)).

The paper examined the nature of the problem of urban bias and rural neglect in developmental policies of Gombe State. It attempts also to assess evidences of bias towards urban areas of Gombe State in government's investments in infrastructure and proffer solutions on the way forward.

There is for long in Nigeria, for instance, a propaganda slogan or a lip-service the need to develop agriculture to improve the wellbeing of the rural people but yet, bias exist in the distribution of wealth and little to show on the agricultural sector as previously assumed. The income gab between dwellers of urban areas of Gombe State and rural areas of the state is wide([Anyakoha & Mbanefoh, 2002](#)); ([Abdullahi et al., 2023](#)). This may be as a result of the policy the State is pursuing, i.e. whether rural political strategy or urban political strategy. According to [Rabinowitz \(2013\)](#), a rural political strategy consists of policies that benefits farmers and chiefs, while urban strategy benefits urban youths and urban consumers. However, developmental policy on investment, housing, education, health favours the state capital at the expense of rural areas and pushes urban-rural incomes and standard of living even further apart. Also, resource allocations within the urban and rural areas as well as between them, reflects urban priority rather than equity([Abbass, 2010](#)); ([Al-Mujtaba et al., 2020](#)).

The growth and development in the state has little impact on mass poverty, but there is always hope things will change for better. It is the observation of this paper that developmental processes in Nigeria and Gombe State in particular is biased against the rural areas and the bias is deep down in the political structure that is dominated by the so-called "Elites" domiciled in the urban centres, that is to say the rural dwellers are poor because they are irrelevant in the polity of the State. Hence, the rural residents would have decrease in income, production of goods, services, wealth and with this development would be difficult. This is in reference to the fact that, "the classical theorists believe that development will come about naturally if there is increase in income, production of goods, services and wealth"

(Dansabo, 2013); (Sule & Sambo, 2020). In his work, Baker (1979) said "the most important class conflict in the poor countries of the world today is not between labour and capital, nor it is between foreign and national interest, it is between rural classes and urban classes. The rural sector contains most of the poverty and most of the low-cost sources of potential advance, but urban sector contains most of the articulateness, organization and power. The urban classes have been able to win most of the rounds of the struggle with the country side". It should be noted that poverty on the part of the rural people is not 'natural' or a weakness but it is attributed to urban bias taken into account. The bias has resulted in the uneven distribution of state resources. This has resulted into the poor agricultural and infrastructural position in the rural areas. This paper shares the view of Lipton seriously which holds that urban bias in development is the major cause of influx of migrants to the cities and the root cause of urban crises as in the case of Gombe State.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: the next section looks at theoretical framework on urban bias, review of empirical literature on urban bias, followed by causes of urban bias, critique of urban bias, examining causes of rural neglect and the last section concludes with recommendations.

### ***Theoretical Literature on Urban Bias***

Urban bias theory: Baker (1979): The work is attributed to Baker (1979) and Robert Bates (1985) and the theory is a reference to a political economy argument according to which economic development of the rural dwellers is hampered by groups who by their location in urban areas, are able to pressure governments to protect their interests. The theory using the words "urban bias" believes that policies are intentionally shifted in one direction, away from some better or best policy, unbiased between urban and rural areas. Once the features of such a policy can be defined, a systematic tendency to reject it and to proffer alternatives more favourable to a particular sector, can properly be stigmatized as bias towards the sector. The urban bias theory put forth two (2) propositions and are:

- That the development processes in third world countries is systematically biased against the countryside.
- That the bias is deeply rooted in the political structure of these countries dominated as they are by the urban groups.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Urban Bias***

As quoted by (Corbridge & Jones, 2005), data from some of the worlds poorest countries Angola, Bangladesh, Chad, Guatemala, Haiti and Niger suggest that over half the urban population there is poor, and for a very few countries (such as Honduras and Mongolia), the proportion of poorer people in urban areas is actually greater than it is in rural areas. Indeed, the urbanization of poverty over at least the past two decades has been associated with a growing problem of food security in cities and towns. The literature also suggests that the urban poor might have benefitted less than had been assumed from urban bias and less from its solutions, while continued problems in the country side suggests that small scale farmers were not well placed to react positively to measures attempting to tackle price twist a situation where goods or services originating from rural areas are under-priced whereas goods or services from urban areas are overpriced.

The literature further maintains and observe that bias against countryside is still evident in the policies of urban biased governments. According to Rabinowitz (2013), the literature sought to explain the problem in African politics. Since the 1980s, two contradictory trends were witnessed; on the one hand, coups, which become rare events in the continent, have continued to proliferate; concurrently, several countries such as Ghana, Uganda, Burkina Faso and Benin have managed to escape from coup-traps, to work at the trend, focus was made on Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, while Ghana suffered five coups from 1966-1981, Cote d'Ivoire was an oasis of stability and prosperity. However, by the end of the 20th century, Ghana had emerged as one of the few stable democracies on the continent, as Cote d'Ivoire slid into civil war what explains the dramatic reversal of fortunes? The literature answers the puzzle by examining the political strategies of both the countries, with particular focus on rural alliances and the literature further found that leaders who followed a rural political strategy were better able to preserve stability, while those that followed an urban political strategy were more likely to suffer coups and the literature further observe that the rural/urban dichotomy is pervasive and predictive of the success/failure of governments (Abdullahi et al., 2023).

It is the believe of (Pugh, 1996); (Lasbrey et al., 2018) that Africa has increasingly become an urban continent with an average annual growth rate of 3.3 percent of urban dwellers between 1990 and 2000. The expansion of the urban population exceeds the rate at which gainful employment for job seekers could be achieved. The literature has

identified this as factors that facilitate urban migration; economic, financial, rural violence, drought and the desire to break away from cultural inhibitions, educational opportunities, etc.

Finally, the literature further consider it more unfaithfulness for governments in Nigeria to talk about urban crises as if the whole world has gone mad without taking alternative actions to the real issue. The upsurge of human beings to the urban areas causes population explosion so does joblessness increase, house scarcity in the urban centres increases, crimes increases and urban centers serve as concentration of destitute, distressed and disappointed people that cause the urban crises.

In Nigeria, urban bias means when the Federal government/State government gives attention to development of only the Federal/State capital at the expense of other states/local government rural areas. When there is tendency to concentrate the resources in developing the urban centres without corresponding investment in the rural areas to support the rural poor like other states in the federation, Gombe State also suffers from the phenomenon of urban bias in the sphere of development.

Having briefly looked at the theoretical literature on urban bias, review of empirical literature on urban bias, the paper attempts to look at some facts about infrastructural development of the study area, Gombe State.

Gombe State with a population of about 3.3 million people (2016 Projected Population), according to National Population Commission of Nigeria (Web), National Bureau of Statistics (Web), is one of the 36 states of Nigeria, lies in the centre of Northeastern Nigeria, with Gombe as its capital, populated by about 367,500 people. The State shares common boundary with the States of Borno, Yobe, Taraba, Adamawa and Bauchi. The State has an area of 20,262km<sup>2</sup> with 11 local government areas. Ordinarily, every local government headquarter should have basic amenities that support investment and development, such as pipe borne water, electricity, accessible roads, housing units, good general hospital, good market, etc.

It is observed that all the major infrastructural developments in the State are concentrated in Gombe, the capital, including an international airport, the international conference centre, federal as well as state secretariats, the Central Bank, National Deposit Insurance Company (NDIC), Federal Housing Estate, Federal Road Safety Housing Estate, other Housing Estates by the State such as those at Dukku road, Abubakar Habu Hashidu, Gombe State Investment and Property Company, Group Captain J.I. Orji Housing Estates and many similar other housing estates belonging to private companies such as Alh. Baffa Tirebo Housing Estate, Home to Federal Referral Hospital, State Specialist Hospital and many other private specialist hospitals, with a total of nineteen (19) commercial banks and five (5) micro finance banks. The population of Gombe, the capital city is put at about 367,500 people, which is 11.29% of the population of the entire State. By implication, the remaining ten (10) local government areas looks up to the State capital for their sustenance. To Africa and most of the less developed countries, this pattern of development has become pervasive and a looming open political, social and economic problem.

What is observable is that the accelerated growth of the urban areas becomes the tool for under-developing the rural areas and this can be understood by drawing conclusions based on our evidence and reasoning from rural-urban matrix of distribution of the benefits of the perceived public sector expenditure of the State in the capital city of Gombe. The expenditure of the State can be perceived in respect to the following order:

**Education:** Most of the tertiary institutions of the state including Gombe state university are located in urban Gombe town. From the take-off of the university in 2005, a lot of state resources was expended, for instance, the report of the Accountant General of the state for the year ended, 31st December, 2006 indicated that in the schedule of capital receipts and capital expenditure the sum of five hundred and seventy six million naira (N576,000,000.00) were expended in the University, continuously the University from then receives high share of budgetary allocation on education. The budgetary allocation provision in capital expenditure as captured in 2017 budget amounts to three hundred and eighty million (N380,000,000.00), in 2018, budget five hundred and five million (W505,000,000) and in 2019, four hundred and fifteen naira (415,000,000.00) was earmarked for the university alone, that means a significant share of expenditure on education had being expended in the capital city of Gombe and this is a bias against other rural areas of the state.

**Health:** The capital expenditure of School of Nursing and Midwifery, Gombe State University Teaching Hospital, Gombe State Specialist Hospital far outweighs the expenditure of local health centres across the state. For instance, the budgetary provision of capital expenditure allocated to School of Nursing and Midwifery in 2017 budget amounted to one hundred and ninety five million naira (\$4195,000,000), in 2018, one hundred and thirty seven million naira (\$4137,000,000) and in 2019, two hundred and seventy million naira (N270,000,000.00) respectively for the School of

Nursing alone were earmarked. By implication, more money is spent in urban Gombe on health sector at the expense of rural areas.

**Housing:** Since the creation of Gombe state, there has never been construction of housing schemes in rural areas, but Notes on Cash Flow Statement in the Report of the Accountant General of Gombe State for the year ended 31st December, 2006 indicated that the sum of two hundred and thirty seven million, seven hundred and eighty nine thousand seven hundred and thirty one naira (14237,789,731) was spent in the construction of Gombe urban housing scheme at Tumturu Housing Estate and in 2008, for instance as provided in the Gazette of Gombe State Investment and Property Development Company Limited, 82 (eighty two) number of 2 bedroom costing three million, five hundred and eighty thousand, seven hundred and seventy two naira fifty kobo (143,580,772.50) each and 68 (sixty eight) number of 3 bedroom costing four million five hundred and seventy six thousand eight hundred and eighty naira (144,576,880.00) each were constructed at Dukku Road Housing Estate. This is another bias.

**Water Supply:** Not much was spent by the state in rural water supply. From the creation of the state, a lot has been spent by the state in urban Gombe water supply project. For instance, in his address to State House of Assembly in the presentation of 2004 budget, the then Governor of the State, Alh. Muhammad Danjuma Goje said one billion seven hundred and forty seven million, nine hundred and seventy four thousand naira (141,747,974,000.00) was earmarked for urban Gombe water supply project and in the Schedule of Capital Receipt and Capital Expenditure of the Report of the Accountant General of Gombe State for the year ended 31st December, 2006, the sum of two billion one hundred and seventy one million and thirty two thousand naira was expended on same Gombe city water project as indicated.

**Causes of urban bias :**Over the years, most people treat urban migration as the real cause of urban crises, neglecting other causes. The major reason for the influx of most youth to Gombe city, for instance, is not only because of the facilities there, but jobs that do not necessarily exist in rural Gombe and recently for refuge by Internally Displaced Persons from Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states, Gombe regarded as a relatively peaceful city across the borders of these Boko Haram infested states.

Although, in the profile of Displacement in Northeast Nigeria Round 25 of Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) carried out by International Organization for Migration (IOM), Borno is most affected by the conflicts in the North Eastern zone of Nigeria, particularly Boko Haram insurgency with more than 1,475,605 individuals as Internally Displaced Persons as at October, 2018. Gombe State also has to come to terms with thirty four thousand and fifty seven (34,057) IDPs as at August 2018 of Round 24 and thirty seven thousand two hundred and eighty four (37,284) IDPs in October 2018 of Round 25.

The ideas of most political leaders as the economic plan reflects, clearly is that if it is okay with the state capital, it is okay with the entire state and then take this position to convince investors that the state has infrastructure to sustain capital investment and to create room to embezzle government funds and perpetuate corruption, there seems to be tendency inherent in the system of state's management of funds that supports allocation of funds to the urban areas at the expense of the rural areas to convince the electorates, particularly urban residents of the infrastructures in the capital that they have succeeded in their tenure since the urban residents are more politically conscious.

The implications of urban bias in Gombe metropolis cannot be overemphasized in that the city experiences a wide range of criminal activities such as phone/bag snatching, petty theft, armed robbery, activities of gangs (kalare), crime is facilitated by the anonymous character of the big town and deficiencies in essential infrastructure, such as streetlights in the night when women, elderly and weak constitute the victims of all sort of crime. It is observed that Gombe State has turned into a conglomeration of political thuggery, gangsterism, prostitution, thievery, car and motorcycle snatching, etc. The perpetrators are distressed and discontented with life as they could not find opportunities in their villages, urban bias breeds a welfare disparity gap between the urban and the rural dwellers. This gap persists because the 'lion share' of the state budget goes to only 11.29% of the population of the state domiciled in the urban centre of Gombe.

As noted, another consequence is that of job seekers that move to Gombe expecting to get better jobs, most of them end up squatting with friends and relatives without securing the job. It is this group of jobless youths that constitute a nuisance in Gombe township.

**Critique of the Theory of Urban Bias :** According to critics of this theory, urban bias does not necessarily cause rural poverty, considering the fact that government in some developing countries have been seen as favoring policies that ensure rural development, at the expense of urban areas. For instance, Taiwan and South Korea implemented sweeping land reforms that favor agricultural production for the rural populace whereas Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand engaged in decidedly pro-rural policies investing considerable resources into public health and educational projects

benefiting rural areas (McGuire, 2001). In Gombe, the intervention of Gombe State Agency for Community and Social Development (CSDP) in virtually all sectors such as education, water supply, health, transport, rural electrification, etc, is appreciable.

In addition, urban bias theory fails to note that technical changes such as Green Revolution of 1980s in Nigeria during Shagari's regime that will lead to a successful growth of rural areas and cause them to be more better off than urban areas. Similarly, the theory fails to understand that rural poverty may be caused by external factors such as natural disasters that may impact on agricultural land and crops thereby creating hunger and starvation in rural areas such as drought or 'tsunami'.

Moreover, corruption has been blamed as one of the factors that causes poverty in rural areas, as such if the stolen funds were deployed to address poverty challenges in rural areas, poverty rate would decline. In this regard, it is not true to blame urban bias alone as the cause of poverty in rural areas as there are other factors.

The theory fails to note that unemployment and low income levels can also cause rural poverty in the rural areas and the duo are the major challenges that are facing rural economies, equally values and traditions that discourage social, economic mobility and innovation can also constitute rural underdevelopment not necessarily urban bias.

Finally, urban bias has been the main factor that causes rural poverty in respect to unequal distribution of projects between urban and rural centres as the urban centres are more funded. Import substitution is an injustice to the exporting rural agrarian economies whereas on the other hand, it is not true to say that urban bias is the main cause of poverty in rural areas as sometimes external factors such as drought may cause the rural areas to become poor.

After examining the critique of urban bias, an attempt is made to look into the concept of rural neglect and assess how urban bias undermines rural development:

### ***Rural***

The term 'rural' is highly ambiguous. This is because places identified as rural are greatly heterogeneous (Ashley & Maxwell, 2001). Hence, there can be no exact definition of the term. However, rural places are clearly recognizable. They constitute the space where human settlement and infrastructure occupy only small patches of the landscape. Most of which is dominated by fields and pastures, woods and forests, water, mountain and desert.

Other criteria apart from natural resources and population that can be used to identify a rural economy includes: places where most people spent most of their working time on farms (Rahman & Westley, 2001).

The paper adopts Michael Lipton's thesis of urban bias in the analysis of rural neglect and backwardness in development. Lipton's work is a reference to argument according to which economic development in rural areas is hampered by groups who by their central location in urban areas are able to pressurize government to protect their interest. The work has great relevance to developmental studies as it can help improve our knowledge on the realities of rural life in our country.

**Causes of Rural Underdevelopment and Neglect:** The causes of rural neglect are many and varied depending on the country in question. However, what remains the reality is that, they range from corruption to lack of resources and wrong policies.

The major causes of rural neglect include the following:

**Neglect of Agriculture:** There is no doubt that majority of people live in rural areas and farming is one of the most important means of their survival but as noted above, instead of state authorities in Gombe State, for instance, to channel significant percentage of the budget on agriculture, little was done to improve agricultural productivity through procurement of modern farm implements as required and agricultural support initiatives, rather state leaders prefer spending billions of naira building international airports, international conference centres, international hotels, etc, that has no direct effect on the lives of majority of people in Gombe state as such the little that is produced by poor farmers is sold in Gombe town, giving rise to the awkward situation in which prices of foodstuffs are generally higher in rural areas than in the city as the rural farmers have to pool their produce to the city market since they lack modern storage facilities.

**Rural-Urban Migration:** In typical Nigerian villages, majority of the population comprises old people who are mostly economically unproductive and actually dependent on their children and relations for survival. This is because the young and productive youths have migrated to the cities in search of better life. This limits the number of people that remain in rural areas to till the land and hence, reduce productivity in Agriculture. In Gombe state, in rural areas, the aged and the ill remain at home unproductive. Family planning, however, is yet to be a success in rural areas due to

religious and cultural influences. Too much has been geared to family planning methods among people who are poor but still it has not yet paid the desired result.

**Poor Planning and Corruption by Government Officials:** Some of the federal government initiatives targeted at improving the lives of rural dwellers have failed due to poor planning and corruption by government functionaries and their collaborators. Hence, instead of impacting positively on the people, it diminishes them the more by way of social differentiation and in the process makes the rich get richer through domination. Therefore, it is not surprising that rural areas in Gombe state remained underdeveloped and neglected over the years inspite of rural developmental programmes launched by different administrations in this country and the state and this amounts to rural neglect.

**Economic Injustice:** This connotes state's failure to provide individuals with enough basic necessities of life, such as access to adequate food and housing, equally is its maintenance of huge discrepancies in wealth as such many individuals suffer from poverty while the elites of the society live in relative luxury. Such injustices stem from lack of available jobs, education and sufficient healthcare. All these conditions lead some individuals most especially rural dwellers to believe that they are neglected by the state. In Gombe state, as we noted above on the concentration of infrastructural development in the state capital, the level of government presence in rural areas is low. For example, electricity supply which is a general problem even in the whole country but it is worse in the rural areas of the state. Typically, in a month, electricity may be available only for twenty four hours cumulatively, a situation that makes life in rural areas difficult and unattractive to the youth, lack of motorable roads and portable water supply is a serious problem in rural areas owing to limited access to money and other credit sources, rural areas are forced to operate on subsistence level and all these constitute rural neglect.

**Poverty:** Majority of rural dwellers are in a wretched and discouraging state whereas few others domiciled in the urban areas are better off living in luxury. This is essentially an outcome of greed and injustice which is in defiance of any good economic principle. In Gombe state, for instance, due to corruption and structural anomalies in local government administration and finance, local governments cannot effectively tackle the problems of poverty and underdevelopment in the rural areas because the local governments are handicapped as their allocation has to come through the account of state government. This is where the issue and agitation of local government autonomy comes about, without which the neglect of local government or by extension of rural areas would continue.

**Illiteracy:** In Nigeria, the level of illiteracy is high. [Akinboade \(2013\)](#) remarked that 35 million Nigerian adults are illiterate. It is a known fact that very few are enrolled in schools in the rural areas because the young are needed best in the farm than in classes by the parents. The state has not done as expected to neutralize the perception of rural parents on schooling, particularly western education schools. Those who are functionally illiterate may be subject to social intimidation, health risk, stress, low income and other pitfalls associated with their inability and all these are manifest in rural Gombe State which is also due to rural neglect.

**Implications of Rural Neglects :**The neglect of the rural areas in terms of infrastructural and economic development presents a bad signal for the future of the country's economy and social stability. Some of the consequences may include the following:

**High Rate of Poverty and Unemployment:** The neglect or nonchalant attitude to agriculture has resulted into high rate of poverty and unemployment due to poor provision of farm inputs and credit facilities. This affects the output of rural areas and hence, poverty level rises. Recent data from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) indicated that more than 70% of Nigerians are poor ([Asaju & Akume, 2012](#)). The Federal Government statistics indicates that the poverty incidence in Nigeria is 54% (FGN, 2005). All anti-poverty efforts of the government and non-governmental agencies had failed to yield positive results ([Duru, 2021](#)). In the city of Gombe, this has manifested itself.

**Migration:** Another negative effect of rural neglect is the migration to the cities occasioned by the oil boom of 1970s. In Gombe State today, the reason for the rural-urban drift is as noted, some due to the failure of Agriculture to meet the demands of rural people, absence of social amenities and the insurgency of boko-haram that resulted in displaced persons drifting to Gombe State being the nearest relatively peaceful city across the borders of Boko-Haram infested states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa. And this presents serious implications on the environmental wellbeing of the citizenry. The migration leads to a loss of manpower in rural areas to work on the farmlands and also leads to congestion in Gombe town, resulting in increase in unemployment level, increase in crime level such as motorcycle snatching or robbery using sharp knives or even guns([Ibrahim, Musa, & Sa'idu, 2020](#)).

**Import Dependent Economy:** Nigeria spends a lot on food importation with the neglect of Agriculture. Statistics



from Federal Ministry of Agriculture revealed that Nigerians consume about 5 million metric tonnes of rice annually which amounts to about 100 million 50kg bags of rice (Scott & Marshall, 2005). It is disturbing that a country which led the world in the production and export of essential agricultural commodities in the 1960s, now depend on food produced by much smaller and less endowed nations.

## CONCLUSION

The paper concludes with the highlight that the upsurge of human beings to the urban areas causes population explosion. As the number of rural dwellers migrating to urban centres increases so does the joblessness increase, housing scarcity in the urban areas increase, rate of criminal behaviour increases environmental degradation, traffic congestion, etc. It is the concentration of destitute, distressed and disappointed people that cause the reality of urban crises particularly in Gombe township.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is the recommendation of this research that policy and planning of Gombe State Government should include balancing population and resources between urban and rural areas of the state. On the part of the State Government, there should be serious new rural development initiatives that will foster sustainable economic growth, promote rural development and to ensure improvement in standards of living for the rural dwellers. Government should embark on campaign to encourage people to resettle in their rural communities and take up farming with effort by the state in providing skills acquisition programmes to improve the lot of rural settlers. The state should also create rural development plan implementation unit in the Ministry for Local Government to help review conditions for efficiency in poverty reduction and transportation improvement in all the eleven local government areas of the state. It is also the recommendation of this paper that rural infrastructure maintenance unit be created in the ministry to improve social welfare of rural people by monitoring and reporting damages on infrastructures such as schools, bridges, rural roads, cottage hospitals, primary health care facilities, etc, to effect renovation. Finally, local government autonomy is vital to enable them make more impact on the lives of rural people as they are more closer to the people.

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