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THE IMPACT OF RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION ON FOOD SECURITY IN GOMBE METROPOLIS, GOMBE STATE, NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract
Rural-urban migration is a growing phenomenon in Nigeria, with significant implications for food security, particularly in rapidly urbanizing areas like Gombe Metropolis, Gombe State. This study investigates the impact of rural-urban migration on food security by analysing how population shifts affect agricultural productivity, food availability, affordability, and accessibility in both rural and urban areas. The research qualitative interviews involving migrants, farmers, traders, and policymakers. Data is collected from both rural and urban respondents to understand migration patterns, drivers, and the consequences on local food supply chains. Findings reveal that rural-urban migration leads to Labour shortages in agricultural communities, reducing food production and exacerbating rural poverty. Simultaneously, the increasing urban population heightens demand for food, driving up prices and making nutritious food less accessible for low-income households. Additionally, urban infrastructure struggles to keep pace with rapid population growth, further straining food distribution systems. The study highlights key policy challenges, including the need for improved rural development programs, investment in sustainable urban food systems, and strategies to enhance agricultural resilience. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on migration and food security by providing evidence-based recommendations to policymakers on how to balance rural development, urban planning, and food sustainability. The study emphasizes the urgency of integrated policies that address migration-induced food security risks to ensure stable food systems in both rural and urban areas of Gombe State and beyond.

Keywords: *Rural-urban migration, food security, Gombe State, agricultural productivity, urbanization, food supply chains, Nigeria.*

Background of the Study

Globally, the phenomenon of rural-urban migration has been a recurring issue with countless socio-economic and political consequences. The incidence has been recording serious food security challenges especially among the vulnerable segments of the realities.

Rural-urban migration has become a dominant trend in Nigeria, contributing to rapid urbanization and presenting both opportunities and challenges for food security. Migration from rural areas to urban centres is driven by multiple socio-economic and environmental factors,

including unemployment, poverty, insecurity, climate change, and the search for better education and healthcare. While migration can enhance economic opportunities for individuals and boost urban labour markets, it can also negatively impact food production and distribution systems, particularly in states like Gombe, where agriculture plays a fundamental role in livelihoods and sustenance.

Gombe State, located in the northeastern region of Nigeria, has experienced significant rural-urban migration in recent decades. Gombe Metropolis, the state capital, has become a major destination for rural migrants seeking better economic prospects. However, this migration pattern has serious implications for food security, both in rural areas—where agricultural labour shortages reduce food production—and in urban areas—where increased demand puts pressure on food supply chains, leading to higher prices and affordability challenges. The situation is worsened by infrastructural deficits, economic instability, and limited government interventions to address food security concerns in both rural and urban settings.

Food security, as defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO,2021), exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs for an active and healthy life. However, food insecurity remains a critical challenge in Nigeria due to structural and systemic problems such as low agricultural productivity, inefficient food distribution networks, and climate-related disruptions. The effects of rural-urban migration exacerbate these challenges, creating a food supply-demand imbalance that disproportionately affects vulnerable populations.

Rural areas in Gombe State rely heavily on subsistence and commercial farming. However, as young and able-bodied individuals migrate to cities, agricultural Labour shortages emerge, reducing productivity and leading to lower food output. This not only affects rural households that depend on farming for income but also disrupts food supply to urban markets. The influx of migrants into Gombe Metropolis increases the demand for food, leading to higher market prices. Many urban dwellers, especially low-income households, struggle to afford nutritious food, contributing to rising cases of malnutrition and food insecurity. Additionally, food imports from rural areas and other states are often affected by transportation challenges, further straining food availability. Strain on Urban Infrastructure and Services. The rapid urbanization in Gombe Metropolis is not matched by adequate infrastructure and services such as housing, markets, roads, and storage facilities. Poor urban planning exacerbates food insecurity as markets become congested, food storage facilities are inadequate, and transportation costs increase, making food less accessible.

Despite the growing concerns about migration and food security, existing policies have not effectively addressed these interconnected challenges. Rural development policies have failed to curb migration by creating viable economic opportunities in rural areas, while urban policies have not sufficiently tackled food insecurity among the growing urban population. The lack of a comprehensive strategy to balance rural agricultural productivity with sustainable urban food systems has left Gombe Metropolis vulnerable to food crises.

Statement of the Research Problem

Rural-urban migration has become a significant socio-economic trend in Nigeria, particularly in Gombe State, where many rural dwellers migrate to Gombe Metropolis in search of better economic opportunities, education, healthcare, and improved living conditions. While migration can drive urban growth and economic diversification, it also creates challenges that threaten food security in both rural and urban areas. Despite the increasing rural exodus, there is limited research on the direct impact of rural-urban migration on food security in Gombe Metropolis, making it difficult for policymakers to implement effective interventions.

One of the major challenges posed by rural-urban migration is the decline in agricultural productivity. The migration of able-bodied individuals from rural areas to urban centres leads to labour shortages in agriculture, reducing food production and farm output. As rural farming communities experienced dwindling workforce availability, food supply to urban areas becomes inconsistent, contributing to market shortages and price hikes. Additionally, the aging rural population left behind struggles to maintain agricultural production, often lacking the capacity for mechanized farming and modern agricultural techniques.

In urban areas, the increasing population placed pressure on food supply chains, leading to rising food prices and reduced affordability, especially for low-income households. The growing demand for food in Gombe Metropolis is not met with a corresponding increase in local food production, making the city more reliant on food imports from other regions, (Gombe state Government, 2022). This dependence makes the urban food system vulnerable to supply chain disruptions, price volatility, and inflation, further exacerbating food insecurity. Many urban migrants, who often settled in low-income communities with limited economic opportunities, struggle to afford nutritious and sufficient food, increasing the risk of malnutrition and hunger.

Research Questions

This study seeks to investigate the impact of rural-urban migration on food security in Gombe Metropolis, Gombe State. To achieve this, the following research questions will guide the study:

- What are the key drivers of rural-urban migration in Gombe State?
- How does rural-urban migration affect agricultural productivity and rural food supply in Gombe State?
- What are the consequences of rural-urban migration on food security in Gombe Metropolis?
- What coping mechanisms do rural and urban households employ to address food security challenges resulting from migration?

These research questions will help in analysing the relationship between migration patterns and food security while providing insights for policymakers and stakeholders to develop sustainable solutions.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of rural-urban migration on food security in Gombe Metropolis, Gombe State. The specific objectives are to:

- Identify the key drivers of rural-urban migration in Gombe State.
- Assess the impact of rural-urban migration on agricultural productivity and rural food supply.
- Investigate the coping mechanisms adopted by rural and urban households to mitigate food security challenges caused by migration.
- Propose policy recommendations for balancing rural agricultural sustainability and urban food security in Gombe State.

These objectives will guide the study in providing a comprehensive analysis of how rural-urban migration affects food security and in suggesting practical solutions to mitigate its negative impacts.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it provides a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between rural-urban migration and food security in Gombe Metropolis, Gombe State. Given the increasing rate of migration from rural to urban areas, the findings of this study will offer valuable insights for various stakeholders, including policymakers, government agencies, development organizations, researchers, and local communities. The study will help policymakers and government institutions develop effective strategies to address food security challenges caused by migration. It will provide evidence-based recommendations to enhance agricultural sustainability and improve urban food systems.

Overall, this study is crucial in addressing the pressing issue of food security in the context of rural-urban migration. The findings will provide practical solutions to improve food security, strengthen rural agricultural productivity, and ensure sustainable urban development in Gombe State.

Literature Review

Literature on rural-urban migration and its impact on food security. It provides a theoretical framework, empirical evidence, and an analysis of the relationship between migration, agriculture, and urban food supply. The review also examines existing policies and interventions aimed at addressing food insecurity in Nigeria and globally.

Conceptual Framework

Rural-Urban Migration

Rural-urban migration refers to the movement of people from rural areas to urban centres in search of better economic, social, and infrastructural opportunities. Several factors drive this movement, including poverty, unemployment, climate change, insecurity, and inadequate access to education and healthcare (Ajaero&Onokala, 2013). Migration can be voluntary or forced, and while it can contribute to urban economic development, it also has significant consequences for food production and security.

Food Security

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2008) defines food security as a situation in which all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs for an active and healthy life. Food security has four main dimensions:

Availability – The supply of food from local production and imports.

Accessibility – The ability of individuals to obtain food through income or social safety nets.

Affordability – The economic capacity of households to purchase sufficient and nutritious food.

Theoretical Framework

Several theories explain the phenomenon of rural-urban migration and its consequences for food security:

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

Developed by Chambers and Conway (1992), this framework examines how households adapt to migration-induced food security challenges. It emphasizes the need for diversified income sources, improved agricultural policies, and better urban food systems to ensure sustainable food access for both rural and urban populations.

Empirical Review

Impact of Rural-Urban Migration on Agricultural Productivity

Studies have shown that rural-urban migration leads to labour shortages in agriculture, reducing food production and weakening rural economies (Awumbila, 2014). In Nigeria, migration has resulted in lower farm productivity, as younger generations leave farming for urban jobs, leading to food scarcity and increased reliance on food imports (Akinyele, 2019).

Climate Change, Migration, and Food Security

Climate change is a significant driver of rural-urban migration in Nigeria, as desertification, droughts, and erratic rainfall patterns make farming less viable (Oluwatayo & Ojo, 2016). Migration caused by climate-induced agricultural decline leads to increased urban food insecurity, as rural areas struggle to supply enough food to meet growing demand.

Coping Strategies for Food Security Amidst Migration

Households adopt various coping mechanisms to deal with migration-induced food insecurity. Rural communities rely on alternative income sources such as small-scale trading and remittances from urban migrants, while urban households adjust by purchasing cheaper food items, reducing meal portions, or engaging in urban farming (Adesina &Fashogbon, 2019).

Policy Review on Migration and Food Security

Several national and international policies address food security and migration challenges:

Nigeria's Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA)

Launched in 2011, the ATA aims to increase agricultural productivity, reduce food imports, and create employment opportunities in rural areas to discourage migration (Federal Ministry of Agriculture, 2015). However, challenges such as poor funding, weak infrastructure, and climate change have limited its impact.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Food Security

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) emphasizes the need for food security, improved nutrition, and sustainable agriculture. Nigeria has adopted this goal, but rural-urban migration remains a challenge to achieving national food security targets.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts qualitative approaches using interviews and focus Group Discussions to examine the impact of rural-urban migration on food security in Gombe Metropolis.

Study Area: The research was conducted in Gombe Metropolis, Gombe State, a rapidly urbanizing area experiencing significant rural-urban migration, which has implications for food demand and supply.

Population of the study: The population of the study targeted on people that migrated from rural areas of Gombe into the metropolis.

Sampling Technique: A Snowball sampling technique was employed:

Stage 1. Snowball sampling technique was employed in which the researcher intimated a rural-urban migrant who subsequently helped in identifying other migrants for the sake of the interaction to elicit data.

Sample Size: The research dwelled on conducting interviews and discussions, as such, the researcher was guided by the peak of realities of data saturation.

Methods of Data Collection
Primary Data Collection: Data was sourced from interviews and focus group discussion from the identified migrants. Moreso, interviews involving migrants, farmers, traders, and policymakers were conducted.

Data Analysis
Qualitative Data: The data elicited from interviews and FGDs were analysed using qualitative Data miner software (QDM).

Research Findings
Findings from interviews and FGD revealed that majority of rural migrants are young adults (18-35 years old), predominantly male, and have low levels of formal education.

Most migrants engaged in informal sector jobs, such as street vending, transport services, and low-wage labour.

Rural migrants cited unemployment, insecurity, and declining agricultural productivity as key reasons for migration.

Lack of employment and unstable income sources in rural areas pushed people toward urban centres.

Irregular rainfall, desertification, and soil degradation have led to poor agricultural yields, making farming unsustainable.

Rural areas experience banditry, herder-farmer conflicts, and communal clashes, prompting forced migration to urban areas.

Improved healthcare, education, and electricity in urban areas makes migration appealing to rural dwellers.

Conclusions
The study concludes that: Rural-urban migration is a significant contributor to food insecurity in Gombe Metropolis, driven by unemployment, climate change, and insecurity.

The migration trend has led to a decline in rural agricultural productivity, reducing food supply and increasing market prices in urban areas, Urban food insecurity has worsened due to increased demand, reliance on food imports, and rising costs.

Migrants and low-income households are disproportionately affected, facing high food costs and adopting unsustainable coping strategies.

There is a lack of comprehensive policies addressing both rural development and urban food security, necessitating immediate government intervention.

Recommendations
Improve rural farming techniques by providing access to mechanized equipment, irrigation, and climate-resilient crop varieties.

Promote agribusiness and Agro-processing industries to create jobs and discourage migration.

Enhance rural infrastructure, including better roads, storage facilities, and electricity, to support agricultural activities and reduce post-harvest losses.

Provide financial incentives such as low-interest loans to young farmers to encourage rural employment and Strengthen food supply chains to ensure a steady flow of food from rural areas to urban markets.

Improve rural security by addressing conflicts and strengthening law enforcement to reduce displacement and decentralize economic activities by establishing industries and commercial hubs in rural areas.

Revise food security policies to incorporate rural-urban migration dynamics and encourage private sector investment in agriculture and food distribution.

Enhance disaster preparedness programs to mitigate climate-related agricultural losses.

A comparative study of food security challenges in urban areas with different levels of rural-urban migration.

The role of climate change adaptation strategies in reducing migration-induced food insecurity.

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