

URBANISM AND CRIME PREVALENCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN SUBURBAN AREAS OF NIGERIA: AN ASSESSMENT OF GBOKO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE

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ABSTRACT

Urbanization happens differently around the world, frequently resulting in crime if not effectively planned. Crime destabilises any society and is untenable. This study investigates urbanism and crime management in suburban Nigeria, specifically Gboko LGA of Benue State. This paper utilises a descriptive survey of 397 local government residents selected from thirteen council wards. The study is anchored on relative deprivation theory by Gurr, which explains the psychological causes involving frustration and aggression leading to human capacity for crime. The paper finds that the presence of security agencies, administrative offices, viable markets, and career possibilities draws people to Gboko Local Government Area. However, push factors such as insecurity, lack of access to good healthcare, education, and recreational facilities, promote migration to the local council, resulting in urbanism and its consequences on lives and properties. The findings also discovered that crime is rising due to the changing local, state, and national economy, which is unfavourable to most inhabitants of the nation. As a suburban, Gboko LGA has lost traditional institutions that preserved public order and morals, resulting in growing criminality. The economic trends have considerably undermined customary social control mechanisms that formerly prevented deviant behaviour. In reaction to the criminal outbreak, the government and rural dwellers launched various intervention strategies, such as the establishment of organised crime control mechanisms, such as anti-robbery squads, anti-cultism units, and community vigilante associations. The local council and state government's crime control measures include boosting agricultural activities and youth empowerment to lessen criminal involvement and public peace and security risks. The research advocated, among others, the continual expansion and strengthening of social infrastructures to contain the ever-changing population and also create employment as well as empower citizens through skills.

Keywords: Urbanization, crime, push-pull factors, crime control mechanisms, youth

Introduction

Urbanization is not a recent trend but a continually evolving process that has shaped development since the early 1800s. The migration of people, particularly from rural to urban areas, has been documented over centuries. Historically, societies began transforming as their economies shifted from hunting and gathering to agriculture. This evolution intensified further when societies transitioned from agricultural to industrial economies, spurred by advancements in science and technology. The industrial economy's emergence brought profound social changes, including urbanization, marked by large-scale migration to cities.

This shift, leading to high population densities in specific urban centres, has also introduced numerous social challenges, including environmental degradation, urban pollution, and congestion. Among these, crime stands out as a primary concern linked to urbanization. Rapid urban growth has led to various criminal activities in cities, such as armed robbery, kidnapping, fraud (locally referred to as “419” in Nigeria), and prostitution. Factors such as unemployment, poverty, and the erosion of family values are closely tied to these crimes. Moreover, technological advancements have exacerbated crime rates in urban areas today.

Africa is currently witnessing an accelerated rate of urbanization, with its urban populace expanding at an annual rate of 3.5 per cent (Lall et al., 2021). The United Nations forecasted that by 2050, it is anticipated that over two-thirds of the global population will reside in urban environments, with the most pronounced urban growth projected in presently less developed nations like Nigeria (UNDESA, 2012; Ritchie & Roser, 2021). Nonetheless, Nigeria’s recent urbanization has been marked by unevenness, typified by rapid expansion, extensive informal settlements devoid of fundamental services, and a multitude of environmental challenges (Duranton, 2016; Van Vliet, 2019). This uneven urban development has resulted in disparities in access to services and opportunities between urban and rural locales (de Bruin et al., 2021), posing significant social, economic, and environmental challenges (Pilehvar, 2021; Kontgis et al., 2022) and reshaping societal structures.

In spite of these adversities, urbanization offers significant benefits for inclusive economic, cultural, and social growth when managed effectively. It can promote new forms of social interaction and cooperation that strengthen social cohesion (Wan, et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2021a; Black & Henderson, 1999). Considering the extensive social and economic transformations that rapid urbanization can bring, often accompanied by conflicting effects, understanding urbanization’s impact and identifying mechanisms through which this shift may influence social issues is essential for fostering sustainable and inclusive development in Africa. In Nigeria, the pace of urbanization has been particularly swift. World Bank data (WDI, 2020) shows that the proportion of the population living in urban centres with over 1 million residents has steadily increased over the past four decades.

According to Muggah (2012), over three billion people currently live in urban areas, and this number is projected to rise to five billion by 2050. Remarkably, most of this population increase is expected to occur in developing countries like Nigeria. Nigeria, as Africa’s most populous nation, is anticipated to play a leading role in this urban expansion (UN, 2012). However, in Benue State and particularly in the Gboko Local Government Area, the tangible consequences of rapid urbanization are complex due to demographic, social, and economic changes that accompany this growth. Unfortunately, the opportunities for viable urbanization are jeopardised,

akin to policy inconsistency, lack of adequate resources, or rather, misuse of the available resources, which results in deficient basic infrastructure, inefficient services, and ill-conceived planning cum implementation (Celik et al., 2009). The urbanization process in developing societies like Nigeria and suburban centres like Gboko local government raises significant concerns for both individuals and the government.

In recent times, almost every day, crime is reported by local news, and it is unbelievable that such crimes happen mostly within the environment of dense population like Gboko Local Government. From street crime to high-profile cases, these crimes happen without any sign of caution. Rapid urbanization is one of the main factors that has contributed to the increase in crime rates, and it is now a common trend around the world. This has resulted in fear of the public at large, and the most prominently affected are young women/men and children, necessitating crime prevention as a major goal for Gboko local council, Benue State government, and the Nigerian government at large in providing a better and safer environment for the people.

Gboko local government is faced with a series of problems ranging from overstretched infrastructure, environmental degradation, and the destruction of natural vegetation, but rapid urbanization and crime remains the most significant of them all. The movement of people from rural areas of the state to Gboko city centre and its environs in search of better livelihood has led to an expansion of urban areas and an increase in social and economic activities, thus increasing the risk of urban dwellers and infrastructures to crime and natural disasters (Charles et al., 2023). The town of Gboko is proliferating with the inadequate provision of all urban services, concerning adequacy and coverage of the area, which has sparked the menace of crime. Although, there have been several studies such as Ojo and Ojewale's (2019), among others carried out examined urbanization and crime in Nigeria. None were carried out in Gboko local government area therefore this gap demonstrate the urgent need for an empirical research examining the relationship between urbanization and crime prevalence specifically in Gboko Local Government Area Given that Gboko houses the Tor Tiv palace and serves as the traditional headquarters of the Tiv people, there is a gap in understanding how traditional governance structures interact with formal security systems in managing urbanization-related crime, a dimension absent in existing literature.

The paper therefore make an inquest into the following:

- i. What are the pull factors causing urbanization in Gboko LGA?
- ii. What are the associating factors of urbanization giving rise to crime in Gboko LGA?
- iii. What are the strategies adopted in crime prevention and eradication in Gboko LGA?

Conceptual and Theoretical Orientation

Urbanization

Urbanization is seen as a shift of population from rural to urban areas, engendering an increase in urban population and a decrease in rural population. This shift is influenced by several factors (also referred to as the pull factors) in urban areas, including better access to electricity,

clean and safe water, improved healthcare services, quality education, and the prospect of employment, among others. The push factors are absent, or scarcity of these in the rural areas. Reasons for the shift of population towards the urban centres include the need to access modern basic amenities and other facilities which enhance living standards, as well as the need to be adequately employed. Sadly, there have been many impediments to accessing and enjoying these facilities (Tacoli *et al.*, 2014). The recent fast pace of urbanization in places like Gboko local government area has left much to be desired. The UN-Habitat and IHS-Erasmus University Rotterdam (2018) aptly noted that “Rapid urbanization in Africa often results in the urbanization of poverty and manifests itself in mushrooming urban informal settlements (slums)”. The consequence has been the escalation of crime and insecurity, youth unrest, among others (CIA, 2009).

Urbanization, as posited by Cecilia and Bill (2015), is a population increase in connection with industrial growth and positive innovations. Urbanization began shortly after the industrial disorder when labour and capital shifted to manufacturing industries in cities. Farouk and Mensah (2012), cited in Abode & Hoshen (2020), established that, urbanization is the process of transformations in social, economic, and political areas of human existence, leading to the growth and expansion of the environment. Urbanization takes place when a larger proportion of the population lives in towns and suburbs. Olofinbiyi and Singh (2020) posited that urbanization is a physical growth of urban areas as a result of global change.

An urban area is an agglomeration of people that is organised around non-agricultural activities, and urban growth is the rate of growth of an urban population, while urbanization is defined as the agglomeration of people in relatively large numbers at a particular spot on the Earth’s surface. Cities are products of the process of urbanization. In other words, urbanization is the social process that leads to the creation of cities. Thus, the relationship between cities and urbanization is one of cause and effect (Idowu, 2018).

Crime

Crime is one of the major problems governments all over the world are confronted with, as many innocent people are maimed and killed due to the activities of criminals across the globe. Crime constitutes a major human security problem confronting humanity worldwide (Ukoji and Okolie-Osemene, 2016). Crime as a universal phenomenon is associated with societies with large population size and little basic amenities that supports life’s existence. Nations like the United States of America, Mexico, Mali, South Africa, Yemen, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Nigeria, among others, have a course to contend with rising incidences of crimes like homicide, robbery, and cybercrime, among others. Criminal activities around the world can be experienced in the forms of armed robbery, kidnapping, banditry, drug trafficking, traffic offence, rape, murder, drug abuse, corruption, assault, and stalking, among others (Tretter, 2013; Ayodele & Adeyinka, 2014).

The inability of security agencies to effectively combat the crimes above has adversely retarded growth and development in most countries associated with urbanization, and Nigeria is no exception (Osawe, 2015). Crime is not uniformly distributed across space, and it abounds in every country; however, the degree of crime varies from society to society, as no society is completely immune from crime (National Institute of Justice Website, 2010 and Ratcliffe, et al., 2014). The activities of criminals can be manifested either on land, air, or at sea, especially sea robbery/piracy, which has become a major source of apprehension to mankind (World Bank Group, 2020).

There exists a complex interplay between urban violence and crime; one can adduce that the noticeable consequence of violence is crime. Crime includes many illegal forms of violence. Conceptually, Richard (2009) defines crime as a violation of law and therefore an act of deviance (i.e. a rule violation). Empirically, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2017) reports crime Statistics on reported offences, reflecting that a total of 125,790 cases were reported in 2016 in Nigeria, and Benue State of which Gboko local government is situated, Amnesty International report (2018) indicates that in 2015 about 1177 persons were killed, and in 2016 809 persons lost their lives, in 2017 about 3641 were killed and properties worth millions in cash destroyed.

Crime certainly is an activity that is against the law, and the fact that the linkage between criminal activities and the socioeconomic development of society is undeniable. It is an action or omission which constitutes an offence and is punishable by law and crime is an unlawful act punishable by a state or other authority. It is usually conceived as the outcome of a multiplicity of conditions, ranging from economic, social, cultural, and family (Igbinedion and Ebomoyi, 2017).

Inducing Factors of Crime in Gboko Local Government Area

The incidences of poverty, unemployment, and rural-urban drift have contributed largely to the spate of criminal activities in Gboko Local Government Area. Endemic poverty in the rural areas on the fringes of the town, Benue State and across neighbouring states as a result of governments' neglect precipitates an unprecedented rural-urban migration among the youths. This has been compounded by the increasing rates of youth unemployment in urban areas in the state and Nigeria at large (Olalekan, 2020).

Government demolitions have displaced hundreds of thousands of people in urban areas over the last decade, rendering millions of residents in urban areas homeless and provoking economic losses for many families. This structural disadvantage and social disorganisation have exacerbated the incidence of homelessness in the city and driven many young people to occupy obscure places which has further made them vulnerable to being recruited into criminal gangs (Robert, 2017).

Another driver of precipitating crime in Gboko is population upsurge. Crime in urban areas is intricately connected to the incidences of poverty and unemployment among youths residing in rural areas. Neglected street children who have become victims of pervasive inequality in most

states like Benue State and Gboko local government, constitute vulnerable groups that are easily recruited into criminal gangs. The proliferation of street children is also linked to poor parenting and restricted family planning as a recipe for population control, particularly in the northern part of Nigeria. In urban areas in Nigeria, there is a conspicuous crack in the family system. There is a rising incidence of unstable marital relationships, and prevailing harsh socioeconomic forces have negatively impacted the family structure as the basic unit of the community and a microcosm of the larger society.

Public sector corruption helps to stimulate crime in urban areas. In recent times, Nigeria has witnessed a rising wave of financial scandals and corruption reports about serving and former political office holders who loot the government treasuries (Federal and State) to the tune of billions of US Dollars. This degree of impunity manifested by the corrupt officials is setting the tone for grievances and social discontent among the citizens, and this is translating to a ticking bomb whereby aggrieved citizens might resort to picking up arms against the state and corrupt officials. This social malady is also communicating a wrong message to the youths to jettison the culture of transparency, accountability, and probity in their quest for a means of livelihood (Kieghe, 2016).

Street trading on both arterial roads and highways is woven into the culture of daily life in urban areas in Nigeria and is another driver of urban crime. The trade was plied by the poor lower-class residents in the city in search of economic survival. However, the menace of street trading has transformed into different strands of crime incidence in the state. It serves as an impetus for child abuse. Children under the age of sixteen (16) trade openly and widely on the traffic corridor. This exposes the female hawkers in particular to sexual assault by rapists. Armed robbers also masquerade as street hawkers to prey on unsuspecting commuters in the city (Onibokun, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Relative Deprivation Theory, which provides a comprehensive framework for understanding why individuals and groups engage in violent behaviour, including riots, rebellion, criminal activities, and other forms of social deviance. Developed by Ted Robert Gurr in 1970, this theory explores the psychological mechanisms that drive people toward crime, particularly focusing on the interplay between frustration and aggression as fundamental motivators of criminal conduct. At its core, relative deprivation refers to the perceived gap between what people believe they rightfully deserve and what they realistically expect to achieve in their current circumstances.

This discrepancy creates a psychological tension that can manifest in various forms of anti-social behaviour. According to Gurr, deprivation emerges when individuals' value expectations significantly exceed their value capabilities. Value expectations encompass fundamental human aspirations such as economic welfare, personal security, social recognition, and self-actualisation, while value capabilities represent the legitimate and accessible means available to individuals for

achieving these aspirations, including employment opportunities, education, business capital, and social mobility pathways. When there is a substantial mismatch between what people aspire to achieve based on societal standards and what they can realistically attain through legitimate channels, feelings of frustration intensify. While frustration alone does not automatically lead to criminal behaviour, prolonged and intensifying frustration creates conditions under which aggression becomes increasingly likely as individuals or groups seek alternative, often illegitimate, means to bridge the gap between their expectations and reality. Gurr's theory emphasises that it is not absolute poverty or objective deprivation that necessarily triggers criminal behaviour, but rather the subjective perception of being deprived relative to one's expectations or in comparison to others. People can adapt to difficult circumstances and even severe hardship if they perceive their situation as stable or improving.

However, when individuals perceive a significant and growing discrepancy between what they believe they deserve and what they believe they will actually receive, the resulting frustration can generate aggressive responses at individual, group, and societal levels. This is particularly true when people feel that their legitimate expectations cannot be met within the existing social and economic order, leading them to conclude that only by disrupting or circumventing the status quo can they achieve their goals. Morrison (1971) noted that relative deprivation serves as a central variable in explaining social movements and collective action, as these movements often emerge from shared feelings of deprivation among groups who perceive systematic barriers to achieving their legitimate aspirations. The theory highlights how cultural values establish success standards and goals for society's members, while the social and economic structure determines who has access to the legitimate means of achieving those goals. When cultural expectations remain high but structural opportunities for achievement are limited or unequally distributed, intense pressure for deviant behaviour builds up within the population, particularly among those who feel most excluded from legitimate pathways to success.

In the study on urbanism and crime prevalence in the Gboko Local Government Area, the Relative Deprivation Theory offers valuable framework in understanding the relationship between rapid urban growth and increasing criminal activity. Gboko, like many suburban centres in Benue State and Nigeria at large, has experienced significant urbanization without corresponding expansion of economic opportunities, infrastructure, and social services. The Nigerian Constitution of 1999, in Section 16(1) (a), explicitly mandates that the state shall manage the national economy to ensure maximum welfare, freedom, and happiness for every citizen based on principles of social justice and equality of opportunity. However, this constitutional obligation has been largely unfulfilled, particularly in areas like Gboko, where qualified youths face severe employment constraints and the general population endures persistent insecurity. Gboko's urban transformation has attracted a youthful population with skills, energy, and aspirations for stable, productive lives. However, the absence of commensurate employment opportunities and access to

business capital has created a large pool of idle, frustrated youth whose initial optimism gradually transforms into disillusionment and desperation.

As Kilishi et al. (2011) rightly observed, the rising trend of crime in Nigeria is closely linked to high unemployment rates and rapid urbanization. In Gboko, this manifests in the proliferation of violent crimes, including armed robbery, kidnapping, thuggery, and youth gang activities, all of which represent symptoms of a widening gap between societal expectations and available legitimate opportunities. The urban environment of Gboko simultaneously raises aspirations by exposing residents to modern lifestyles, consumer goods, and images of prosperity while limiting access to the means of achieving such lifestyles through legitimate channels. This creates what can be termed as an "aspiration-opportunity gap" that is particularly acute in rapidly urbanising areas. Young people observe wealth and success around them but find themselves excluded from pathways to achieve a similar status through education, employment, or entrepreneurship. When legitimate avenues are blocked or severely constrained, and when the population continues to grow while opportunities remain stagnant or decline, individuals may resort to illegitimate means to fulfil both their personal aspirations and societal expectations. The growing joblessness and economic hardship inevitably generate discontent and protest, and when governments respond to such grievances with violence or repression rather than constructive engagement, the cycle of frustration and aggression intensifies.

In the context of Gboko urban setting, the combination of population pressure, inadequate infrastructure, limited employment prospects, and perceived government neglect creates fertile ground for relative deprivation to translate into criminal behaviour. Unemployed youths, viewing kidnapping and other violent crimes as lucrative alternatives to non-existent legitimate employment, have increasingly been recruited by criminal networks, fostering a culture that normalises or at least tolerates violence as a means to economic ends. Furthermore, deprivation can intensify competition for the limited resources available in urban areas, potentially sparking conflicts between different groups and communities.

In Gboko, this competition occurs along ethnic, generational, or socioeconomic lines, as various segments of the population struggle for access to land, employment, political patronage, and other scarce resources. The resulting tensions escalate into violence, property crimes, and communal clashes that further undermine urban security and development. Therefore, the Relative Deprivation Theory provides a robust analytical lens for examining how Gboko's urbanization process, characterised by rapid population growth, inadequate economic opportunities, weak institutional capacity, and unfulfilled aspirations, creates conditions conducive to crime prevalence. By understanding the psychological and social mechanisms through which the gap between expectations and capabilities generates frustration and aggression, this study can identify specific intervention points for addressing crime in Gboko, including expanding legitimate

economic opportunities, strengthening social support systems, improving governance and service delivery, and creating pathways for meaningful youth engagement in the urban economy.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate urbanism and crime prevalence within the Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State. Gboko serves as the administrative headquarters of the Tiv-speaking tribe and is the most populous local government area in Benue State, with an estimated population of 521,170 residents distributed across thirteen council wards: Mbaanku, Yandev South, Gboko Central, Mbadim, Mbatser, Ukpekpe, Yandev North, Mnakper, Igyorov, Mnakwem, and Mbadem (City Population Web, 2025). This demographic distribution provides a comprehensive backdrop to ensure representativeness in the study. To ensure generalizability and minimize sampling bias, the study employed a simple random sampling technique to select participants from the target population. This approach was chosen due to its ability to provide each member of the population an equal opportunity of being selected, thereby capturing the heterogeneous characteristics across the diverse wards of Gboko. Utilising the Taro Yamane (1967) formula for sample size determination, with a 5% margin of error, the calculated sample size was 397 respondents, as shown below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where; n = sample size

N = population size

e = tolerable error (5%)

$$= \frac{52170}{1+52170(0.0025)}$$

$$= \frac{52170}{131.42}$$

$$= 396.97 \approx 397$$

Data collection was conducted primarily through a structured questionnaire developed on a five-point Likert scale, containing 5= strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3=neutral, 2= disagree and 1= strongly disagree aimed at harnessing the respondents' perceptions relevant to the study's objective. The instrument comprised two sections: Section A elicited demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents to contextualise analytical insights, while Section B contained close ended statements designed to address the research questions. To supplement primary data, the study integrated secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, government agency reports, and credible online databases, to enrich the analysis and provide a comprehensive evidence base. Ethical considerations guided respondent confidentiality and

voluntary participation throughout the data collection process. This methodological approach ensures the reliability, validity, and representativeness of the findings, thereby enhancing the study's contribution to the academic field.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 4.2 Personal Data of the Respondents

	Frequency	Response Rates (%)
Gender		
Male	238	64.9
Female	129	35.1
Marital Status		
Single	135	36.8
Married	157	42.8
Widowed	31	8.4
Divorced	27	7.4
Age		
18 – 30	120	32.7
31 – 60	242	65.9
61 Above	5	1.3
Family Size		
Below 5	148	40.3
6-10	152	41.4
11 Above	67	18.3
Educational Background		
No Formal Education	38	10.4
Primary Education	53	14.4
Secondary Education	184	50.1
Tertiary Education	92	25.0
Occupation		
Civil/Public Servant	99	27.0
Artisan	37	10.1
Trader	85	23.2
Farmer	146	39.8
Total	367	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Respondent personal data is crucial to understanding this study's conclusions. The 367 survey participants reflect a varied cross-section of Gboko LGA's population. The study had 64.9% male and 35.1% female participants. Men dominate crime in Nigeria, whether as victims, security agents, or perpetrators. The majority male population shows how the study applies to gender dynamics in urban crime and management. The analysis showed that 42.8% of individuals were married, 36.8% were single, 8.4% were widowed, and 7.4% were divorced. The high share of male

respondents shows that many are household heads. Crime affects this demographic more and they may value safety and economic stability, urban concerns.

Table 2: Precipitating Factors for Urbanization in Gboko LGA

Statements	SA	AG	UN	SD	DA
Employment/commercial opportunities in Gboko bring about urbanization	236(64.3%)	78(21.3%)	18(4.9%)	17(4.9%)	18(4.9%)
Presence of basic amenities and better living standards	176(47.9%)	93(25.2%)	16(4.3%)	34(9.2%)	48(13.0%)
Insecurity in the Neighbouring local governments of the State	113(30.7%)	154(41.9%)	6(1.6%)	50(13.5)	44(11.9%)
Perceive Safety and more government presence in the Gboko	77(20.9%)	123(33.5%)	29(7.9%)	42(11.4)	96(26.1%)
Total	367(100)	367(100)	367(100)	367(100)	367(100)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 revealed the precipitating factors responsible for urbanization and crime in Gboko Local Government Area. Four primary factors have been perceived by respondents to influence urbanization in Gboko Local Government Area. Employment/commercial prospects in Gboko LGA fosters urbanization, as considered by 64.3% of the respondents highly agree, 21.3% agree. This overwhelming agreement indicates that the availability of jobs and business prospects is the most compelling factor attracting people to Gboko LGA. Gboko is perceived as an economic hub in the state, drawing migrants in search of better livelihoods.

From the table above, 176 respondents (47.9%) strongly agreed, and 93 respondents (25.2%) agreed, indicating that the availability of basic amenities and higher living standards is another factor attracting people to the area. The data collected indicates that 73.1% of respondents believe that the availability of infrastructure, including water, electricity, health, and education services, is crucial to Gboko's urban growth. The research also highlighted that the prevalence of insecurity in adjacent local governments is a factor for urbanization in Gboko Local Government Area, as 72.6% affirmed that the people migrate to Gboko not only for economic reasons but also to avoid violence or instability in nearby LGAs.

Table 3: Associating Factors of Urbanization and Crime Rise in Gboko LGA

Statements	SA	AG	UN	SD	DA
Limited economic opportunities and income inequality gives rise to crime in Gboko	132(35.9%)	134(36.5%)	45(12.2)	16(4.3%)	40(10.8%)
Weakened social and traditional structures as a result of an uncontrolled population enhance crime Gboko.	141(38.4%)	140(38.1%)	49(13.3)	25(3.2%)	25(6.8%)
Insecurity in the Neighbouring local governments of the Benue State fuels crime in Gboko	113 (30.7%)	154(41.9%)	42(11.4)	11(2.9%)	19(5.4%)
Population density with no decent means of livelihood begets crime in Gboko	173(47.1%)	122(33.2%)	29(7.9%)	42(11.4)	96(26.1%)
Total	367(100)	367(100)	367(100)	367(100)	367(100)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

This table explores public perceptions of inhabitants of Gboko Local Government regarding the relationship between urbanization and the rising incidence of crime in the Local Government Area. The data reflects responses to four key drivers of crime attributed to rapid urban growth and associated social shifts. The survey responses revealed that over 74.3% of the respondents affirm that the changing nature of economic opportunities and the inequality inherent in the distribution in society precipitate and give rise to crime in the study area.

In another dimension, 76.5% of the respondents asserts that, the erosion of the traditional values and the non-respect to traditional institutions in the study area is attributed to the effect of large population with little means of livelihood prompting the survival by all cost resulting to several acts of violence and crimes as well as undermining native institutions of public and civil order in the local government. From the result in the table above, it can be deduced that 72.6% pointed to insecurity in the environment as constituting the rapid population growth and increase in crime rates in the area of study. The table also revealed that 80.3% affirmed that the increase in crime rate in Gboko local government is a result of the growing population in the local government. The statement reflects an overwhelming acknowledgement that poverty and overpopulation are at the root of many criminal behaviours in the area. A situation that has a direct relationship between urban population densities without inadequate jobs, leading to crime prevalence.

Table 4: Government and Citizens' Crime Management Strategies in Gboko LGA

Responses	SA	AG	UN	SD	DA
Establishment of Anti-cultism/robbery and other joint security outfits for crime management	131(35.6%)	134(37.0%)	45(12.2)	16(4.3%)	84(22.8%)
Youth Empowerment and Skill Acquisition programmes for youth and women in Gboko	144(39.2%)	125(34.0%)	42(11.4)	19(5.1%)	37(10.0%)
Encouragement of massive agriculture through farming cooperatives and input/funds supply to the interested population of Gboko	113(30.7%)	154(41.9%)	42(11.4)	11(2.9%)	19(5.4%)
Local Vigilante groups, Anyam Nyor, JTF and community police and reconciliation teams	173(47.1%)	122(33.2%)	29(7.9%)	25(6.8%)	18(4.9%)
Total	367(100)	367(100)	367(100)	367(100)	367(100)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4 illustrates the local and state government's efforts in curbing the menace of crime in Gboko Local Government Area. From the analysis, the positive responses of 72.6% reflect public approval of visible and structured security interventions like anti-cultism and anti-robbery squads. However, 22.8% disagreed, suggesting concerns about the effectiveness, conduct, or sustainability of these efforts. The youth and women empowerment initiatives employed by the government and private individuals in reducing the impact of crime as a result of urbanization showed that 73.2% agreed that empowerment and skills training are effective crime prevention tools. The relatively low disagreement (15.1%) suggests this strategy is widely accepted and seen as impactful. These findings support global evidence that socio-economic empowerment reduces youth involvement in crime.

In terms of agricultural promotion as a means of engaging the youths and a crime-deterrent strategy, 72.6% of respondents support the idea of using agriculture to reduce crime, possibly viewing it as a pathway to economic independence. The low levels of disagreement (8.3%) and neutrality confirm strong alignment between livelihood initiatives and crime prevention in Gboko local government. Another strategy for curtailing the menace of crime in the Gboko local government area is the formation of community policing structures like the Vigilante Groups, JTF, community police and reconciliation teams, which, according to 80.3% of the population, help in controlling the spate of criminality in the local government. Only 11.7% of the responses indicated non-agreement with the strategies in place to reduce crime in Gboko LGA.

Discussion of Findings

From the findings of the paper, it seen that the analysis indicated that the presence of security agencies, administrative offices, viable market and employment opportunities pull people to Gboko local government, while insecurity, lack of access to necessities of life like good healthcare, schools, functional recreational facilities push people to the local government, thereby creating urbanism with it concomitant effect on lives and properties. This result is in line with the study by Aliyu (2017), where he posited that urbanization in urban centres of Kano and Lagos is as a result of the better employment opportunities, improved education and health services and urban industrial growth offering better living standards for the citizens. In like manner, the findings of the study is in line with Selhausen (2021) where he noted that the higher urban wages, industrial and service sector employment are the main incentives for rural population migration to urban centres.

From the result of the study, it is revealed that the prevalence of crime inn Gboko is as a result of the changing nature of the locality, state and national economy generally, which is unfavourable to the majority of the inhabitants, considering that, the study area is a suburb, which has affected the traditional institutions for maintaining public peace and morality with the result been crime outburst. The findings of this study corresponds with the Graif et al. (2014), and Malik (2016) which shows that the ever changing nature of the local economy of developing societies tends to affect the citizens thereby pushing them into spaces where they achieve their goals, and when this new places don't favour them they turn to acts that constitute crimes.

The findings of the study also revealed that, the government of Benue State, Gboko local council and the rural inhabitants have instituted strategies such as the formation of organised crime control mechanisms, such as the anti-robbery squads, anti-cultism, community Vigilante, encouragement of agricultural activities, youth empowerment and others to reduce indulgence in crime and related activities which undermine public peace.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Urbanization constitutes an integral aspect of societal development and is widely acknowledged to pose both positive and negative consequences for societies. The results of this study show that the increasing urbanization in the Gboko Local Government Area is influenced by a mix of pull and push factors. On one hand, pull factors like the presence of security agencies, administrative offices, a thriving market and other business opportunities, and job opportunities which draw people in, all in search of better lives. On the other hand, push factors such as insecurity and the lack of access to essential services like quality healthcare, education, and recreational facilities drive people to move into the urban center. These findings are consistent with earlier research by Aliyu and Amadu (2017) and Selhausen (2021), which highlighted that job prospects, better social services, and higher wages in urban areas are key motivators for rural-to-urban migration in Nigeria. Additionally, the rise in crime in Gboko seems to be linked to

economic uncertainties and social shifts at both local and national levels, which have undermined traditional institutions that usually help maintain peace. This observation supports the work of Graif et al. (2014) and Malik (2016), who pointed out that tough economic conditions can lead individuals to resort to criminal activities when they see no viable alternatives. It's also worth mentioning that local governments and community stakeholders have taken proactive steps to implement various crime control measures, such as anti-robbery squads, community vigilante groups, and youth empowerment programs. These initiatives represent significant strides toward restoring public safety and improving social stability in the face of the challenges brought on by rapid urbanization. The paper therefore recommends that:

Social infrastructures such as healthcare centres, schools, recreational facilities and markets should be strengthened and expanded. This will help tackle the issues that drive rural residents to migrate to urban areas like Gboko under stressful conditions. More job opportunities should be created, as it is essential, and this can be achieved by supporting local industries and fostering entrepreneurship. This approach will help to sustainably manage the increasing urban population and improve the livelihoods of the rural and urban communities.

The government should form a joint committee that will help in improving coordination between security agencies and traditional institutions, as it is vital for enhancing crime prevention and restoring social order in rapidly changing urban settings like Gboko. Urban planning that includes community input should be encouraged, as it will effectively address the infrastructure gaps and social vulnerabilities that urbanization has intensified.

Finally, the youths should be empowered and supported with agricultural programmes. These initiatives will provide meaningful alternatives to crime, thereby helping to sustain the social fabric and economic well-being of the residents in Gboko.

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