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Urban–Rural Poverty Dynamics and Household Living Standards in Sokoto Metropolis, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Poverty remains a multidimensional and spatially differentiated development challenge in Nigeria, with important implications for household living standards across urban and rural communities. Although poverty is frequently assessed through income or consumption indicators, such measures may not fully capture deprivation in education, health, housing, basic services, productive assets, and livelihood opportunities. This paper examines the conceptual relationship between urban-rural poverty dynamics and household living standards, with particular attention to Sokoto Metropolis, Nigeria. Drawing on the Capability Approach, Human Capital Theory, Spatial Inequality Theory, Welfare Economics, Rural-Urban Linkages Theory, and Poverty Trap Theory, the paper argues that poverty should be understood as a multidimensional and spatially embedded process rather than simply as an income deficit. The paper further conceptualizes household characteristics, including education, household composition, employment, assets, credit access, social capital, and livelihood diversification, as important mechanisms through which spatial conditions may influence household welfare. At the same time, infrastructure, market access, institutional conditions, environmental risks, and location are considered contextual factors that can strengthen or weaken these relationships. The discussion highlights the interconnectedness of urban and rural economies and argues that differences in household living standards cannot be adequately understood without considering the flows of people, goods, services, information, and resources between urban and rural spaces. The paper concludes that poverty-reduction strategies in Sokoto Metropolis should move beyond uniform income-based interventions towards integrated approaches that address multidimensional deprivation, spatial inequality, human capital, livelihood opportunities, and urban-rural linkages.

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INTRODUCTION

Poverty remains one of the most persistent socioeconomic challenges confronting developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Although traditionally associated with inadequate income or consumption, contemporary perspectives recognize poverty as a broader condition involving deprivation in education, health, housing, employment, access to basic services, productive assets, and opportunities for social and economic participation (Alkire & Foster, 2019; Sen, 1999; World Bank, 2022). This broader understanding is important because households with similar income levels may experience substantially different standards of living depending on their access to public services, infrastructure, employment opportunities, markets, and social networks. Poverty is therefore not simply a question of how much a household earns but also of what

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household members are able to achieve with the resources and opportunities available to them (Sen, 1999).

The spatial dimension of poverty is particularly important in developing countries. Urban and rural areas often differ considerably in access to employment, markets, education, healthcare, transportation, electricity, water, financial services, and other productive and social infrastructure (World Bank, 2022; IFAD, 2021). Urban areas may provide greater economic diversification and access to services, but urban households can also experience high living costs, insecure employment, overcrowding, inadequate housing, and other forms of deprivation. Rural households, on the other hand, may benefit from access to land and natural resources but frequently face limited infrastructure, weak market integration, restricted access to financial services, and greater dependence on climate-sensitive livelihoods (IFAD, 2021; UN-Habitat, 2023). Consequently, neither urban nor rural poverty can be understood adequately without considering the broader spatial and institutional context in which households operate.

The concept of poverty dynamics adds another dimension to this discussion. Poverty is not necessarily a permanent condition, as households may experience improvements or deterioration in their welfare in response to changes in employment, prices, health, household composition, assets, migration, remittances, environmental conditions, and other socioeconomic circumstances (Baulch & Hoddinott, 2020; Jalan & Ravallion, 2000). The distinction between chronic and transitory poverty is therefore useful for understanding why some households remain deprived over extended periods while others experience temporary episodes of deprivation (Carter & Barrett, 2006; Jalan & Ravallion, 2000; Ukpe et al., 2025). From this perspective, poverty dynamics refer not only to movements across a poverty threshold but also to changes in the underlying conditions that determine household capabilities and living standards.

Nigeria provides an important context for examining these issues. Available national evidence indicates substantial monetary and multidimensional deprivation, with considerable differences across regions and population groups. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022) reported that 63% of Nigerians were multidimensionally poor, with substantial deprivation in areas including living standards, health, education, employment, sanitation, food security, and housing. The NBS also reported that 65% of multidimensionally poor Nigerians lived in the North, while multidimensional poverty was substantially higher in rural areas (72%) than urban areas (42%); state-level incidence ranged from 27% in Ondo to 91% in Sokoto (NBS, 2022). These patterns make spatially sensitive approaches particularly important because national averages can conceal substantial differences between communities and households operating within different socioeconomic and institutional environments.

Sokoto Metropolis provides a particularly relevant context for considering the relationship between urban–rural poverty and household living standards. As an important urban centre in north-western Nigeria, Sokoto is characterized by interactions between urban economic activities and surrounding rural livelihoods. Households participate in different combinations of farming, petty trading, wage employment, self-employment, informal activities, migration, and other livelihood strategies. These activities are influenced by access to markets, infrastructure, education, health services, financial resources, and social networks (IFAD, 2021; World Bank, 2022). Evidence specifically from Sokoto Metropolis also indicates that social capital is relevant to household welfare, although its effects may vary across different dimensions of social participation (Mohammed, Tukur, & Abdullahi, 2018). Consequently, differences in household living standards may reflect not only household characteristics but also the opportunities and constraints associated with location.

The relationship between location and household welfare is also unlikely to be direct or uniform. Household socioeconomic characteristics can influence how households

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convert available resources into improved welfare. Education, for example, can improve access to employment and information, while asset ownership can provide a buffer against economic shocks. Access to credit may enable households to invest in productive activities, while livelihood diversification may reduce dependence on a single and potentially vulnerable source of income (Becker, 1964; Carter & Barrett, 2006; Karlan et al., 2019; Scoones, 2022). Household composition can also affect welfare because available resources must be distributed among household members with different needs (Adepoju & Oyewole, 2020).

At the same time, contextual factors may strengthen or weaken these relationships. Infrastructure, market accessibility, quality of public services, institutional conditions, environmental risks, and urban–rural location can determine the extent to which households benefit from their socioeconomic resources (IFAD, 2021; IPCC, 2022; World Bank, 2022). Thus, two households possessing similar levels of education or income may experience different living standards if they face substantially different access to roads, electricity, water, healthcare, markets, or employment opportunities.

The Capability Approach provides an important foundation for understanding this relationship. Sen (1999) argues that poverty should be viewed in terms of deprivation of capabilities and freedoms rather than income alone. From this perspective, household living standards depend on the real opportunities available to individuals to achieve valued ways of being and doing. This makes the approach particularly relevant to urban–rural poverty because differences in infrastructure, services, markets, and institutions can affect households' ability to convert resources into meaningful improvements in well-being (Sen, 1999; Robeyns, 2017).

Other theoretical perspectives further strengthen the conceptual understanding of the problem. Human Capital Theory emphasizes the importance of education, health, skills, and experience in improving productivity and income-generating capacity (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961). Spatial Inequality Theory draws attention to uneven development across geographical areas and the cumulative advantages enjoyed by better-connected locations (Myrdal, 1957; Williamson, 1965). Rural–Urban Linkages Theory emphasizes the flows of people, goods, capital, labour, and information connecting rural and urban economies (Douglass, 1998; Tacoli, 1998). Poverty Trap Theory, meanwhile, explains how mutually reinforcing disadvantages can prevent households from accumulating the resources necessary to improve their living standards (Carter & Barrett, 2006; Sachs, 2005).

Against this background, this paper examines the conceptual relationship between urban–rural poverty dynamics and household living standards in Sokoto Metropolis. Rather than undertaking an empirical estimation of poverty transitions, the paper synthesizes relevant conceptual and theoretical perspectives to explain how household-level socioeconomic conditions interact with spatial and contextual factors to shape welfare. Particular attention is given to the multidimensional nature of poverty, socioeconomic mechanisms, spatial inequality, and rural-urban interdependence. The paper contributes to the poverty literature by bringing these perspectives together within a conceptual framework relevant to Sokoto Metropolis. It argues that understanding household living standards requires moving beyond a simple urban–rural distinction and considering the interaction between household capabilities, livelihood resources, institutional conditions, infrastructure, and spatial opportunities (Sen, 1999; Myrdal, 1957; Tacoli, 1998).

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Concept of Poverty

Poverty is broadly understood as a condition in which individuals or households lack the resources, capabilities, and opportunities required to attain an acceptable standard of living. Earlier approaches largely conceptualized poverty in monetary terms, particularly through income or consumption shortfalls. Contemporary perspectives, however, increasingly regard

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poverty as multidimensional, encompassing deprivation in education, health, housing, employment, security, social participation, and access to essential services (Alkire & Foster, 2019; Alkire & Kanagaratnam, 2022; World Bank, 2022). The Capability Approach of Sen (1999) provides a particularly influential interpretation. Rather than defining poverty simply as insufficient income, the approach considers poverty in terms of the deprivation of capabilities the substantive freedoms that individuals have to achieve valued ways of living. Income is important because it provides access to goods and services, but its contribution to well-being depends on how effectively individuals and households can convert resources into desirable outcomes (Sen, 1999; Robeyns, 2017).

Poverty may also differ according to its duration and intensity. Chronic poverty refers to deprivation that persists over an extended period, often because of structural constraints such as inadequate human capital, limited assets, weak infrastructure, and restricted economic opportunities. Transitory poverty, by contrast, may result from temporary shocks such as illness, unemployment, food-price increases, crop failure, or other adverse events (Jalan & Ravallion, 2000; Baulch & Hoddinott, 2020). This distinction is important because different forms of poverty may require different policy responses.

Poverty can also be understood through monetary and multidimensional approaches. Monetary measures provide useful information about the purchasing power and consumption capacity of households, while multidimensional approaches capture deprivation in several areas of life. The Multidimensional Poverty Index, for example, identifies overlapping disadvantages across dimensions such as education, health, and living standards (Alkire & Foster, 2019; Alkire & Kanagaratnam, 2022). The Nigerian MPI similarly demonstrates the extent to which multiple deprivations can overlap within households and populations (NBS, 2022). Combining these perspectives provides a broader understanding of household welfare.

Poverty Dynamics

Poverty dynamics refer to changes in household welfare and poverty status over time. The concept distinguishes between households that remain poor over extended periods and those that experience temporary episodes of deprivation. Poverty entry describes a deterioration in welfare that moves a previously non-poor household into poverty, while poverty exit describes an improvement that enables a poor household to move above a specified poverty threshold (Baulch & Hoddinott, 2020; Jalan & Ravallion, 2000). The factors underlying poverty dynamics are diverse. Households may experience changes in employment, income, health, household composition, asset ownership, access to credit, migration, remittances, and exposure to economic or environmental shocks.

Consequently, poverty should not be regarded as a fixed household characteristic. Rather, household welfare can change as the resources, opportunities, and constraints facing households change (Carter & Barrett, 2006; Ukpe et al., 2025). From a conceptual perspective, poverty dynamics are also related to vulnerability. A household may currently be above a poverty threshold but remain highly vulnerable because it lacks assets, savings, stable employment, or social protection. Similarly, a household may experience temporary deprivation without being structurally poor. Understanding these distinctions is important for designing interventions that address both immediate deprivation and the underlying causes of persistent poverty (Baulch & Hoddinott, 2020; World Bank, 2022).

Household Living Standards

Household living standards refer to the material and non-material conditions in which household members live. They include income and consumption but extend to housing quality, access to clean water and sanitation, electricity, healthcare, education, nutrition, employment, transportation, and other dimensions of well-being (Sen, 1999; NBS, 2022; World Bank, 2022). A multidimensional understanding of living standards is particularly important in developing-country settings because households may

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experience improvements in income without corresponding improvements in access to essential services.

Conversely, households with relatively modest monetary resources may experience better welfare where public services and community infrastructure are relatively accessible (Alkire & Foster, 2019; Castañeda et al., 2018). Household living standards are therefore influenced by both resources and opportunities. Resources include income, assets, education, labour, and social capital, while opportunities include access to markets, schools, health facilities, infrastructure, financial institutions, and productive employment. This distinction is especially important when comparing urban and rural households (Sen, 1999; Robeyns, 2017).

Urban-Rural Poverty

Urban-rural poverty refers to differences in the nature, incidence, causes, and consequences of deprivation across urban and rural environments. Rural poverty is often associated with limited infrastructure, dependence on agriculture, weak market access, inadequate social services, and vulnerability to environmental shocks (IFAD, 2021; World Bank, 2022). Urban poverty, although sometimes associated with greater access to services and employment, can involve insecure informal employment, high housing costs, overcrowding, inadequate sanitation, and limited social protection (UN-Habitat, 2023; World Bank, 2022). The urban–rural distinction should therefore not be interpreted as a simple division between prosperous urban households and poor rural households. Poverty can be severe in both settings but may take different forms.

Rural households may experience service and infrastructure deprivation, while urban households may experience income insecurity and high costs of living (NBS, 2022; World Bank, 2022). In Sokoto Metropolis, these differences can be understood within the broader relationship between the metropolitan economy and surrounding rural communities. Urban markets create opportunities for rural producers, while rural areas provide food, labour, and other resources to urban consumers and enterprises. The welfare of households in either setting can consequently be affected by developments occurring in the other (Douglass, 1998; Tacoli, 1998).

Socioeconomic Factors and Poverty

Household socioeconomic characteristics constitute an important mechanism through which poverty and living standards are shaped. Education is particularly important because it can enhance productivity, improve employment opportunities, and facilitate access to information. Human capital may therefore strengthen a household's ability to respond to economic shocks and exploit emerging opportunities (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961; Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018). Household size and dependency structure also matter because household resources must be distributed among members. Larger households may benefit from greater labour availability but may simultaneously face greater consumption and education requirements. The net welfare effect therefore depends on the relationship between household resources and household needs (Adepoju & Oyewole, 2020; Akinbode & Ojediran, 2018).

Asset ownership is another important dimension. Land, livestock, savings, housing, productive equipment, and other assets can provide income, security, and a buffer against shocks. Access to credit can similarly enable households to invest in businesses, agriculture, education, or other productive activities (Carter & Barrett, 2006; Karlan et al., 2019). Livelihood diversification is particularly relevant in contexts where households depend heavily on climate-sensitive activities. Combining farming with trading, wage employment, self-employment, or other activities may reduce dependence on a single source of income and potentially improve household resilience (Scoones, 2022; IFAD, 2021).

Contextual and Moderating Factors

The relationship between household resources and living standards is influenced by the environment in which households operate.

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Infrastructure is one of the most important contextual factors. Roads, electricity, water, telecommunications, and transportation can reduce transaction costs and improve access to markets and services (World Bank, 2022; IFAD, 2021). Market access is similarly important. A household may possess productive resources but remain economically vulnerable if it cannot obtain favourable prices for its products or access reliable markets. Financial infrastructure can also determine whether households are able to save, borrow, insure against risks, or invest in productive activities (Karlan et al., 2019; IFAD, 2021).

Institutional conditions constitute another important contextual dimension. The effectiveness of public policies, social programmes, local institutions, and service delivery can influence whether households are able to benefit from available opportunities (World Bank, 2022). Environmental conditions also matter, particularly for households dependent on agriculture. Climate variability, drought, flooding, land degradation, and other environmental pressures can affect agricultural productivity and household welfare (IPCC, 2022; IFAD, 2021).

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Capability Approach

The Capability Approach, principally associated with Amartya Sen, provides the central theoretical foundation for understanding poverty and household living standards. Sen (1999) argues that poverty should be understood as deprivation of capabilities rather than simply inadequate income. Robeyns (2017) further develops the approach by emphasising the importance of people's real opportunities to achieve well-being and social justice. The approach distinguishes between resources, capabilities, and functioning's. Resources such as income and assets provide the means through which individuals can pursue well-being, while capabilities represent the genuine opportunities available to them.

Functioning's refer to the actual achievements resulting from those opportunities, such as being adequately nourished, educated, healthy, housed, or socially included (Sen, 1999; Robeyns, 2017). This perspective is particularly relevant to urban–rural poverty because households with similar resources may achieve different welfare outcomes depending on their location and access to services. A rural household may possess land but have limited capability to improve its welfare because of poor roads, limited extension services, inadequate markets, or weak access to credit. An urban household may have better access to schools and healthcare but still face deprivation because of insecure employment, high living costs, or inadequate housing (Sen, 1999; World Bank, 2022). The Capability Approach therefore provides a strong conceptual basis for examining household living standards in Sokoto Metropolis. It directs attention away from income alone towards the actual opportunities available to households.

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory, associated particularly with Becker (1964) and Schultz (1961), emphasizes investment in education, health, skills, training, and experience as mechanisms for improving productivity and economic welfare. Education can increase access to employment, improve decision-making, facilitate the adoption of technology, and strengthen access to information. Health similarly affects the ability of household members to participate productively in economic activities (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961; Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018). Within the context of Sokoto Metropolis, Human Capital Theory helps explain why households with different levels of education, skills, and health may experience different living standards even when they operate within the same geographical environment. The theory also highlights the importance of intergenerational investment because parental education and economic resources can influence children's opportunities.

Spatial Inequality Theory

Spatial Inequality Theory emphasizes the uneven distribution of economic opportunities

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and public resources across geographical areas. Myrdal's (1957) concept of cumulative causation suggests that development can generate self-reinforcing advantages in already developed locations, while weaker areas may experience continuing disadvantages. Williamson (1965) similarly highlights the spatial dimensions of inequality during development. The theory is useful for understanding differences between urban and rural communities around Sokoto. Urban areas may attract greater investment, businesses, infrastructure, skilled labour, and public services. These advantages can reinforce further economic activity. Rural communities may experience weaker infrastructure and market access, which can limit investment and economic diversification (Myrdal, 1957; Williamson, 1965). The theory therefore suggests that poverty should not be attributed exclusively to household characteristics. The spatial distribution of opportunities and services can also influence household welfare.

Welfare Economics

Welfare Economics provides a framework for considering how economic resources and public interventions affect social well-being. The tradition associated with Pigou (1920) emphasizes the role of public intervention in addressing market failures and improving welfare, while Sen's later contributions broaden welfare analysis to include capabilities and substantive freedoms (Pigou, 1920; Sen, 1999). This perspective is relevant to urban–rural poverty because access to public goods such as roads, water, healthcare, education, electricity, and social protection can substantially affect household welfare. From this perspective, poverty reduction involves not only increasing household income but also improving equitable access to opportunities and essential services.

Rural-Urban Linkages Theory

Rural-Urban Linkages Theory emphasizes the interdependence between rural and urban areas through flows of people, goods, services, labour, capital, and information (Tacoli, 1998; Douglass, 1998). This perspective is particularly important for Sokoto Metropolis. Rural producers depend on urban markets, while urban consumers depend on rural areas for food and other agricultural products. Migration, remittances, employment, transportation, and market exchanges further connect the two spaces (Tacoli, 1998; Douglass, 1998). Consequently, urban and rural poverty should not be treated as completely separate phenomena. Economic shocks in rural areas can affect urban food prices, while changes in urban demand can affect rural household incomes. Strengthening these linkages may therefore contribute to improvements in household welfare across both settings.

Poverty Trap Theory

Poverty Trap Theory explains persistent poverty through self-reinforcing mechanisms. Households with inadequate resources may be unable to invest sufficiently in education, health, productive assets, or businesses. Low investment can then produce low productivity and income, reinforcing the original poverty condition (Carter & Barrett, 2006; Sachs, 2005). This perspective is particularly relevant where households face several overlapping constraints. For example, inadequate income may limit education and healthcare expenditure; poor education may restrict employment opportunities; limited employment may reduce income; and inadequate infrastructure may further constrain productive activities. The theory therefore reinforces the multidimensional interpretation of poverty and highlights the possibility that poverty reduction requires simultaneous attention to several interconnected constraints.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL INSIGHTS

The literature reviewed in this paper demonstrates that poverty and household welfare are influenced by a combination of demographic, economic, spatial, institutional, and environmental factors. Evidence from Nigeria and other developing countries repeatedly emphasizes the importance of education, household size, assets, credit, infrastructure, migration, remittances, and

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location (Adepoju & Oyewole, 2020; Akinbode & Ojediran, 2018; World Bank, 2022).

Studies on poverty dynamics have distinguished between chronic and transitory poverty and have shown that household welfare can change considerably in response to shocks and changes in economic circumstances (Jalan & Ravallion, 2000; Baulch & Hoddinott, 2020; Ukpe et al., 2025). Other studies emphasize that rural households often face greater exposure to infrastructure and service deprivation, while urban households face challenges associated with informality, insecure employment, housing conditions, and high living costs (NBS, 2022; World Bank, 2022; UN-Habitat, 2023).

The literature also demonstrates the importance of multidimensional approaches. Evidence from Nigeria and other developing countries suggests that monetary poverty does not necessarily capture all dimensions of deprivation. Households may have similar income levels but substantially different access to education, health, sanitation, electricity, housing, and other essential services (Alkire & Foster, 2019; Castañeda et al., 2018; NBS, 2022). Another important insight is the role of migration and remittances. Rural–urban migration can provide households with additional sources of income and may improve welfare through remittance transfers. However, migration can also generate costs and pressures in receiving urban areas, particularly where housing, employment, and public services are inadequate (Obi-Egbedi & Taiwo, 2023; Ezeudu & Tukur, 2024).

The literature on financial access similarly suggests that credit and formal financial services can strengthen household productive capacity and consumption smoothing. However, access alone does not guarantee improved welfare because households must also possess the capabilities and opportunities necessary to use financial resources productively (Karlan et al., 2019).

The evidence relating specifically to Sokoto is particularly relevant. Mohammed, Tukur, and Abdullahi (2018) examined social capital and household welfare in Sokoto Metropolis using data from 230 households and found that the relationship between social-capital measures and household welfare was not uniform. Such evidence demonstrates the importance of considering local social and institutional conditions rather than assuming that findings from other regions automatically apply to Sokoto.

Overall, the literature suggests that urban–rural poverty is best understood as a multidimensional phenomenon arising from the interaction of household resources and contextual opportunities. However, the literature is often fragmented, with studies focusing separately on income poverty, multidimensional deprivation, migration, education, financial access, infrastructure, or rural livelihoods. A conceptual synthesis that brings these dimensions together is therefore useful for understanding household living standards in Sokoto Metropolis.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of this paper is built around the proposition that urban–rural location influences household living standards through a combination of household-level socioeconomic mechanisms and broader contextual conditions. This proposition is consistent with the Capability Approach, spatial inequality perspectives, and rural-urban linkage literature (Sen, 1999; Myrdal, 1957; Tacoli, 1998). The framework can be represented as follows:

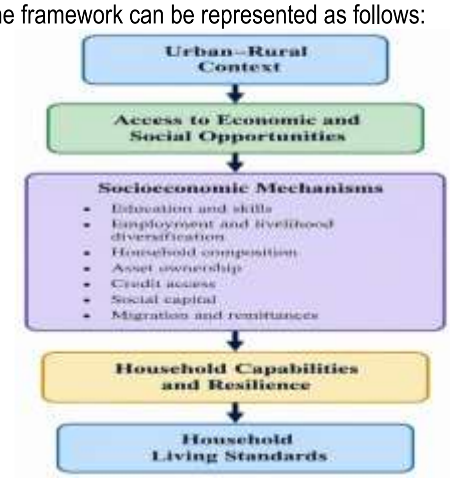

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Urban–Rural Poverty Dynamics and Household Living Standards. ***Source:*** *Author's conceptualization based on the reviewed literature.*

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The relationship is further influenced by contextual factors, including infrastructure, market access, public service availability, institutional quality, environmental conditions, local economic opportunities, and urban–rural connectivity (IFAD, 2021; World Bank, 2022). Thus, the framework does not regard location as an independent determinant of welfare in isolation. Rather, location affects the opportunities available to households, while household resources and capabilities determine how effectively those opportunities can be converted into improved living standards (Sen, 1999; Robeyns, 2017).

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The conceptual analysis indicates that urban–rural poverty should be understood through the interaction of place, household capabilities, and socioeconomic opportunities. The urban environment may provide greater access to markets, education, healthcare, financial institutions, and diversified employment, but these advantages do not automatically eliminate poverty. Urban households may simultaneously experience informal employment, high living costs, insecure housing, and inadequate infrastructure (UN-Habitat, 2023; World Bank, 2022).

Rural households face a different configuration of constraints. Agricultural dependence, limited infrastructure, weak market access, environmental risks, and restricted access to financial services may constrain their capacity to improve living standards. However, rural households may also possess productive assets such as land, livestock, and social networks that can support livelihood strategies when appropriate markets and services are available (IFAD, 2021; Scoones, 2022).

The distinction between urban and rural poverty is therefore not absolute. Rural and urban households are connected through economic and social relationships. Food produced in rural communities is consumed in urban markets, while urban employment, services, finance, and markets provide opportunities for rural households. Migration and remittances further strengthen these connections (Douglass, 1998; Tacoli, 1998).

For Sokoto Metropolis, this implies that poverty-reduction strategies should not treat the urban and rural components of the metropolitan economy as isolated spaces. The living standards of households are likely to be shaped not only by their immediate location but also by their access to employment, markets, infrastructure, public services, financial opportunities, and social networks across urban and surrounding rural areas. Weak linkages between these spaces may limit households' ability to benefit from available economic and social opportunities, while stronger linkages may support livelihood diversification, access to markets and services, and the movement of labour, goods, finance, and information. Policies directed exclusively at urban employment or rural agriculture may therefore have limited relevance where the wider socioeconomic connections between the two environments are not adequately considered.

The Capability Approach provides an overarching explanation for these relationships. Household resources matter, but what matters ultimately is whether households possess genuine opportunities to convert those resources into improved functioning and well-being. Education, health, infrastructure, markets, financial services, and social institutions therefore form part of the broader capability environment (Sen, 1999; Robeyns, 2017).

POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

The conceptual analysis has several important policy and development implications for poverty reduction and the improvement of household living standards in Sokoto Metropolis. First, poverty-reduction policies should adopt a multidimensional approach that addresses not only income deprivation but also education, healthcare, housing, water and sanitation, electricity, transportation, and other essential services. Second, greater emphasis should be placed on human capital development, particularly through improved access to quality education, skills development, healthcare, and employment

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opportunities, as these can strengthen household capabilities and resilience.

Third, policies should strengthen urban-rural linkages by improving roads, transportation networks, rural-urban markets, storage facilities, communication systems, and access to market information, thereby enabling rural producers to connect more effectively with urban markets while improving access to goods and services for urban and rural households. Fourth, financial inclusion and productive opportunities should be expanded through accessible credit, savings facilities, entrepreneurship support, and livelihood diversification, particularly for households with limited assets and unstable sources of income. Fifth, poverty interventions should recognize household heterogeneity, since household size, education, employment, assets, social capital, and livelihood strategies can influence the capacity of households to respond to economic shocks and improve their welfare.

Finally, the conceptual framework suggests that policies should address spatial inequalities by improving infrastructure and public-service delivery in underserved communities and strengthening the institutional and environmental conditions that shape household access to economic and social opportunities. An integrated policy approach that combines human capital development, infrastructure provision, financial inclusion, livelihood diversification, basic services, and stronger urban–rural connectivity may therefore be important for improving household living standards and reducing persistent and multidimensional poverty in Sokoto Metropolis.

CONCLUSION

Poverty in Sokoto Metropolis should be understood as a multidimensional and spatially embedded phenomenon rather than simply a shortage of income. Household living standards are shaped by the interaction between household resources, capabilities, livelihood strategies, and the economic, social, and institutional opportunities available within the surrounding environment. The conceptual analysis demonstrates that differences in household welfare between urban and rural settings arise not only from location but also from variations in access to education, employment, assets, credit, infrastructure, markets, public services, and social networks. Moreover, urban and rural economies are interconnected through the movement of people, goods, labour, capital, information, and other resources, meaning that changes in one location can influence household welfare in the other.

Accordingly, poverty reduction in Sokoto Metropolis requires an integrated and spatially sensitive approach that combines human capital development, improved infrastructure, stronger market connectivity, financial inclusion, livelihood diversification, and equitable access to basic services. Such an approach should recognize differences in household characteristics and livelihood capacities while strengthening connections between the metropolis and surrounding rural communities. Overall, a multidimensional and spatially informed perspective provides a more comprehensive basis for understanding household living standards and designing development policies capable of addressing the structural conditions underlying persistent deprivation in Sokoto Metropolis.

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