The Challenges of Poverty Implementation Policy and Programmes in Nigeria

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Abstract

Poverty alleviation has been a recurrent decimal in the anals of development planning in Nigeria since post-colonial era. The various interventions of successive governments have unanimously been agreed and observed to be a monumental failure in respect of the objectives for which they were focused. Consequently, this paper examines the challenges confronting the implementation of these programmes with a view to proffer recommendations for effective and efficient implementation.

A total of 720 respondents consisting of men and women between the ages of 20 and 60 years above were drawn from two local governments areas in Lagos and Ogun states, Nigeria respectively; using simple random and convenient sampling.

Questionnaires were administered and responses collated and analysed. The chi-square statistical techniques and percentages were used in testing the hypothesis and in analyzing the collated data.

Results revealed that the implementation of alleviation policy and programmes of Nigerian successive governments since independence faced the challenges of corruption, lack of transparency and political will on the part of government to make the programme a success. The findings also revealed that the rural dwellers which formed the original focus of the programmes benefited less due to wrong focus.

The study therefore concluded by recommending that government should enthrone high levels of transparency, accountability and political will in the implementation process. It also recommended that the community which constituted the highest percentage of poverty ridden people should be the focus of government and government should therefore adhere to faithful implementation of these policies and programmes as a means of achieving reults.

Keywords: *Alleviation, Challenges, Implementation, Poverty, Programmes*

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a global phenomenon and is a cancerworm that has more ravaging and worrisome effects on the less developed continents of the world, especially Africa with specific reference to Nigeria. The menace is so devastating in Nigeria to the extent that it has overtaken India going by world poverty clock report of 2018. Even though India population is seven times more than Nigeria population, the report has indicated that Nigeria has the largest extreme poverty population of 86.9 million representing almost 50% of the estimated population of 200 million as against India of 71.5 million (World poverty clock report, 2018). This is a serious indictment on the successive Nigerian governments with vast oil riches.

Inspite of economic growth, the statistics have shown that the poverty line has risen with almost 100 million people living on less that a &1 (E0.63) a day (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

What is more worrisome and critical about this situation is the emphasis by Aiyedogbon and Olwofasa (2012) that no obvious achievement has been accomplished inspite of the several attempts and efforts made in the past introducing policies aimed at poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

Poverty manifests in almost all facets of life in Nigeria both in urban and rural sectors but is more pronounced among the rural dwellers due to underdevelopment in terms of minimum human standard of living. The rural areas are bedeviled with bad roads, poor drinking water, ill-equipped health centres, and in some cases lack of infrastructural facilities and incessant crime rates (Aderonmu, 2010). This is however due to the deficiencies and inconsistencies in poverty alleviation policies of the successive governments in Nigeria since the independence period (Aderonmu, 2010). Various governments have come with varied programmes to find a permanent solution to this "tragedy" but despite the huge resources expended, corruption, unpatriotism, poor implementation and fiscal indiscipline have been identified as cancerworm that have undermined and eroded these efforts and make them a mirage.

However, despite an increasing recognition of the failures of the successive government alleviation programmes

and policies in Nigeria, little attention has been devoted to examine the challenges confronting these initiatives. This study therefore intends to extend the body of knowledge in this area by examining the challenges that have impeded these well intentioned programmes in positively impacting on the people.

Table 1. Nigeria has the largest Poverty Population (2018)
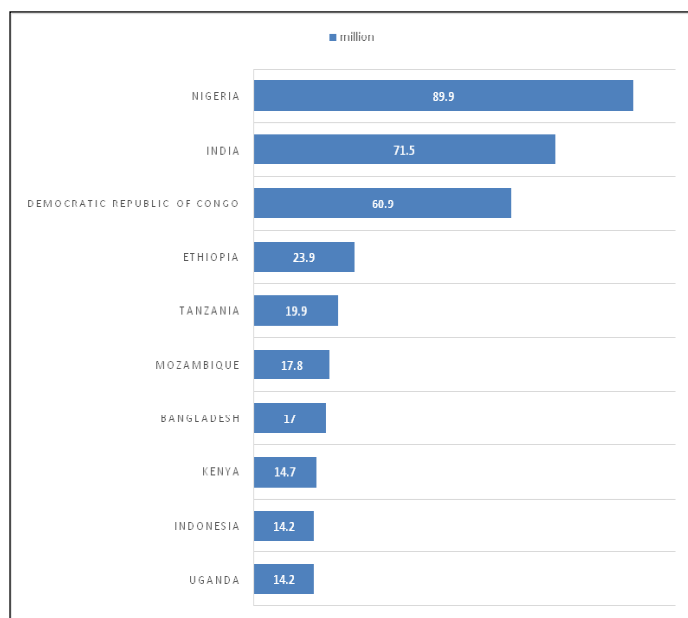
Source: ATLAS – Data World Poverty Clock (2018)

Table 2.

Year	Poverty Incidence %	Populations in Poverty (million)
1980	28.1	17.7
1985	46.3	34.7
1992	42.7	39.2
1996	65.6	67.1
2004	54.4	68.70
2010	69.0	

Sources: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)

From table 2, the Population in Poverty kept increasing year after year indicative of failed Policies and Programmes of Poverty alleviation.

Tables 3: Poverty Trends by Sector

Year	Urban %	Rural %
1980	17.2	28.3
1985	37.8	51.4
1992	37.5	46.0
1996	58.2	69.8
2004	43.2	63.3
2010	61.8	73.2

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) / Poverty Profile in Nigeria.

From table 3, it is observed the rural dwellers are the worst hit in the Poverty trend than the Urban dwellers indicating the Poverty alleviation Policies and Programmes were not well articulated in the rural sectors of the economy.

Conceptual Explanation of Poverty

The definition of poverty is shrouded in its complexity as there is no agreed and standard definition of the concept (Laderchi, Saith& Stewart, 2003, 2006). There are persistent debates on its nature in that poverty has both tangible and intangible indicators, and policy makers are often being faced with the challenges of what will determine poverty and its extent (Callan & Nolan, 1991). Measuring poverty from the income perspective will describe the poor as those whose standard of living is below $1.00 per day (UNDP, 2002). However, Foster, (1998) and Lok-Dessallien (1999) both observed that poverty could be either absolute or relative. When poverty is absolute, it connotes the inability of a household to live above its subsistence existence meaning that such household is not able to meet up with the basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, clothing, transportation and education. Whereas, relative poverty connotes the falling standard of a household relative to the income of the population in the society under consideration. This explains individual household resources falling below the acceptable living average household standard in the same community. As poverty is context-sensitive, so also it is dynamic in that the acceptable living standard in one community may be far below the standard of living in another community (Foster, 1998, Lok-Dessallien, 1999).

Notwithstanding this, various measurements have frequently been used to explain poverty; ranging from head count, poverty gap index, disparity of income distribution and human development index(Grootaert and Braithwaite, 1998:194). But in Nigerian context, the main factors that have been adduced to poverty escalation include weak governance, impunity, systemic failures, illiteracy, unemployment, income inequality and corruption, all of which have led to low standard of living, high rate of social ills, political unrest and abuse of religion (Hope Sr, 2017, Ogbeidi, 2013, Okoosi-Simbine, 2011). This culture of poverty, according to Oscar Lewis, an American anthropologist constitutes a pattern of life which a community has come to live with and which is passed from one generation to another (Bradshaw & Main 2016).

Consequently, in view of the devastating effects of poverty, successive government in Nigeria have made several attempts introducing poverty alleviation programmes, but all to no avail.

Policies and Programmes of Nigerian Government Aimed at Alleviating Poverty

The ultimate aim of poverty eradication is to enrich human livesand enable human potential. Consequently, to achieve any remarkable success in this dimension government policies and programmes will have to depend on policies

and investments that will secure rural communities, strengthen rural productivity and build infrastructure. It is as a result of this that successive governments in Nigeria made several attempts initiating programmes and policies aimed at reducing and alleviating rural poverty. Some of these programmes from 1970s are National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP), Operation feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution, Back to land Programme, or Graduate Farming Scheme, Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), Better life for Rural Women, National Directorate of Employment, National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), National Economic Empowerment & Development Strategy (NEEDS) and lately N-Power Programe, Micro-crediting Plan, Meals for school children, materials aid for poor citizens and improvement of the educational system (Ogunleye, 2010). As noble as these programmes are, it is evident that they are colossal failures and it is the view of the present paper to identify the whys so as to reinforce the efforts of the current programmes for the improvement of quality of life. The operations feed the Nation (OFN) which aimed at food production and self-sufficiency of the rural dwellers was cut short with the advent of Green Revolution indicative of the fact of its inadequacy to address the food production problems and other activities meant to elevate the living standards at rural level. Also, the advert of DFFRI which enjoyed the acceptance of the capitalist countries as it was meant to address the problems of food shortage, roads underdevelopment, skill acquisition and rural infrastructure, was also shortlived. Although the programme provided laudable projects for its success for example, peoples bank and community banks were established to provide basic financial services to the poor, their weak financial base, poor management, lack of inputs from the grassroot rural dwellers and stakeholders and other factors accounted for their failures in performing their roles properly (The guardian, June 20, 2007). In addition, the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was equally laudable as it was established to complement the efforts of the other poverty and rural development measure and to specifically train unskilled young Nigerian to acquire skills and self-reliance. The policy was backed by the micro business funds, but as it were, like the preceding programmes, was afflicted with political decisions that usurp its functions through other politically motivated structures such as PAP, NAPEP and others.

In overall, the literature as enunciated is vast with the general claims that poverty alleviation programmes were initiated to banish poverty in Nigeria and amongst the rural dwellers but as it were, not much was achieved going by the world report that ranked Nigeria as one of the poverty ridden countries in the world (World Poverty Clock, 2018). This suggests the need to further investigate the factors and challenges that are responsible for the failures in the implementation of these programmes and policies in Nigeria. This therefore leads to the formation of the following hypotheses thus:

H1 – Lack of transparency and political will of successive governments in Nigeria to implement poverty alleviation programmes posed a great challenge to the success of the programmes.

H2 – The wrong focus of the alleviation policies and programmes affects the success of the implementation process.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted survey method. The research population which consisted of different social economic background was drawn from rural sectors, market women, farmers, students, business men and civil servants from two local governments of Lagos and Ogun State (Ojoduand Ifo local government area) make up of over ten thousand people. Majority of the respondents from Ifo local government area consisted of rural dwellers. A sample size of seven hundred and thirty participants of different socio- economic status was obtained using random and convenient sampling

The study employed structured questionnaire to obtain data from the population sample and the questionnaire was designed on likert pattern of agree, disagree, YES or NO and contained statement to which the respondents would indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement. Thepre-test to check validity of the research instrument was conducted by the researcher. A list of seven hundred and thirty questionnaires (730) was personally administered of which seven hundred and twenty (720) copies was completely filled and retuned representing 98%. Ten (10) copies were not properly filled; and therefore did not form part of the analysis.

The seven hundred and twenty copies that were returned formed the basis of the analysis. Sixteen (16) questions were drawn of which the respondents were expected to provide answers. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data presented in frequency and percentages and the statistical tool used in testing the hypothesis is chi-square statistical test which shows the causal relationship between events or is helpful in cause and effect situation.

Model Situation

$$x^2 = \frac{EC(O - E)}{E}$$

Where O = Observed frequency

C = Number of columns

E = Expected frequency

and to determine the degree of freedom,

Df = (C - I) (r - I)

Where r = Number of rows

c = Number of columns

and the test is carried out under 0.05 (5%) level of significance.

The chi-square is relevant under the conditions where there are two or more variables from independent samples each of which is categorized into Agree or Disagree responses and when the data is either Numeric or expressed in a Null form indication of no relationship between two variables.

Decision rule is when the calculated value is greater than the table value, the Null hypothesis is accepted and alterative hypothesis rejected.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Distribution of Respondents by Gender

	Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Male	515	71.52%
2	Female	205	28.47%
3	Total	720	100%

Source: field work, 2019

The above table records gender distribution of respondents. 515 out of 720 participants are male representing 71.52% while 205 are female representing 28.47%. The difference between male and female distribution is an indicative of low female participation in the affairs of national lifes.

Age Distribution

	Age	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	20-30	112	15.56%
2	31-40	100	13.88%
3	41-50	298	41.38%
4	51-60	120	16.66%
5	60 & above	90	12.5%
	Total	**720**	**100%**

Source: field work 2019

Majority of participants in the age bracket of 41-50 records 41.38% which also falls within the active labour productive force thus likely presumed to be beneficiaries of government poverty alleviation programmes.

Educational Distribution

S/N	Qualification	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Primary	300	41.66%
2	Secondary	218	30.27%
3	Post-secondary	202	28.05%
	Total	**720**	**100%**

Source: field survey, 2019

The above table shows that 300 respondents of Primary school certificate is 41.66%, Secondary school leaving certificate is 30.27% while Post-secondary school certificates is 28.05%.

Occupational Distribution

S/N	Occupation	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Civil servants	250	34.72%
2	Business men and women	155	21.52%
3	General public	315	43.75%
	Total	720	100%

Source: field survey, 2019

The occupational distribution of the respondents showed that the general public randomly selected from the two local government is 43.75%, while civil servants chosen the same way has 34.72% and business men and women has 21.52%.

TEST OF HYPOTHESES

H1 – Lack of Transparency and Political will of successive Nigerian governments to implement poverty alleviation programmes posed a great challenge to the success of the programmes.

In testing this hypothesis, a contingency table is constructed based on questions 10 and 12 on the questionnaire.

S/N	Options	Questions		Total
1	Strongly disagree	152	100	252
2.	Strongly agree	502	580	1082
3.	Undecided	66	40	106
4	Total	720	720	1440

The expected frequency for each cell is calculated by multiplying the total row by total column and divide by grand total

Thus,

Cell 1 = $\frac{252 \times 720}{1440} = 126$

Cell 2 = $\frac{1082 \times 720}{1440} = 541$

Cell 3 = 106 x720/1440 = 53

$$x^2 = \frac{E(0-E)^2}{E}$$

$$x^2 = \frac{(152-126)^2}{126} + \frac{(100-126)^2}{126} + \frac{(502-541)^2}{541} + \frac{(580-541)^2}{541} + \frac{(66-53)^2}{53} + \frac{(40-53)^2}{53}$$

$$-\frac{676}{126} + \frac{676}{126} + \frac{1521}{541} + \frac{1521}{541} + \frac{169}{53} + \frac{169}{53}$$

x^2 = 5.36+5.36+2.81+2.81+3.18+3.18 = 22.7

Hence, 22.7 > 5.991

$x^2cal.$ = 22.7 which is greater than the table (critical) value. The Null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

This hypothesis states that lack of transparency and political will of successive Nigerian governments to implement poverty alleviation programmes posed a great challenge to the success of the programme.

With this result, it is disheartening that despite the efforts of governments, on various programme initiatives to alleviate poverty, the resources were wasted due to lack of political will and selfish interests to make them a success.

H2 – The government poverty alleviation programmes were wrongly focused to address the needs of the rural people.

Here a contingency table is constructed based on questions 13 and 15 on the questionnaire.

S/N	Options	Questions		Total
1	Strongly disagree	100	200	300
2.	Strongly agree	580	420	1000
3.	Undecided	40	100	140
4	Total	720	720	1440

The expected frequency for each cell is calculated by multiplying the total row by the total column and divide by the grand total.

Cell 1: $\frac{300 \times 720}{1440} = 150$

Cell 2: $\frac{1000 \times 720}{1440} = 500$

Cell 3: $\frac{140 \times 720}{1440} = 70$

$$x^2 = \frac{E(0-E)^2}{E}$$

$$x^2 = \frac{(100-150)^2}{150} + \frac{(200-150)}{150} + \frac{(580-500)^2}{500} + \frac{(420-500)^2}{500} + \frac{(40-70)^2}{70} + \frac{(100-70)^2}{70}$$

$$-\frac{2500}{150} + \frac{2500}{150} + \frac{6400}{500} + \frac{6400}{500} + \frac{900}{70} + \frac{900}{70}$$

x^2 = 16.66+16.66+12.8+12.8+12.85+12.85 = 84.62

Hence, 84.62 > 5.991

The Null hypothesis which states that the government poverty alleviation programmes were wrongly focused to address the needs of the rural people is accepted.

This is also disheartening in that the focus and directions of the programmes may have been hijacked by the political jobbers who may have seen the programme as spoils of politics. This phenomenon has therefore vitiated the desire and efforts of government to create employment, increase food production, giving our micro-credit loans and increase the general standard of living of Nigerians.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the test of hypotheses one, it was discovered that implementation of the various programmes of poverty alleviation due to lack of transparency and political will constituted the major problems and challenges Nigerian governments have been confronted with since independence. Consequently, successive governments have come up with different nomenclatures such as NDE, NAPEP, DFRRI, OFN and FEAP, etc as a way out which did not yield any results.

This hypothesis was supported by Taiwo and Agwu, (2016) which attributed the cause to corruption, pursuit of parochial interests and dishonesty; resulting to draining the national resources instead of addressing the sole aim of the programmes which is to reduce the incidence of poverty. Also, Mustapha Hussaini (2014) supported the hypothesis and attributed the cause to lack of successive planning by governments due to the failure of these governments to inherit programmes from their successors but rather sought to introduce their own programmes.

The second hypothesis showed that most of the policies from the governments did not actually address the needs of the rural sectors which was the focus and this was found to be as a result of lack of accountability, dishonesty, resulting to manipulation of funds meant for the programme being diverted to family members and political loyalists.

The hypothesis was supported by Ogunleye Olusesan (2010) and attributed it to macro-economic mis-management, corruption, negative role of globalization on the economy, and disparities in access to health and education.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nigeria, inspite of its enormous wealth both in human and material resources is dishearteningly being classified as one of the poorest nations in the world. The present study discovered that successive governments in Nigeria are the brain behind this menace borne out of corruption, unpatriotism, lack of political will to combat the menace, decline in incomes and welfare of the people and poor macro-economic policies. As a result of all these, poverty continued to pose a great danger to human capital development, national security, economic growth, health, religious fanaticism and nations social solidarity.

Recommendations

The study comes up with the following recommendations from the foregoing analysis.

a. Poverty in Nigeria is complex and multi-dimensional hence the approach to resolve the menace also requires same where stakeholders are inculcated into the scheme.

b. Poverty alleviation can be achieved by empowering the poor and the understanding of the underlying causes should become sacrosanct in designing the pro-poor programmes.

c. The government should enthrone high levels of transparency, accountability and political will and should also entrench strong institutions that will deal with all negative tendencies such as fraud, dishonesty, corruption and money laundering.

d. Government should adhere to faithful implementation of its programmes as a means of achieving results.

e. Government should invest in massive infrastructures, introduce effective monitoring units, involve grass-root

people and create social responsibility programmes such as old age support, child support and unemployment support.

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