

A Sociological Insight on the Factors Responsible for Persistence of Poverty in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria's precarious poverty rate remains a worrisome phenomenon begging for multidisciplinary intellectual attention. Despite numerous attempts to stem the rising poverty in Nigeria, high incidences of poverty and poverty-related issues such as hunger and malnutrition have persisted. Thus, Nigeria's pride as the "Giant of Africa" has turned a subterfuge owing to apparently conflicting economic realities. This has also earned Nigeria an "uncommissioned" title as the "Poverty Capital of the World". Nigeria's alignment with international poverty reduction initiatives and huge financial commitments is yet to tackle the poverty menace. Factors which undermine the successes of these initiatives are multidimensional. In this article, attempt is made at exhuming salient factors which hinder the reduction of poverty in Nigeria. The focus is on internal disruptions to poverty reduction since the country's return to democracy in 1999. The paper leverages the progressive social theory of poverty to advance its argument. Being a theoretical paper, data were sourced from reputable journal articles, authentic media reports, classical literatures, and annual reports of relevant organisations such as the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). Thereafter, content analysis was used to analyse information extracted from the aforementioned sources. From the findings, the paper links the persistence of poverty in Nigeria to prevailing unfavourable economic, political and social factors which have continued to stagnate the progress in the war against poverty. Recommendations offered include evidence-based policy making; proper disaster management; reorganization of the political structure; and addressing the poor standard of education in the country.

Keywords: Poverty; Persistence; Sociological Insight; Progressive Social Theory; Nigeria

Introduction

Global efforts aimed at curbing the menace of poverty and bolstering developmental initiatives in third world countries are gaining momentum. However, serious concerns have been raised about the Global South which has remained the hub of poverty and underdevelopment. The Global South grapples with a plethora of developmental drawbacks which have made the region one of the poorest in the world (Mitlin & Satterthwaite, 2013). In the Global South, Africa, especially Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) constitutes a more serious concern given its "undeserved" poverty profile where 534 million people are reported to be in acute multidimensional poverty (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2023). The region suffers developmental inferiority complex and is unable to match its peers. Much of its developmental setbacks are linked to bad governance which breeds rising poverty and further worsens other development indicators in the region (Saxena & Muthumbi, 2023; Abdullahi & Abubakar, 2019). Igwe (2012. p.23) explains this scenario as the paradox of poverty in a wealthy nation where he observes how the twin evil of poverty and underdevelopment thrive where the so-called "Giant of Africa" (Nigeria) is situated

despite the country's abundant natural resources. As an oil producing country and the seventh largest exporter of crude in the world, Nigeria ought to drive development in SSA; and also radiate economic prosperity to other countries in the sub-region and the continent at large. However, in defiance to these expectations, Nigeria has been struggling to rid itself of the menace of poverty which has entangled the country in a vicious cycle of poverty and underdevelopment. More disturbing is the fact that Nigeria's economic realities have precipitated into other African and European countries. Evidences in this regard are discernible from reports of the "Japa" syndrome which cuts across skilled and unskilled migrants (Oludotun, 2023); the overwhelming assembly of Nigerians as dominating forces in other African and European countries which has resulted in cases of xenophobic attacks in South Africa (Busari, 2023), discriminatory trade policies against Nigerians in Ghana (Onyekakeyah, 2019); and high rate of deportation of Nigerians from other European countries as illegal migrants who take dangerous routes to European countries (Matazu & Ibrahim, 2021). All these testify to the enormity of poverty in Nigeria which pushes the people to migrate.

Therefore, it goes without say that Nigeria is indeed neck-deep in poverty and does not reflect the true "Giant of Africa". In migration studies, places with favourable conditions retain their population and attract others. Therefore, with the surge in the rate of legal and illegal migration in Nigeria, it is logical to submit that the conditions in the country are unfavourable and are responsible for "pushing" the population to places with better conditions. In his work, "The Laws of Migration", Ravenstein (1889) notes that economic reasons have been identified as the major drivers of migration. Nigeria is not an exception to this as the most frequent reasons cited by both legal and illegal migrants are economic-inclined. These reasons revolve around unemployment and underemployment all of which are recipes for poverty. The poverty level rises when people remain unemployed or underemployed. As such, the people look for alternative places with better conditions to escape these unfavourable conditions.

With poverty (in all dimensions) being recklessly pervasive in Nigeria, the Nigerian governments at all levels acknowledge the enormity of the problem. This has led to the establishment of several poverty alleviation programmes to address the problem. Some of the programmes such as National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NAPEP) were indigenous initiatives, while others such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were global initiatives. Some of these programmes yielded the desired results while other did not. The ongoing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which targets elimination of obstacles to development in third world nations ends in less than a decade. As such, it is expedient to reexamine the issue of poverty which is a frontline goal (goal 1) in the SDGs with a view to making the desired progress in the war against poverty. Poverty eradication is critical to the actualisation of other goals. As such, its persistence will inevitably affect the actualisation of the other SDGs. Nigeria was unable to meet up with targets of significant number of goals in the MDGs (Aliyu and Abubakar, 2022a), such scenario must be averted in the SDGs which seems to be more ambitious. This is to avoid speculations about Nigeria's capacity to be co-opted in international agenda of the United Nations (UN) beyond the 2030 SDGs.

Igwe (2012) notes that the "unacceptable" persistence of poverty in Africa is yet to be treated with the measure of urgency it deserves even as the scourge of poverty continues to ravage the continent. To this end, this paper takes a departure from the general direction of literatures on this subject matter as it relegates the usual attempt of blaming colonialism and unfounded neocolonial interests for Nigeria's rising poverty. It dwells on the peculiar policies and actions which

eventually breeds high rates of poverty in Nigeria. The paper begins with an explanatory note on the concept of poverty. Afterwards, the paper takes an overview of poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria. Thereafter, the theoretical framework for the paper is explained and factors disrupting the war against poverty in Nigeria are examined through the theoretical lens. The paper concludes with recommendations on how to achieve poverty eradication in Nigeria.

The paper adopted secondary research design wherein relevant literatures from previous studies and data from the National Bureau of Statistics were utilised. The paper sourced for literatures on meaning and causes of poverty, assessment of the successes and failures of poverty alleviation programmes, and theoretical explanations on poverty. Furthermore, upon careful scrutiny of media reports, those deemed to be authentic were selected for inclusion. Information retrieved from the aforementioned sourced were analysed using content analysis after which conclusions were drawn.

The Concept of Poverty

The concept of poverty has been defined in various ways. Most definitions encapsulate the phenomenon of poverty to represent severe deprivation of basic needs faced by people. Scholars of development use numerous criteria in assessing the incidence of poverty. Taiwo and Agwu (2016) describe poverty as a phenomenon characterized by derivation of basic needs. They explained the deprivations faced by people to be as follows:

- i. Individuals below the poverty line whose incomes are insufficient to cater for their basic needs.
- ii. Individuals and households lacking access to basic services and other forms of sociopolitical support.
- iii. People in isolated rural areas without access to essential infrastructural facilities.
- iv. Female-headed households lacking minimum nutritional requirements.
- v. Unemployed individuals unable to gain employment due to unfavourable economic policies.
- vi. Marginalised ethnic minorities who are persecuted economically, socially, culturally and politically.

The above deprivations succinctly present the numerous dimensions of deprivations which could be utilised in the conceptualisation of poverty. In this vein, Ewubare and Okpani (2018) conceptualise poverty as a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs which includes, but not limited to, education, health, safe drinking water, and access to basic social services. As such, this paper conceptualises poverty as the inability to acquire basic needs due to unfavourable sociopolitical and economic processes. These processes, either manifest or latent, contribute to prevent people from actualizing their basic needs regardless of the efforts invested. It is also instructive to note that the adoption of the foregoing definitions as framework for this paper is due to their convergence with the indicators of the National Poverty Headcount utilised by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) to assess the rate of poverty in Nigeria. The indicators used by the NBS includes access to clean energy, healthcare centre, schools, electricity, etc. As such, the adoption of the definition justifies the use of statistical derivations which adopt the foregoing variables in measuring poverty in the country.

Nigeria's Unending Quest to End Poverty: An Overview

Nigeria emerged from colonialism poverty-ridden and the need for a fresh start and hope for the citizenry was apparent. Unfortunately, in less than a decade after the country's hard-earned independence, democracy was truncated by soldiers in favour of military administration. The

combined effect of several years of colonialism and military rule in Nigeria became a strong recipe for the unending poverty in the country. Because poverty is multidimensional and leads to several deprivations, efforts to fight poverty are also multidimensional in order to ensure the scourge of poverty is alleviated in all ramifications. Kolawole (2021) notes that there are four approaches to poverty reduction. The first is the economic growth approach; secondly, the basic needs approach; thirdly, the rural development approach; and lastly, the target approach. The target approach birthed the Community-Driven Development (CDD) approach. While adopting different methods in the pursuit of their primary goal (poverty reduction), all of these approaches have been applied in the Nigerian context without much needed result. Sadly, the long experience with poverty and poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria is yet to translate to reduced scourge of the menace. On record, Nigeria has established over twenty poverty eradication programmes since 1959 with little results to justify the efforts and resources invested in such programmes. In his own analysis, Kolwaole (2021) categorized poverty reduction programmes into three phases namely; the pre-Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) era (1960-1985), SAP era (1985-2000), and the democratic era. In table 1, a rundown of the poverty alleviation programmes in the democratic era is provided.

Table 1: Poverty Reduction Programmes in Nigeria

S/No.	Year	Programme
Pre-Structural Adjustment Programme Era		
1	1959	Farm Settlement Scheme (FSS)
2	1972	Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs)
3	1973	National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP)
4	1973	River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs)
5	1976	Operation Feed the Nation (OFN)
6	1977	Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS)
7	1977	Rural Banking Programme (RBP)
8	1977	Free and Compulsory Primary Education (FCPE)
9	1980	Green Revolution Programme (GRP)
Structural Adjustment Programme Era		
10	1986	Directorates for Foods, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI)
11	1986	National Directorate of Employment (NDE)
12	1987	Better Life for Rural Women Programme (BLP)
13	1989	Peoples Bank of Nigeria (PBN)
14	1992	Community Banks (CB)
15	1992	National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA)
16	1994	Family Support Programme (FSP)
17	1997	Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP)
18	1989	Strategic Grains Reserve Storage Programmes (SGRP)
19	1988	Primary Health Care Scheme (PHCS)
Democratic Era		
20	1999	Universal Basic Education (UBE) Scheme
21	2000	Poverty Alleviation Programmes (PAP)
22	2001	National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)
23	2003	Fadama II project
24	2004	National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS)
25	2004	Local Empowerment and Environmental Management Project (LEEMP)
26	2008	Community and Social Development Project (CSDP)

Source: Adapted from Kolawole (2021)

It is pertinent to note that the above list is not exhaustive of the poverty reduction programmes. However, it illustrates the extent of commitment to poverty reduction by successive governments. Some of the programmes are made up of several subcomponents which aid the attainment of set goals. For example, Taiwo and Agwu (2016) note that NAPEP had the following subcomponents:

- a. Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES);
- b. Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS);
- c. Social Welfare Service Scheme (SOWESS); and
- d. Natural Resources Development and Conservative Scheme (NRDCS).

An Overview of Poverty Trend in Nigeria in the Fourth Republic

Poverty is measured using numerous indices. In Nigeria, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) undertakes the task of generating data on poverty rate in the country. Such statistics are usually released as the Multidimensional Poverty Index. In this work, the poverty index generated by the National Bureau of Statistics will be utilised to provide a graphical representation of the poverty rate in Nigeria. Figure 1 shows Nigeria's poverty trend from 1999 to date.

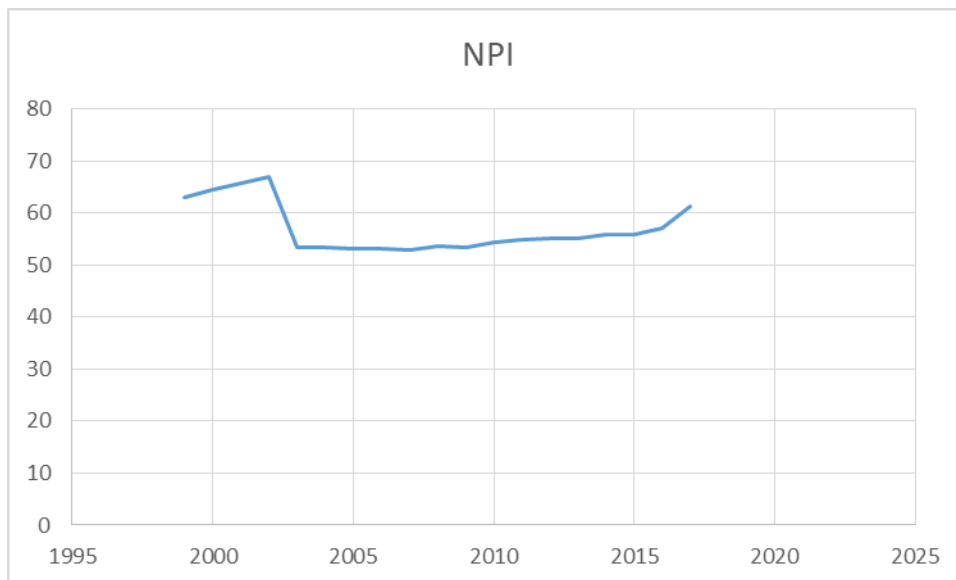


Figure 1: Poverty Trend in Nigeria

Datasets source: Ewubare and Okpani (2018)

Currently, the 2022 National Multidimensional Poverty Index puts Nigeria's rate at 63% which implies that over 133million Nigerians are in poverty (NBS, 2022). This statistic is suggestive of a retrogressive trend in the fight against poverty. This is not unconnected with the adverse economic policies of the Muhammadu Buhari's administration such as the naira redesign and the most recent economic uncertainties foisted on Nigerians by the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu administration as regards subsidy removal and floating the nation's legal tender which have all worsened the poverty situation in the country. The sudden removal of subsidy without any provision to cushion the knock-on effects has devastated many Nigerians and still pushes more people below the poverty line.

Theoretical Framework

Progressive social theory of poverty was used to anchor the study. The progressive social theory evolved in response to the “blame-the-victim” behavioural theories of poverty. The behavioral theorists argue that the individual is responsible for his own poverty and must work on himself for his poverty status to be eliminated. In response, scholars such as Bradshaw (2005) and Abdulai and Shirmshiry (2014) put forth the argument that poverty is the making of the structure of society and cannot be blamed on the behaviour of individuals. The progressive social theory is situated within the realm of structural theories of poverty. The structural theories of poverty argue that poverty is caused either directly or indirectly by the social structure (Omideyi, 2007). In this case, the theory situates the origin of poverty in economic, political and social structures which limit people’s opportunity and life chances thereby causing many of them to be poor. Addae-Korankye (2019), Danaan (2018), and Omideyi (2017) have applied the theory to the understanding and explanation of poverty in Nigeria. In their submissions, Nigeria’s poverty is explainable using the theory because Nigeria’s capitalist nature (economic structure) is hugely responsible for the wanton poverty in the country. Capitalists deliberately create an army of unemployed youths as a strategy to keep wages low. In the social structure, they explained that certain discriminations based on social characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, race, etc. also leads to denial of opportunities to people of such categories thereby increasing their poverty rate. Lastly, the political structure affects poverty through formulation of policies which exacerbate the economic difficulties being faced by the people. To these theorists, poverty is therefore a function of economic and sociopolitical structures of the society.

Although the theory is criticized for its neglect of the human agency and disregard for the role of the individual’s behaviour in the occurrence and persistence of poverty, it provides an ample understanding of the peculiar Nigerian scenario. In Nigeria, much of poverty is attributable to the social structure which renders the hard work of many individuals inconsequential to economic prosperity. Many Nigerians are hard working. Evidences within the country and from the diaspora have testified to the hard work and industriousness of Nigerians. Hence, it is more suitable to adopt structural theory as against the behavioural approach. Therefore, the weaknesses of the theory do not invalidate its application to the current discourse.

Sociological Insight on the Factors Responsible for Persistence of Poverty in Nigeria

With reference to the foregoing theoretical framework, the paper examines the factors responsible for persistence of poverty in Nigeria as follows:

1. **Poor economic policy framework:** In Nigeria, the flagrant abuse and disregard for the policy formulation cycle has often led to formulation of haphazard, disjointed and prematurely executed policies. The Nigerian government has consistently churned out ill-conceived policies or well-conceived but prematurely executed policies. Numerous examples exist to substantiate the foregoing point. However, examples will be limited to recent trends. In 2022, the Naira redesign crisis remains an unforgettable scenario for many Nigerians. While the policy sought to reduce the circulation of cash and increase the adoption of the e-naira, it only succeeded in killing the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) which the same government struggle to support through its Tradamoni and Marketmoni interventions. Small businesses who were given the grants to boost their sales ended up losing their entire investments in the cash swap process due to difficulty in accessing the new legal tender. During the crises, both

the old and new notes disappeared. Eventually, the few available new naira notes bought the old naira notes at very unrealistic rates (Ndujihe et al., 2023). Yet, the government never backtracked on the decision to swap the currency. Businesses (especially in the rural areas) shut down prematurely thereby pushing more people in poverty.

The most recent of such ill-conceived and prematurely executed policies is the subsidy removal by the Tinubu administration. The government announced the removal of subsidy on petrol without any plans to cushion the knock-on effects. This singular action has pushed more millions of Nigerians into poverty within the first trimester of the administration's lifespan. To make things worse, the government foot drags as regards minimum wage review and proposed a pittance as palliative which is also not forthcoming (Nnodim, 2023). Feeding has become a huge task for many households thereby increasing hunger and diseases among the population. Consequently, the government prides itself with huge savings from the subsidy removal forgetting it has a very hungry population to cater for. While efforts of some State governments in cushioning the effect are commendable, the federal government is yet to prove its worth in this regard. The boarder closure and several other policies of this nature are common in Nigeria.

2. **Rising rate of unemployment:** scholars of development have established an unbroken link between poverty, unemployment and inequality. Unemployment is the inability to secure a reliable source of income despite the willingness and zeal to do so. This eventually culminates in the inability to meet basic needs which is an illustration of poverty. Aside poverty, the phenomenon of unemployment usually aggravates inequality thereby making the rich to become richer while the poor become poorer. In development discourse, close attention is usually paid to unemployment and inequality because each of the elements is capable of breeding higher poverty. Dantake (2012) explains that unemployment is a major factor influencing poverty in Nigeria and must be taken seriously in order to avert its dangerous consequences which could undermine the development of the country. The rate of unemployment in Nigeria is alarming as more youths are getting trapped in the menace. Nigeria's 33.3 percent unemployment rate is one of the highest globally as it rose five-fold within 10 years period (Ojekunle, 2021). Most of the unemployed are graduates of tertiary institutions. The tertiary institutions churn out graduates who continue to wallow on the streets without securing their dream job or at least a job that can cater for their basic needs. With an exponentially growing population, the unemployment situation gets worse due to untamed increase in the potential labour force. Not only has unemployment affected the rise in poverty rate, it has also affected the rise in criminal activities such as cybercrimes, advance fee fraud, organised crimes, among others (Dantake, 2012). Most of these crimes committed by the youths are motivated by the urge to secure a steady financial base to meet their daily needs and live the life of their dreams. The disconnection between expectations and reality breeds strain in the youths who find crime as an escape route. Therefore, the persistence of unemployment will invariably lead to the persistence of poverty.
3. **Too large informal sector:** Nigeria suffers from the burden of an over bloated informal sector which could produce enormous returns on investment if the authorities concerned intervened in the organisation and administration of those sectors. Many youths are engaged in the activities of the informal sector and have remained crude in their operations without much progress several years after entering into their respective business. For example, commercial motorcyclists (Okada) employs at least 10million riders who constitute a huge source of revenue in many States in Nigeria (Olanrewaju, 2020). Often times, the sector feels the

presence of government on negative ground such as imposing of ban on the riders while forgetting that there is more they can do to improve the business and generate revenue for the benefit of all. Yet, the sector suffers from government neglect leaving most revenue lost in the hands of hoodlums. Nigeria's informal sector accounts for over 80% of the labour force (Adenuga, 2021). This has led to loss of humongous revenue in the hands of illegal tax collectors. The informal sector which remains unregulated scarcely receive the attention of government and their progress and development remains slow and bleak. Most people in the informal sectors start poor and remain poor all through. Thus, the informal sector only swells but without much impact on the workers' lives.

4. **Exponential growth in population without a commensurate growth in social amenities:** Nigeria's population growth is usually likened to an elephant in a room. By 2050, it is projected that Nigeria would be the third most-populous country in the world with an estimated population of over 400 million (Elumoye, 2022). While the country's population is growing exponentially, its food and economic growth are arithmetically slower with slim chances of recovery. This has made the country to outgrow its poverty reduction success. In fact, even when there is a reduction in the in the country's poverty index, there is a corresponding increase in the number of poor people in the country. Thus, Nigeria's population is a ticking time bomb wait to explode into a myriad of social problems which includes higher and higher levels of generational poverty.
5. **Corruption in public offices:** the topic of corruption and national development has remained an age-long discourse. Yet, the phenomenon of corruption has remained has remained unrelenting on its onslaught on development. Poverty is Nigeria has been tied to many factors including corruption (Igwe, 2012). The phenomenon of corruption has worsened poverty in Nigeria and Africa at large. Corruption in this paper is conceptualised as the carting away of resources meant for public utility, growth and advancement. This act denies millions of potential beneficiaries the opportunity to benefit from the supposed intervention such resources would have offered. Poverty reduction interventions are not spared in the waves of corruption in Nigeria as direct and indirect cases of corruption have been fingered in many of such programmes and interventions. The NDDC is an example of a government parastatal borne out of the need to alleviate the sufferings and poverty bedeviling the Niger-Delta region. Unfortunately, the NDDC under several leaderships has been engulfed in corrupt practices such as embezzlement and mismanagement of public funds. During the 2020 Covid-19 lock-down, the management of the NDDC claimed to have used over N6bn as palliatives for its staff (Salau, 2021). Similarly, procurement fraud has become rampant in the public sector. Budgets and contract sums are inflated and kickbacks given to allies as gratification. These practices drain governments of resources which would have been utilised to bolster national development and fight poverty. Sadly, despite the act of contract inflation, most contracts still remain undone with contractors getting away scot-free (Umoru, 2022). The combined effect of the twin evil of mismanagement and contract fraud are perpetual poverty for the citizens.
6. **Poor disaster management strategies:** The spate of displacement in Nigeria is very high (Aliyu & Abubakar, 2022b). Presence of natural disasters such as flood, fire, drought, extreme whether events, etc. are common occurrence in Nigeria and have made the phenomenon of IDP camps common place in the country. This has placed pressure on the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) which is responsible for immediate response to disasters. While NEMA has been managing to cope with the high rates of artificial and natural disaster, it is overwhelmed by the rate of displacement. Survivors of disasters not only lose their investments

but become solely dependent on aids and relief materials provided by government and other donor organisations. These provisions in the IDP camps are grossly insufficient thereby leaving more IDP families hungry and at the mercy of exploitation (Aliyu & Abubakar, 2022b). Government must invest in disaster prevention than the usual business of reacting to disaster through provision of relief materials which scarcely suffices. Disaster preventions are cheaper and more effective. Without prevention strategies, people are devastated by these disaster and they lose their lives and livelihoods in the process.

7. **Poor planning of the poverty reduction interventions:** poor planning of poverty reduction programme has often times led to wastage of investment in such programmes. For example, rice farmer got loans under the Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria (RIFAN) CBN's anchor borrowers programme which targeted improvement in food security and also poverty alleviation. However, the investment of such funds in flood-prone States and locations led to a total waste of the resources as flooding washed away many farms. (Agbo et al., 2022). This increased poverty and hunger and food insecurity despite the investment in such programmes. Without synergy between government agencies in tackling the problem of poverty, these kind of wastages can hardly be avoided.
8. **Insecurity:** insecurity such as the Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, cattle rustling, kidnap for ransom, farmers-herders conflict alongside other artificial disasters have combined to make poverty situation far worse in Nigeria. Agricultural investments especially in the rural areas have been endangered due to the persistent attacks from criminals under the guise of kidnapers, cattle rustlers and bandits. Often times, farming activities are truncated due to activities of these criminals who maim and kill innocent farmers. In some rural suburbs, the rural dwellers are taxed by these criminal elements before they are allowed to plant and/or harvest crops (Ojoye, 2019). For those engaged in animal production, their assets (cattle and sheep) get rustled by the criminals who eliminate any resistance crossing their path. Today, it is common to receive multiple reports of bandits and rustlers attack in the rural areas of northern Nigeria. During their attacks, the criminals also kidnap some villages and in turn demand for huge ransom for their release. This has further drained the innocent rural dwellers of their resources thereby throwing many into poverties.
The foregoing development has caused mass exodus of rural dwellers who now settle in city centres in search of safety. Many of them are settled in the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps spread across the country. With this scenario, the poverty index has worsened as many have now become unable to cater for their basic needs without assistance from the government which is scarcely available. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is overwhelmed with the rate of displacement from both natural and artificial disasters which makes efficient response quite slow. In the end, many lives and valuables are lost with many surviving as indigent people needing to start afresh. Furthermore, this has resulted in food scarcity and insecurity with the little available food stock commanding very exorbitant prices.
9. **Poor standard of education:** the poor standard of education in Nigeria which in turn has led to the disruption of industrial harmony in the Nigerian academic environment is a worrisome development. Union at all levels of education have consistently disrupted academic calendars on the grounds of seeking better working conditions and improving the standard of education. Unfortunately, this is yet to yield the desired result. At the tertiary levels, industrial actions have become frequent. It is important to note that the public tertiary institutions are mostly attended by the average and poor citizens. In most cases, the consequences of the industrial actions affect mostly the poor who ultimately pay more for education. They incur more direct

and indirect costs and take more time to graduate. Along the line, most of them lose interest in pursuing higher education leading to a waste in the investment already made (Heitmann, 2021). For those who manage to continue, they return to school after long absence and are disconnected from the academic environment entirely. In the end, students graduate with disjointed knowledge and poor understanding of their area of expertise. This affects their employability and without employment, poverty is bound to continue.

10. **High cost of governance:** Nigeria's adoption of federalism which permits operating a bicameral legislature, and duplication of ministries departments and agencies (MDAs) has made the business of governance very expensive. Onyekpere (2014) observes that large numbers of ministers, large number of special advisers, abandonment of projects, violation of public procurement act, high cost of running the National Assembly, over staffed ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs), ghost-workers bloating the wage bill, and diversion of internally generated revenues, etc. have combined to make the business of governance very expensive in Nigeria. In the words of Onyekpere, government suffers from high recurrent expenditure and very low capital investment because these duplicated and redundant offices drain the country's purse through claims of unrealistic operating costs. Similarly, the expensive and lifestyles of the political class which is serviced using the State resources also adds to the concern. Aminu (2023) opines that the issues of poor fiscal discipline, lack of transparency and accountability have contributed heavily to the worsening condition of Nigeria's economy. Nigeria's poor transparency and accountability profile is typically exemplified in the utilisation of security votes by most States in the country. Therefore, the political class have made it practically impossible to address the issue of poverty squarely because the ruling class resists all attempts to cut down the cost of governance. In most cases, budgetary allocations to public offices are prioritised before issues of public interest. Hence, the political class live in affluence while the citizens continue to wallow in abject poverty.
11. **Religious affiliations:** Nigeria is recognised as a very religious country even in the international arena. Islam and Christianity are dominant religions in the country with significant majorities in the northern and southern regions respectively (Alubo, 2016 p.254). The uptake of certain poverty reduction interventions are usually affected by these religious affiliations. Religious tenets affect the acceptance or otherwise of interventions proposed for poverty reduction. Hence, programmes which conflict with religious doctrines suffer widespread rejection. For example, loans which attract interest, no matter how meagre, are rejected by majority of Muslims. The religion of Islam forbids giving and taking of interest (Ribah) on money loans by an individual. This affected some of the poverty reduction interventions such as CBN's AGMEIS interventions which had to be reviewed to enable Muslims predominantly in the Northern region to access such facilities (Obarayese, 2020). While poverty is known to be widespread in Northern Nigeria, the people were "comfortable" with poverty than taking interest-based loans. As such, the influence of religion can never be over emphasised given the role it plays in the Nigerian society.

Recommendations

To effectively reduce poverty in Nigeria, the following policy recommendations are proffered:

- i. Poverty reduction programmes should only be initiated after carefully conducting a needs assessment. Follow-up policies should be evidence-based and should adopt the bottom-top

- approach devoid of political undertones. All programmes should have realistic targets and indicators which should be monitored for progress.
- ii. The challenge of insecurity which has continued to reverse the gains in poverty alleviation must be addressed. Particularly, the surge in rural banditry and kidnapping must be decimated. Without addressing the scourge of insecurity, the impact of the poverty reduction programmes would hardly be felt because more and more people become displaced thereby making the aid-dependent. Criminals who are arrested should be prosecuted publicly to serve as deterrence to other criminals.
 - iii. Unemployment remains a major factor impacting poverty. Therefore, conscious efforts must be invested in creating employment opportunities for the teeming population. Employment opportunities can be availed the youths through skills acquisition in areas of technological expertise, vocational skills, agricultural entrepreneurship, and crafts science. This would reduce the heavy reliance of youths on white-collar jobs which have become grossly inadequate to address the problem of unemployment.
 - iv. For poverty reduction to be achieved, the education standard at all levels cannot be compromised. The learning environment and welfare of the teachers must be taken seriously in order to achieve the desired standard of education. With a strong education system, the capacity of the people will be enhanced and poverty reduction initiatives can easily impact them for a better results.
 - v. Disasters management strategies must be improved upon. The strategies should address issues of early warnings and timely evacuation of vulnerable people. This would reduce the pressure of displaced people on the government and also the possible hardship to be faced by the people.
 - vi. The cost of governance must be checked to avoid wastage of public funds. This will free-up resources to pursue poverty reduction programmes and other people-oriented programmes. Again, corruption in public offices must be effectively dealt with. There should be appropriate public sanctions meted out on public officers who squander and embezzle State resources in order to serve as deterrence to others nurturing similar tendencies. Therefore, strong institutions to execute this mandate must be established to replace the political approach of torturing political opponents in the guise of fighting corruption.
 - vii. Religious bodies, community-based organisations (CBOs) and other stakeholders should be integrated in poverty reduction programmes in order to gain higher acceptance from the people. The stakeholders should engage in mass sensitisation of people at the grass root who may have access to reliable information or may not be educated enough to understand the intent of government on policies of government. This will make poverty reduction programmes to be people-centred and would yield the desired result.

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