



GOVERNMENT POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF THE PEOPLE OF IMO STATE

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Abstract

This study has examined government poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria and economic empowerment of the people of Imo State. The study was informed to identify the impact of the government poverty reduction programmes in achieving sustainable development in Nigeria in general and Imo State in particular. The work used survey research design, and questionnaire served as the instrument of data collection. The data collected were presented in tables and analyzed using simple percentage and chi-square. The study discovered that inadequate funding does not significantly affect poverty alleviation programmes in Imo State, there is no significant relationship between corruption and poverty alleviation programme in Imo State, and lack of

proper coordination /poor design does not significantly affect poverty alleviation programmes in Imo State. Therefore we conclude that the Nigerian government should involve the people and avoid corruption in its poverty

Key Words:

Government Poverty
Alleviation
Programmer,
Economic
Empowerment,
Inadequate Funding,
Corruption, Lack of
Proper
Coordination, Poor
Design.

alleviation programmes. It was recommended that government should effectively fund poverty alleviation programmes so as to achieve economic empowerment of the people.

Introduction

Every country in some stage of its development has encountered some challenges. In the developing countries like Nigeria, one of such challenges hindering economic development is poverty. Poverty has been a serious challenge to government in Nigeria. The rate of poverty is very high in Nigeria because it is one of the common features of third world countries. According to Alugbuo and Akpanabia (2013), it is worrisome that Nigeria as a nation – state is today neck – deep in poverty both in material, spiritual, moral and infrastructural dimensions. In Nigeria context, persons or families with low income, irregular salary and whose means of livelihood stem mainly from peasant farming, petty trading, hawking, menial jobs, migrant fishing and begging are judged to be poor. People are said to be poor when they lack the necessities of life such as food, clothing and shelter. They are poor as they lack the resources to obtain an average worth of diet, housing, clothing and security and other social amenities within the average group (Ugwu, 2013).

To him, poverty is lack of basic necessities of life. Here, the majority of Nigerians are so poor that they cannot feed well, live in good houses or obtain good and quality education and medical attention. One of the basic factors contributing to poverty is unemployment.

In that direction, Onah (2008) opined that the term unemployment could be used relation to any of the factors of production which is idle and not being utilized for production. Here, with reference to labour, there is unemployment if it is not possible to find job for all citizens who are eligible and able and willing to work. In this case, when poverty alleviation programmes are well implemented, it will lead to employment creation/employment of the people; hence drastic poverty reduction will be achieved. Considering the effects of poverty which includes lack and deprivation in the basic necessities of life etc (and in a bid to overcome poverty and reduce unemployment), the Nigerian government initiated different policies and programmes between 1986 and 2004 to alleviate it. According to Idowu, Duruji and Bankole (2011), these programmes include: Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), Better Life programme (BLP), Directorate of Employment (NDG), People bank of Nigeria (PBN), Community Bank (CB), Family Support programme (FSP), Family economic Advancement programme (FEAp), Poverty eradication Programme (PEP), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) whose aim were to ameliorate the suffering of the people by providing them employment opportunities and access to credit facilities to enable them establish their own businesses.

Also, the government of Goodluck Jonathan administration implemented the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SUREP) as a poverty alleviation programme in Nigeria. At present, the Buhari administration since 2016 till date has started the implementation of its own poverty alleviation programmed named N-power. The N-power programme covers the area of agriculture, teaching and information technology. The way and manner these programmes achieve their objectives is therefore the focus of this study. Not only that, the government at state and local government levels have introduced different poverty alleviation programmes. In Imo State for example, the government of Achike Udenwa (1999 – 2007) and the government of Ikedi Ohakim (2007 – 2011) adopted different poverty alleviation programmes in Imo State. The government of Owelle Rochas Okorochoa (2011-2019) also adopted many poverty alleviation programme so as to enhance economic empowerment in Imo State. These include youth must work programme, ikuola nkwu, Community Government Council (CGC) etc. The government of Emeka Ihedioha started youths and women empowerment poverty reduction strategy in 2019 before the present government of Hope Uzodinma which has started the implementation of shared prosperity poverty reduction approach. The aim of the above poverty alleviation programmes in the state is to enhance economic empowerment of the people and achieve sustainable development.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

All the poverty alleviation programmes in Imo State in particular and Nigeria in general have not been successful due to inadequate funding, corruption, lack of proper coordination and commitments, poor design and elevation of programmes etc; hence the programmes have not impacted positively on economic empowerment of the people. Since economic empowerment is the major concern of poverty alleviation strategies, it means that the Imo State government should be more pragmatic in its policy implementation on poverty alleviation. Therefore, whether these

above stated poverty alleviation programmes and policies in Imo State have succeeded in both reducing poverty or not is mute point. But, the present economic reality reveals that poverty rate is still very high in Imo State depending on how we look at it. Therefore, this study focuses on government poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria and economic empowerment of the people of Imo state.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study focused on government poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria and economic empowerment of the people of Imo State. The specific objectives are to:

1. identify the extent inadequate funding affects poverty alleviation programmes in Imo State.
2. determine the relationship between corruption and poverty alleviation programme in Imo State.
3. find out the extent lack of proper coordination /poor design significantly affect poverty alleviation programmes in Imo State.

RESEARCH QUESTION

In line with the above objectives, the following research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent does inadequate funding affects poverty alleviation programmes in Imo State?
2. What is the relationship between corruption and poverty alleviation programme in Imo State?
3. To what extent does lack of proper coordination/poor design significantly affect poverty alleviation programmes in Imo State?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

In view of our research question and objectives, the following hypotheses guided the study:

1. Inadequate funding does not significantly affect poverty alleviation programmes in Imo State.
2. There is no significant relationship between corruption and poverty alleviation programmes in Imo State.
3. Lack of proper coordination/poor design does not significantly affect poverty alleviation programmes in Imo State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Poverty

Poverty can be seen as a state where one is incapable of providing himself with the basic needs of life. According to Onah (2018), poverty is lack of means of satisfying a person's basic needs for nutrition, housing, clothing and other essentials of life. According to Canogranian, Ngwafon and Thomas (2017), basic needs include: food, water, shelter, health services and learning to works. Poverty is also viewed as failure to meet the basic requirements of a decent life of a person/group of people. Poverty is marred in health, education and nutrition indicators that remain too low (Alugbuo & Akpanabia, 2013). By these definitions, it implies that poverty is a multidimensional social phenomenon. It does not result from the lack of one thing alone, but from many interlocking

factors. In other words, poverty is lack of multiple resources that lead to hunger and physical deprivation. Some basic factors can bring about poverty in our society. Sometimes, poverty may either be inherited or acquired. It is inherited, if the children of a poor parent cannot be trained for needed skill and knowledge in a certain jobs which may be available for the employment of some of the unemployed. This can lead to chronic poverty of the affected unemployed persons do not have alternative ways of engaging themselves. Sen (2010) opined that age may account for the poverty profiles in terms of retirement. To him, poverty is basically of two different forms namely mental poverty and material poverty.

Mental poverty is of the mind and it deals with the inability of the individual victim to independently articulate good thoughts without relying on another. The individual is devoid of creative thoughts, lacks originality in doing things and can hardly make any break-through. He or she becomes just a merely informed person. It is the worse form of poverty since it is the mind that controls the body. Within the mental sphere, lies the spiritual and moral aspect of poverty. If one is a destitute mentally, it is likely to affect his spiritual and moral aspects of life. Material possessions; it is often due to the inability of the mind to coordinate the activities of the body to a necessary end. Material poverty is quickly noticed in one's dresses, housing, means of transportation and domestic utensil (Alugbuo & Apanabia, 2013). In this case, Ochienta (2014) opined that social exclusion in all forms which are low or no access to water, shelter, health services, transportation, education, electricity should be seen as equally good indicators or poverty. Apart from this, the feeling of social exclusion and the psychological burden of unfulfilment are also crucial in defining poverty. Actually, Badjan-Young (2016) sees the social exclusion accompanying poverty as constituting both a violation of human dignity and threat to life itself.

The Nature of Poverty

Poverty is not an easy concept to define. As a result, a range of definitions exist, influenced by different disciplinary approaches and ideologies (Bankole, 2011). According to the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP), poverty is inherent deprivation of lives. It is not only the lack of necessities of material well-being, but denial of opportunities for having a tolerable life. Poverty is the result of economic, political, social and environmental processes that interact with and frequently reinforce one another in ways that exacerbate the deprivation in which poor people live. In general terms, poverty is considered from two broad perspectives: relative poverty and absolute poverty. Relative poverty is associated with experiencing deviational outcomes from expectations and irrelevant comparison of one's material position with others, mostly peer and age groups. Absolute poverty is a misery linked to an insufficient resource base, lack of income, narrow margin, high risk of failure, hunger, disease etc. Such other personal cum domestic issues like indebtedness, dependence, powerlessness and physical weakness or disadvantages are often seen as crucial in poverty definition (Ochienta, 2014). It is quite important here to state that poverty despite its complexity is a social fact that can be easily perceived. The poor are those who somehow lack the things the rich have and who may not meet the basic needs of life or barely manage to. This is a definition based on the ability of groups and individuals to meet up their basic necessities in a particular socio-cultural milieu.

Poverty, especially from the realities of the developing world, is defined usually in terms of quality of life that is actually available to a people at any time. There is the penchant of orthodox economics to make an academic distinction between relative and absolute poverty. This distinction

which has some ethnocentric basis is meant to draw attention to the two different cases of self-inflicted penury or relative poverty and mass impoverishment of a group. The utility of this distinction in the study of poverty in the developing world, in spite of the bogus statistics imbued in some economic studies utilizing this distinction is largely secondary (Bankole, 2011). Chambers (2013) and Dava (2013) have poignantly highlighted issues worthy of consideration in efforts at examining urban poverty. According to them, three main indicators are imperative. These are:

- a. Higher and more reliable incomes and better consumption. A continuation of, but improved emphasis on the economic issues of income and consumption.
- b. A consideration of assets, in relation to liabilities.
- c. Attention to issues of security, independence and self-respect.

In other words, these three factors are paramount to a conceptualization of poverty in general. Higher and more reliable income and better consumption may indicate an escape from poverty, a positive balance between assets and liabilities and a feeling of security, independence and self-respect or worth perspective, the last two dimensions are very important. This is because a burgeoning liability base, a loss of self respect and independence will most likely stifle efforts and determination to fight poverty on the part of the individual. There is obviously no gainsaying the fact that poverty alleviation will succeed to the extent in such programmes (Ugwu, 2013). Food poverty is especially crucial when we realize that the most fundamental need of man is food and the most important economic motive for working is to earn income for livelihood. To this end, income as an economic concept acquires concreteness in the form of the value it commands vis-à-vis the acquisition of food and other necessities. Hence, the definition of poverty along income lines is guided by the quantity and quality of food such income can command.

Therefore, Eitzen and Zinn (2019) see poverty as arising in a situation where people spend more than one-third of their incomes on food. Apart from this, there is an established relationship between malnutrition and poverty as well as the fact that food poverty or the inability to feed well is the most excruciating aspect of deprivation (Rakesh, 2011; Reutlinger, 2016; Ojba, 2010). This sort of reasoning can be seen as arising largely from and informing the ILO (2017) prescription of two crucial elements of the basic needs indicator. According to ILO, those who cannot meet up their basic needs can be seen as poor. The two elements are certain minimum requirements of a family for private consumption, adequate food, shelter, clothing, household equipment and furniture and essential services provided for the entire community by the government and or its agencies. For the purpose of this book, poverty is also defined by a sense of helplessness, dependence and lack of opportunities, self-confidence and self-respect on the part of the poor. Indeed, the poor themselves see powerlessness and noiselessness as key aspects of their poverty.

Factors Contributing to Poverty

Many social scholars including Adebayo (2013), Olubukola (2013), Alanana (2013), Echebiri (2015), Ayinde (2018), Morphy (2018), Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010), Njoku and Ihugba (2011), Okafor (2011) have identified several causes of unemployment in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. We are going to discuss them in this study.

1. **Unemployment:** Unemployment is a major factor contributing to poverty in Imo State. There is a strong correlation between unemployment and poverty. When people are unemployed, their source of livelihood depletes over time. The cost of living becomes high

and the standard of living goes down. There are many people in Imo State who lack the opportunity of being employed. The formal unemployment rate in Nigeria as estimated by the World Bank in 2007 was 4.9 percent and Nigeria ranked 61st across the world's countries. Many graduates in Imo State wander the streets without anything reasonable to do for a living. The government is capable but unwilling to provide jobs for them. Employment in Nigeria is usually not based on merit but depends on how connected you are with people that have power. This leaves many highly qualified people in poverty as seemingly no one cares to know what they are capable of achieving. These people are missing out on the income they would have gotten if they were employed. The number of quality jobs in the economy is low and many government resources are misallocated. Unemployment-induced poverty tends to increase the crime rate and violence in the country. Most unemployed youths resort to crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, internet fraud and other forms of fraudulent activities. The reservation wage they get from these activities is typically barely enough to take care of their basic necessities.

2. **Corruption:** Transparency International defines corruption as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain”. This has become a common act in Imo State in particular and Nigeria in general, and it has destabilized the political system drastically. Government funds are being misappropriated on a daily basis by the leaders, who only put the interest of their family and friends at heart while ignoring the masses. The corruption has eaten so deeply into the government and economy that everyone seems to be blinded by it. Corruption has almost become an accepted way of life in Nigeria (Ucha, 2010). In Imo State, the government's income is generated mostly from federal allocation. This income, instead of being used for developmental purposes, is then circulated among the political office holders and their families, leaving the rest of the people to wallow in poverty. Political leaders practically ignore the affairs and wellbeing of their people who elected them into office. They mismanage and embezzle funds. There are several issues involved with bad governance in Imo State, use of wrong policies, adaptation to wrong policies and implementation of those wrong policies. In any case, it is clear that Imo State corruption has increased poverty and inequality as well as contributed to high crime rates.
3. **Non-diversification of the economy - oil over-dependency:** While Nigeria's poverty has been identified to be caused by many factors, Nigeria's non-diversification of the economy can be seen as a major factor. Before 1970, the Nigerian economy was driven by the agricultural sector. The oil sector which only constituted 1 percent of the country's export revenue in 1958 rose to 97 percent by 1984 and has since then not gone below 90 percent. In 2008, the oil and gas sector constituted about 97.5 percent of their export revenues, 81 percent of government revenues and about 17 percent of GDP. In Nigeria, those in power have practically ignored other sources of income, and today, Nigeria depends heavily on exporting oil. This dependency on natural resources is often referred to as “Dutch disease”, whereby natural resources make a country less competitive. Excluding the few working in the oil sector, the majority of the people have been impoverished as their products have become irrelevant. The agricultural sector, which was their major means of income before the discovery of oil, is considered almost useless. Beyond the Dutch disease, Nigeria's abundance of a natural resource has led to what is known as a resource curse, which is reflected in the “Niger Delta Crisis (reflecting the

region of the country where most of the oil is coming from). The people in this region are fighting for resource control as they claim the government is not fulfilling their promise of giving them the large part of the, oil revenues. The wealth from natural resources in Nigeria is supposed to be working with the derivation policy, but this policy is not functional in any way, as the oil-producing states are still impoverished and this policy is supposed to work in a way such that these states with these natural resources should be able to get a large part of the country's revenue as they contribute a lot to the national wealth (Ucha, 2010).

4. **Inequality:** Inequality implies a concentration of a distribution, whether one is considering income, consumption or some other welfare indicators or attributes (Oyekale & Adeoti, 2017). There was an increase in income disparity after the economic growth which Nigeria experienced between 1965-1975, and this income inequality has increased the dimension of poverty in the country (Oluwatayo, 2018). The income inequality between the people in rural and urban areas in Nigeria is remarkably high, as those who live in the rural areas base all their income on agriculture which is today not a thriving sector in Nigeria as oil has taken over the economy. They do not invest their money to acquire skills as people in the urban areas would and this makes them more vulnerable to poverty and leads to some social and economic problems such as violence, corruption and so on (Oluwatayo, 2018).
5. **Laziness:** Laziness is a common disease which is virtually suffered by many Imo State today, especially those from wealthy households. Everyone wants to be comfortable but they are not ready to work towards it. This often leads to greed where people will do whatever they can to keep the family wealth for themselves. In most families, everyone depends on the bread winner, who works so much to keep the family going and when he dies the family is likely to become poor because of mismanagement of funds. In most Nigerian families, the death of the bread winner means the death of the whole family fortunes; because everyone was depending on him/her to provide everything.
6. **Poor education system:** Education can play a major role in reducing poverty. According to the World Bank, education is central to development. It promotes economic growth, national productivity and innovation, and values of democracy and social cohesion. In Imo State, the population with no education account for most of the poor. The education system in Imo State can be regarded as a failure compared to other countries in the world. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "everyone has the right to an education." This right to education has been denied to many Nigerians, of which many of them can be considered invisible to the society now. This deprivation of education applies more to females than males, because they are considered the inferior sex. Hence educating them is seen as unnecessary as they are expected to marry as early as possible. It is a fact that the Nigerian educational curriculum is more theoretical than practical. It has been argued that the average Nigerian graduate does not possess the skills needed by the employers of labour for a formal employment and could therefore be said to be unemployable. According to Dabalen, Oni and Adekola (2010), Employers complain that graduates are poorly prepared for work. They believe that academic standards have fallen considerably over the past decade and that a university degree is no longer a guarantee of communication skills or technical competence. As a result, university graduates are commonly viewed as "half baked". This is because of corruption

in our system and lack of effective funding of our educational institutions. Olubukola (2013). He opined that the country's higher educational institutions turn out thousands of liberal arts graduates who are not in higher demand in the labour market. Also, there is a rapid expansion of the educational system which leads to increase in the supply of educated manpower above the corresponding demand for them. This contributes to the problem of the youth unemployment in Nigeria.

7. **Lack of patriotism:** In Imo State, most people are patriotic to their ethnic and tribal group, and not to the country. This is the major cause of corruption, ethnocentrism, favouritism and segregation which have all helped to increase the unemployment rate. For instance, many Nigerian leaders open industry and invest their money abroad and still come to the media and beg for foreign investors to come to Nigeria and invest. This is a major cause of unemployment and poverty; hence lack of patriotism has also led to slow economic growth.
8. **Socio-political and religious crisis in the country:** Nigeria has a history of crisis. Such crisis includes the Nigeria civil war, many religious crises and many electoral crises. The present crisis of insurgency (Boko Haram), kidnapping and militancy are all contributing to the unemployment situation in the country. Some people in the southern Nigeria today that are unemployed left the north east where they work or do business because of the terrorist activities of the insurgency. Many people are unemployed today in the South-East and South-South because many industries have closed down and new industries do not want to come in because of the issue of kidnapping and militancy. Hence no economic activity can thrive in an unsecured environment.
9. **Rapid rural-urban migration:** The rate at which young people move from the rural areas to the urban centers in Imo State in search of greener pastures is alarming. Many of these youths are fleeing from the poverty in the rural areas. This can be explained in the light of the push-pull factors. The push factors include the pressure resulting from man-land ratio in the rural areas and the existence of serious underemployment arising from the seasonal cycle of climate (Okafor, 2011). This is further compounded by the gross lack of infrastructural facilities in the rural areas, which makes the standard of living in the rural areas unattractive. Since the industries and social amenities are concentrated in the urban areas, youths migrate into the urban areas to seek employment in the industries and ministries, as well as enjoy the comfort which the social amenities offer. For Sarr (2010), youth migrants in Africa are three times more in number than other migrants. He argues that the urbanization rate of the youth was 32 percent in 1990, compared to less than 25 percent for the non-youth population. He estimated that by the end of the year 2010, over 50 percent of the youths in Africa will be residing in the urban areas where job opportunities are limited to a few modern sectors and establishments (Adebayo, 2013).
10. **Rapid population growth:** Nigeria has continued to experience high rate of population growth. The increasing population growth has produced an overwhelming increase in the youth population thereby resulting in an attendant increase in the size of the working age population. With the 2006 population census in Nigeria, the nation's population was estimated to be 140,431,790 and projection for the future indicates that the population could be over 180 million by the year 2020, given an annual rate of 3.2 percent (National Population Commission and ICE Macro, 2009). This made Nigeria the most populous

nation in Africa. The growth in population rate has resulted in rapid growth of the labour force which is far higher than the rate of jobs supply.

11. **Corruption:** High level of corruption in Imo State has robbed the country of developing a vibrant economic base in spite of her abundant natural resources. Massive corruption is perpetuated in every sector and has permeated the entire social structure of Imo State. Funds meant for development projects which could have generated employment have been misappropriated, diverted, or embezzled and stashed away in foreign banks. Endemic corruption has robbed the country of the chance of using more than \$500 billion dollars estimated revenue from the sale of oil in the last 50 years to develop a vibrant economy that would have created jobs for the youths in the various sectors of economy (Okafor, 2015).

Issues in Economic Empowerment of the People

The goal of the government is to provide development, sustainable development, so as to enhance economic empowerment of the people . When the government provides security of lives and properties, provide enabling environment for business, employee citizens in public sector, and make positive economic policies, it means economic empowerment of the people. This will lead to poverty reduction, emplacement creation and economic growth. Low economic growth is manifested in low economic activity and investment rates, which do not generate enough additional employment. The combination of both low economic activity and high population growth results in a scarcity of jobs, meaning that hiring is based more on experience and education, the very assets young people are struggling to acquire (Olubukola, 2013). This is because of high level of corruption, lack of proper orientation, mismanagement and other internal crisis. Also, such policies as open door policy (ODP) and the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) that ushered in liberalization, deregulation and the devaluation program of the domestic currency, made it possible that many of the teething domestic firms in the country collapsed.

In Nigeria today, many school leavers (from secondary and higher institutions) in Nigeria suffer from certificate frenzy and prepare their minds to work for government and other small/big private sector organizations in Nigeria. There is an enduring societal biased attitude against technical and vocational education. A large number of job seekers lack practical skills that could enhance self - employment. That is why rather than providing jobs for others, the graduate unemployed persons keep depending on the government and non-vibrant private sector for job offers (Bello, 2003). This is a very big problem; hence entrepreneurship skill is needed to reduce the unemployment rate (Ugwu, 2013). When Nigerian people were fully engaged in palm oil, cocoa, groundnut and many other agricultural products, unemployment was not known. It is a fact that the agricultural sector has been the leading provider of employment in Nigeria especially in the sixties and in the seventies when the sector provided employment for more than 60 percent of the Nigerian population. However, in the wake of oil discovery, the attention on this anchor of the economy was gradually drawn away to the oil sector where employment capacity is very low. The resulting effect is the large number of job seekers who have no place in the oil industry. Even with the expansion of the industry, unemployment has continued to grow at an alarming rate. Not only that, the neglect of the rural areas (based on low level of infrastructure) has led to rural-urban migration and has increased the rate of unemployment. Rural-urban migration is usually explained in terms of push-pull factors.

The push factors include the pressure resulting from man-land ratio in the rural areas and the existence of serious underemployment arising from the seasonal cycle of climate (Okafor, 2011). The factors are further exacerbated in Nigeria by the lack of infrastructural facilities, which makes the rural life unattractive. Youths move to urban areas with the probability of securing lucrative employment in the industries, hence there is the concentration of social amenities in the urban centers. Empirical studies have revealed that there is no vibrant manufacturing sector which has the capacity to absorb unemployed youths in Nigeria. There are over 800 collapsed industries in Nigeria and over 37 factories closed shops in 2009. About half of the remaining operating firms have been classified as “ailing,” a situation that poses a great threat to the survival of manufacturing in the country. The capacity of the manufacturing sector to absorb youths into its workforce has been hampered by the continuous decline in the sector. In 2009, over 837 factories have collapsed and closed shops (Okafor, 2011).

Some Recent Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Nigeria in General and Imo State in Particular

With the birth of democracy and inauguration of Nigeria’s fourth republic in 1999, it was estimated that about 70% of Nigerians lived in poverty (Ogwumike, 2001). The Poverty Alleviation Program (PAP) came on board as an interim antipoverty measure, both at the state and federal level.

1. **Poverty Alleviation Program (PAP):** As observed by Chukwuemeka (2019), the program was targeted at correcting the deficiencies of the past efforts of alleviating poverty through the objective of providing direct jobs to 200,000 unemployed people Obadan (2011). Despite the introduction of the Poverty Alleviation Program, poverty incidence in Nigeria remained perpetually high. Following the ineffectiveness of the program, the government came up with the National Poverty Eradication Program (NAPEP) in 2001 (Omotola, 2018). This poverty alleviation programmes was also implemented in Imo State during the Achike Udenwa administration. During this period, 5,000 Imo State citizens benefited in employer.
2. **The National Poverty Eradication Program (NAPEP):** As revealed in the approved blueprint for the establishment of (NAPEP), the program will serve as a central coordination point for all anti-poverty efforts from the local government level to the national level by which schemes would be executed with the sole purpose of eradicating absolute poverty. This is the only government embarking on eradication; a shift from the traditional concept of alleviation. According to Elumilade, Asaolu and Adereti (2016), NAPEP has been structured to integrate four sectoral schemes which include:
 - ❖ Youth empowerment Scheme (YES)
 - ❖ Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS)
 - ❖ Social Welfare Service Scheme (SOWESS) and
 - ❖ Natural Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS).

On the whole, these schemes were designed to spearhead government’s ambitious program of eradicating absolute poverty with a take-off grant of N6 billion approved for it in 2001. The difference between NAPEP and past poverty reduction agencies is that it is not a sector project implementation agency but a coordination facility that ensures that the core poverty eradication Ministries were effective. It would only intervene when necessary, under its secondary mandate which gives it the right to provide complementary assistance to the implementing ministries and parastatals nationwide. Although NAPEP appears to be well crafted, but the prevalence of poverty in Nigeria and the various dimensions it has taken is on the increase. It’s a fact that about 12,000 Imo State people benefited from Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), Rural Infrastructure

Development Scheme (RIDS), Social Welfare Service Scheme (SOWESS) and Natural Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS) (Ucha, 2010). However, the program was criticized for high level of corruption, low level of implementation especially for rural poor people in Imo State.

3. **The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS):** Also worth mentioning is the National Economic empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) described as a medium term strategy. The implementation of NEEDS rests on four major strategies. First, it aims at reforming government and institutions by fighting corruption, ensuring transparency and promoting rule of law and strict enforcement of contracts. Another strategy is to grow the private sector as the engine of growth and wealth creation, employment generation and poverty reduction. Third, it seeks to implement a social charter with emphasis on people's welfare, health, education, employment, poverty reduction, empowerment, security, and participation. The fourth key strategy is value reorientation (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004:4; Omotola, 2018:511; Chukwuemeka, 2019:407). NEEDS is a national framework of action, which has its equivalent at the state and local government levels as State Economic empowerment and Development Strategies (SEEDS) and Local Economic empowerment and Development Strategies (LEEDS) respectively (AFPODEV, 2016). The implementation also stresses collaboration and coordination between the federal and state governments, donor agencies, the private sector, civil society, NGOs and other stakeholders (Action Aid Nigeria, 2009:7). As a home-grown strategy, NEEDS has been described as the Nigerian version of the MDGs (AFPODEV, 2006). This poverty alleviation programme in Imo State was implemented in the 27 local government areas of Imo State. It was estimated that rural women of Imo State especially those from urban LGAs benefited from this poverty program.
4. **The Seven-Point Agenda:** The civilian administration that started in 2007 under the leadership of late President Umar Musa Yar'Adua proposed a Seven-Point Agenda of development. The agenda later became the policy thrust of the administration. The main objectives and principles of the agenda include improving the general well-being of Nigerians and making the country become one of the biggest economies in the world by the year 2020. The agenda has critical infrastructure as the first key area of focus. This includes power, transportation, national gas distribution and telecommunication. The second focus is to address the existing issues in the Niger Delta. Food Security constitutes the third priority area. The fourth area is human capital development and the land tenure reform is the fifth key area. The sixth key area is national security while the seventh area focuses on poverty alleviation and wealth creation. Although the Seven-Point Agenda appears to have a broad coverage to address the various development challenges facing the country, it has been widely criticized by development experts. The wide ambit of the program may not allow for proper monitoring and effective implementation. Again resource constraints may hamper the capacity of the government to productively address the wide areas covered by the program (Oshewolo, 2010b). Nevertheless, as laudable as these programs appear, poverty still remains endemic and pervasive in Nigeria. What then are the challenges? According to Garba (2016), all the poverty alleviation initiatives in Nigeria since independence have yielded very little fruit. He claims that the programs were mostly not designed to alleviate poverty; they lacked clearly defined policy framework with proper guidelines for poverty alleviation; they suffer from political instability, interference, policy and macroeconomic dislocations; and are riddled with corruption, political deception, outright kleptomania and distasteful looting. It must also be stated that lack of continuity and shift in approach trailed poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria. Each subsequent administration came with a different idea or no idea at all. Poverty reduction programs became more 'regime specific' because there was hardly any

continuity with those initiated by previous governments. The challenges above have made government's policies to be largely unproductive. Imo State is not left out in the implementation of the 7 point agenda, but unfortunately, the program did not last because of the dismiss of former President Yaradua.

5. **Transformation Agenda and Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P):** The Transformation Agenda of the Jonathan administration (2011-2015) drew its inspiration from the seven-point agenda and was targeted at the following: job creation, public expenditure management, foreign policy and economic diplomacy, human capital development policies, programmes and projects, infrastructure policies, programmes and projects, and enablers for sustainable growth and development (Ogujiuba, 2014). The Jonathan administration's Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) were a subset of the Transformation Agenda and like NEEDS was designed as a 3 to 4 year programme (Ogujiuba, 2014). Essentially, SURE-P was introduced in 2012 following the uproar that trailed the upward review of the pump price of petrol from N65 to N97 in January 2012. The ultimate goal was to reduce unemployment among graduates and stimulate economic growth, as part of prior transformation agenda of the current administration, while also enhancing opportunities towards the attainment of Vision 2020 (Information Nigeria, 2012; Omafume, 2014). Every local government of Imo State in particular benefited from this poverty alleviation program. It was stated that the Imo State people benefited very effectively from the transformation agenda. Statistically speaking, more than 50,000 people from Imo State benefited from the programmes through their various packages. Amongst this 50,000, only 12,800 got direct benefits, other benefited indirectly.
6. **N-power and agricultural transformation policy:** At present, the Buhari administration since 2016 till this 2018 has started the implementation of its own poverty alleviation programmed named N-power. The N-power programme covers the area of agriculture, teaching and information technology. The way and manner these programmes achieve their objectives is therefore the focus of this study. Not only that, the government at state and local government levels have introduced different poverty alleviation programmes. Also, the Buhari administration is already encouraging agricultural transformation especially rice and other agricultural products so as to reduce poverty and stop/reduce importation in the Nigerian system. This poverty alleviation programme is taking place in all part of Nigeria and Imo State people are not left behind. It has been estimated that up to 58 people from Imo State has benefited from N-power program and there are many other indirect benefits.
7. **Specific poverty alleviation programmes in Imo State:** There has been numerous poverty alleviation programmes in Imo State in recent time. Apart from the implementation of federal government poverty alleviation programmes at Imo State level, various governors of Imo State from 1999 till date have introduced different poverty alleviation programmes. Governor Achike Udenwa of Imo State (1999 – 2007) introduced Rural Agricultural Empowerment (RAE) in Imo State through which the governor empowered people for crop production, animal husbandry and other forms agricultural occupation. The program was a successful during its introduction stage of 2002, but was highly criticized for corruption towards 2006/2007. Chief Ikedi Ohakim (2007 – 2011) also introduced some poverty alleviation programmes which include rural women empowerment and ten thousand job. Through the rural women empowerment, numerous Imo women were empowered for different businesses. Not only that, the ten thousand job of Ohakim administration is a poverty alleviation initiative which was used to offer employment to Imo people from 27 LGAs. The rural women initiative was criticized for corruption; however, the ten thousand was relatively a success. The government of Owelle Rochas

Okorocha (2011-2019) also adopted many poverty alleviation programme so as to enhance economic empowerment in Imo State. These include youth must work programme, ikuola nkwu, Community Government Council (CGC) etc. The government of Emeka Ihedioha started youths and women empowerment poverty reduction strategy in 2019 before the present government of Hope Uzodinma, which has started the implementation of shared prosperity poverty reduction approach. The aim of the above poverty alleviation programmes in the state is to enhance economic empowerment of the people and achieve sustainable development.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Anomie Theory

The anomie was propounded by Durkheim and Merton in 1969. Durkheim opted that the source of anomie is the collapse of the social structure caused by rapid social change (Wosu, 2013). Here, anomie is the theory that focused on the issue of abnormalities in the society. This means that the high level of abnormalities in the Nigerian society and other societies at large is based on the abnormal structure in existence. Here, poverty cannot reduce when poverty alleviation programmes are not implemented as it should be, when most of the beneficiaries of poverty alleviation programmes are not the actual target group, when government and its institution promote high level of corruption in the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes. All the above show high level of anomie/abnormality which are caused by ineffective and inactive social structure. The social structure normally regulates the infinite human drives. If the social structure collapses, these drives are no longer regulated. Thus, valid regulation and norms of behavior lose their function which eventually leads to deviant behavior in one form or another. While Morton asserted that it is not the breakdown of the social structure that is responsible for anomie but that anomie is an inherent part of a society itself.

Anomie emerges when the culture of a society prescribes specific goals to the majority of his members, but the social structures do not provide the legitimate means to achieve these goals to a portion of them. Hence, anomie results from the discrepancy between goals and means. Therefore, deviant behavior or action (behavior that is considered as illegitimate by the respective society) is caused by social pressure as people are expected to reach certain goals but do not have the means to do so. The predisposition to anomie depends on a person's specific position in a particular society - defined by age, sex, ethnicity, religion etc. Anomie can occur on different systemic levels (i.e. in different subsystems to which an individual belongs) and can also be of varying degrees. This theory was employed because if the system of anomie must stop (the problem of poverty, unemployment and social vices) in Nigeria, the government which is the major social structure instituted to be active and effective in its functions must be effective in doing so. The Nigerian government in this case did not show pragmatic, objective and sincere commitment to the implementation and that is why the goals of poverty alleviation were not achieved (a practical example of anomie situation).

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Aguh (2019) assessed poverty alleviation strategies in Nigeria (1999-2013) using Nwangele LGA of Imo State as the focal point. Survey research design was used and questionnaire served as the instrument of data collection. The data collected were presented in tables in analyzed using simple percentage and the hypotheses were tested using chi-square. It was discovered that the specific issues of various poverty alleviation programmes address the poverty problems in Nigeria, the poverty alleviation programmes have contributed in reducing the prevailing poverty levels, and the necessities for change and continuity of the poverty alleviation programmes are genuine. It was suggested that the present Buhari administration should avoid corruption, nepotism and tribalism

in the implementation of its programme so as to alleviate poverty and reduce unemployment in Nigeria.

Igwe (2020) focused on MDG and poverty reduction in Nigeria. Survey research design was used and questionnaire served as the instrument of data collection. The data collected were presented in tables in analyzed using simple percentage and the hypotheses were tested using chi-square. It was discovered the goal of MDG on poverty reduction was not achieved. It was recommended that the present Buhari administration should avoid corruption, nepotism and tribalism in the implementation of ITS programme so as to alleviate poverty and reduce unemployment in Nigeria. Ibekwe (2020) examined the effect of poverty alleviation programmes on reduction of unemployment in Abia State. The study was carried out to determine the poverty alleviation strategies which the government has adopted over the years. In line with above, the objective of the study focused on the relationship between poverty and unemployment situation in Imo State, the factors contributing to poverty and unemployment in Imo State and some of the poverty alleviation programmes in Imo State. Based on that, three corresponding research questions were formulated. The researcher used system theory to guide the study. Ex-post facto research design was used and secondary sources of data through textbooks, journals and online publication etc. guided the study. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and content analysis method. The findings revealed that there has been numerous poverty alleviation programmes in Abia State, but most of them failed because of corruption.

RESEARCH GAP

Many studies have been done in related areas of this work. But none of the studies covered the exact subject matter. Some focused on other states in Nigeria, and neglected Imo State. None of the past studies used the variables employed in the objectives of the work. None of the past studies covered the Imo State government from 1999 till date. For that, there is gap, hence the need for this study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- a) **Research design:** In this study, survey research design was adopted. Survey is a research method that focuses on representative sample based on the entire study population (Asika, 2008). The researcher employed survey research design because of its effectiveness in the use of primary data.
- b) **Population of the study:** The population of this study is made up of the entire 180 staff in social service section of Imo State Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.
- c) **Sample and sampling technique:** The sample size of this study is 180, and the sampling technique applied is census enumeration method. This means that the researcher used the entire population as sample; hence the population is not large. In this direction, census enumeration method was used. Census enumeration method is very relevant in this study because of the need to study the entire population since the population could be reached and studied.
- d) **Research instrument:** In this study, the researcher used both primary and secondary sources of data.
- e) **Method of data analysis:** For data analysis, the researcher utilizes simple percentage method and chi-square.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

Table 1: Do you think inadequate funding affects poverty alleviation programmes in Imo State?

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Agreed	127	74.7

Disagreed	43	25.3
Total	170	100

Source: survey data 2023

From the above table, 74.7% agreed while 25.3% disagreed.

Table 2: Most times, poverty reduction program may fail because of poor funding.

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Agreed	100	58.8
Disagreed	70	41.2
Total	170	100

Source: survey data 2023

From the above table, 58.8% of the respondents agreed, while 41.2% disagreed on the view.

Table 3: There is significance relationship between corruption and poverty alleviation programme in Imo State.

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Agreed	129	75.9
Disagreed	41	24.1
Total	170	100

Source: field data 2023

The table above showed that 75.9% of the respondents maintained that finance is a hindrance to development of their industry while 24.1% disagreed.

Table 4: The past Nigerian governments have not achieved the needed goal of poverty alleviation because of corruption.

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Agreed	100	58.8
Disagreed	70	41.2
Total	170	100

Source: survey data 2023

The table above showed that 58.8% of the 170 respondents maintained that effective performance of the small scale industries are affected when financial institution refuse to give them loan while 41.2% of the respondents disagreed.

Table 5: Poor design significantly affects poverty alleviation programmes in Imo State.

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Agreed	127	74.7
Disagreed	43	25.3
Total	170	100

Source: survey data 2023

From the above table, 74.7% agreed while 25.3% disagreed.

Table 6: Lack of proper coordination affects poverty alleviation programmes in Imo State.

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Agreed	100	58.8
Disagreed	70	41.2

Total	170	100
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Source: survey data 2023

From the above table, 58.8% of the respondents agreed that poor managerial capability constitute a problem to the management staff of small scale industries while 41.2% disagreed on the view.

TESTING AND INTERPRETATION OF HYPOTHESIS

Hypothesis One

1. The specific issues of various poverty alleviation programmes do not address the poverty problems in Nigeria.

To test hypothesis one, data in table 1 and 2 were used.

Table 7: Observed frequency.

Options	No. of Respondents		Percentage (%)
Agreed	127	100	227
Disagreed	43	70	113
Total	170	170	340

Source: Based on data in table 1 and 2

$$\Sigma = \frac{\text{row total} \times \text{column total}}{\text{Grand total}}$$

$$E_{1,1} = \frac{227 \times 170}{340} = 113.5$$

$$E_{1,2} = \frac{227 \times 170}{340} = 113.5$$

$$E_{2,1} = \frac{113 \times 170}{340} = 56.5$$

$$E_{2,2} = \frac{113 \times 170}{340} = 56.5$$

Table 8: Computation of chi-square (χ^2) $\sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$

Observed (O _i)	Frequency	Expected (E _i)	Frequency	O _i – E _i	(O _i – E _i) ²	(O _i – E _i) ² / E _i
127		113.5		13.5	182.25	1.61
100		113.5		-13.5	182.25	1.61
43		56.6		-13.5	182.25	3.23
70		56.6		13.5	182.25	3.23
340						9.68

X² calculated = 9.68

At 5% level of significance, degree of freedom (df) is (row – 1) x (column – 1), which is (2 – 1) x (2 – 1) = 1

X² tabulated at 5% level of significance, degree of freedom 1 = 3.84

Decision Rule

Since X² calculated is greater than X² tabulated that is 9.68 > 3.84, we will reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative, and hence conclude that the specific issues of various poverty alleviation programmes addresses the poverty problems in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two

2. The poverty alleviation programmes have not contributed in reducing the prevailing poverty levels.

Here, data in table 3 and 4 were employed to test the hypothesis two.

Table 9: Observed frequency.

Options	No. of Respondents		Percentage (%)
Agreed	129	100	229
Disagreed	41	70	111
Total	170	170	340

Source: Based on data in table 3 and 4

$$\Sigma = \frac{\text{row total} \times \text{column total}}{\text{Grand total}}$$

$$E_{1,1} = \frac{229 \times 170}{340} = 114.5$$

$$E_{1,2} = \frac{229 \times 170}{340} = 114.5$$

$$E_{2,1} = \frac{111 \times 170}{340} = 55.5$$

$$E_{2,2} = \frac{111 \times 170}{340} = 55.5$$

Table 10: Computation of chi-square (χ^2) $\Sigma(O_i - E_i)^2$

Observed (O _i)	Frequency	Expected (E _i)	Frequency	O _i – E _i	(O _i – E _i) ²	(O _i – E _i) ² E _i
129		114.5		14.5	210.25	1.84
100		114.5		-14.5	210.25	1.84
41		55.5		-14.5	210.25	3.79
70		55.5		14.5	210.25	3.79
340						11.26

χ^2 calculated = 11.26

χ^2 tabulated at 5% level of significance, degree of freedom 1 = 3.84

Decision Rule

Since χ^2 calculated is greater than χ^2 tabulated that is $11.26 > 3.84$, we will reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative, and hence conclude that the poverty alleviation programmes have contributed in reducing the prevailing poverty levels.

Hypothesis Three

- The necessities for change and continuity of the poverty alleviation programmes are not genuine.

To test hypothesis one, data in table 5 and 6 were used.

Table 11: Observed frequency.

Options	No. of Respondents		Percentage (%)
Agreed	127	100	227
Disagreed	43	70	113
Total	170	170	340

Source: Based on data in table 5 and 6

$$\Sigma = \frac{\text{row total} \times \text{column total}}{\text{Grand total}}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
 E_{1,1} &= \frac{227 \times 170}{340} = 113.5 \\
 E_{1,2} &= \frac{227 \times 170}{340} = 113.5 \\
 E_{2,1} &= \frac{113 \times 170}{340} = 56.5 \\
 E_{2,2} &= \frac{113 \times 170}{340} = 56.5
 \end{aligned}$$

Table 4.18: Computation of chi-square (χ^2) $\sum (O_i - E_i)^2$

Observed (O _i)	Frequency	Expected (E _i)	Frequency	O _i – E _i	(O _i – E _i) ²	(O _i – E _i) ² E _i
127		113.5		13.5	182.25	1.61
100		113.5		-13.5	182.25	1.61
43		56.6		-13.5	182.25	3.23
70		56.6		13.5	182.25	3.23
340						9.68

χ^2 calculated = 9.68

At 5% level of significance, degree of freedom (df) is (row – 1) x (column – 1), which is (2 – 1) x (2 – 1) = 1

χ^2 tabulated at 5% level of significance, degree of freedom 1 = 3.84

Decision Rule

Since χ^2 calculated is greater than χ^2 tabulated that is 9.68 > 3.84, we will reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative, and hence conclude that the necessities for change and continuity of the poverty alleviation programmes are genuine.

CONCLUSION

The Nigerian and Imo State governments have implemented many poverty reduction strategies to enhance economic empowerment of the people. However, it could be seen in this study that corruption, poor funding, and lack of planning or design affects the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs and economic empowerment of the people. Therefore we conclude that the Nigerian government should involve the people and avoid corruption in its poverty alleviation programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the finds:

1. The government at all levels should avoid corruption, nepotism and tribalism in the implementation of poverty alleviate programmes.
2. Government should effectively fund poverty alleviation programmes, so as to achieve economic empowerment of the people.
3. Poverty alleviation programmes should be fashioned and directed towards solving the unemployment problems, because unemployment is the major cause of poverty.

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