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CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF POVERTY IN NORTH EAST NIGERIA: A STUDY OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN LGA DAMATURU, YOBE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics in 2012 reported that, 133 million Nigerians are multidimensionally poor, with 88.4 million living in extreme poverty. The World Bank forecasted that Nigeria's economic growth would slow from 3.3% in 2022 to 2.8% in 2023. Therefore, this study intends to analyze the causes and consequences of poverty in northeast Nigeria by studying sustainable socioeconomic development in Damaturu, Yobe State, Nigeria. The research employed a survey method whereby data was gathered using quantitative research techniques. The study revealed that poverty in the study area was caused by corruption, poor governance, poor infrastructure, and poor World Bank and IMF policies. Similarly, its consequences for Damaturu, Yobe state, include socioeconomic underdevelopment, malnutrition, illiteracy and insecurity. Furthermore, it was also discovered that the [redacted] programmes designed to fight poverty still need to be fully implemented because the funds end up in the hands of corrupt individuals, who pocket the majority. Finally, the study recommends the presence of strong institutions and equitable distribution of resources.

Keywords: Poverty, Theories of Poverty, Yobe State, Structural Poverty, Cultural Poverty.

Introduction

Poverty is not a onetime process but it is a way of life. It is a culture in itself. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2012), 133 million people are living with multidimensional poverty. Similarly, the United Nations (UN) state that Nigeria has the awful distinction of being the world capital of poverty, with 71 million people living in extreme poverty today (World Poverty Clock, 2023). Poverty can be conceptualized as a phenomenon that exists at National, Community, Household and individual levels (Orji, 2008). At the national level, poverty represents a state of general socio-economic underdevelopment arising from poor human resource endowment, poor natural Resources endowment, low productivity and stagnating national income or gross domestic product, inadequate availability of social and infrastructural facilities and

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. A.I. Mteiye [MALAWI]

services and a general inability to provide a minimally decent level of living for the ordinary citizen (Dokun, 2008).

At the community level, poverty is a state of general socioeconomic deprivation arising from environmental and natural resources degradation, inadequate access to social services and basic infrastructure, inadequate local employment and income generating opportunities and general appearance of physical decay and wasting of community assets. At the household or individual levels, poverty is the inability to gain access to basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, and decent shelter and so on, inability to fulfil basic economic and social obligations and a general lack of self-esteem (Oyelola, 2021).

Poverty is a multi-faceted social issue involving not only economic but also political and Rights issues attached with it. All these issues are addressed within the framework of Human Rights and MDGs at the global level and Sustainable Development and Development Planning at the regional level (Adeyeye, 2020). In its document World Bank emphasised that for a long lasting impact, 'the countries implement (development) policies aimed at accelerating economic growth, improving the distribution of income and wealth and accelerating social development in order to achieve sustainable poverty reduction'.

There are several Government run Programmes and Initiatives introduced in this area yet the rate of Poverty is continuously increasing in this region. Poverty has given rise to several social problems like occurrence of different types of crime, Drug Abuse, Health problems and Nutritional Deprivation, Prostitution etc. to name some (Olowa 2012). Along with this comes the issue of Human Rights, which claims that every individual has the fundamental Right to live a dignified life that is to fulfil his basic needs in terms food, clothes and shelter and also to provide his children basic education and disease free environment so that they could live a dignified social life like other human beings. Therefore, the study aims to study the causes and consequences of poverty in Damaturu, local government area of Yobe state, Nigeria.

Research Design:

The research employed mixed method whereby both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were used to obtain the primary data. The sample size of the study was 70, drawn from seven wards of the local government area (Damaturu) using Representative Sampling Technique. SPSS was used for the analysis of the quantitative data while content analysis was used in analysing the qualitative data.

Literature Review

The Concept and Definition of Poverty

The word "poverty" and / or "poor" originated from the Latin word *pauper* meaning poor, which has its roots in the words pau- and pario that is "giving birth to nothing"; referring to unproductive livestock and farmland (Westover, 2008). Historically, the idea that some people are trapped in poverty while others have spells in poverty was a central element of most analysis (Hulme and Mckay, 2005). For example, officials and social commentators in eighteenth century France distinguished between the *pauvre* and the *indigent*. The former experienced seasonal poverty when crops failed or demand for casual agricultural labour was low. The latter were permanently poor because of ill health (physical and mental), accident, age or alcoholism (Hulme and Mckay, 2005).

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. A.I. Mteiye [MALAWI]

In contemporary times this durational aspect of poverty has been relatively neglected and conceptual development, and more particularly measurement, has focused on severity/depth and multidimensionality. This has been especially the case in economies where serious work on duration only began to emerge in the late 1980s (Gaiha, & Deolalikar 1993). An implicit assumption of much research was that the persistence of poverty at the individual and household level was highly correlated with the severity of poverty. During the early 1990s such work began to proliferate based on available panel data sets, and in 2000 the first collection of papers on this topic was published (Baulch and Hoddinnott 2000).

There are many definitions of poverty, according to how it is viewed. Encyclopaedia Encarta, defines poverty as the condition of having insufficient resources or income. In its most extreme form, poverty is a lack of basic human needs to sustain as useful and working efficiency such as adequate and nutritious food, clothing, housing, clean water and health services. According to the United Nations (1995), poverty is defined as a complex phenomenon that generally refers to inadequacy of resources and deprivation of choices that would enable people to enjoy decent living conditions. Yunus (2011) on the other hand defines it as the denial of human rights relating to the fulfillment of basic human needs.

Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor (World Bank, 2005). Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. Poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom (World Bank, 2005a). According to the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS 2004), poverty is now recognised as multi-dimensional with complex interactive and causal relationship between the dimensions. According to (GPRS 2004), the poor often lack access to finance and income-earning opportunities.

The subject of poverty has been a major issue on both national and international scale discussions, predominantly among the developing countries (Balogun, 1999). According to Balogun (1999), poverty could be described as a condition where a society barely survives on a level of subsistence, coupled with limited access to the necessities of physiological factors such as clothing, food, and appropriate accommodation, in view of maintaining a basic standard of living. In the view of the World Bank and The World Development Report (WDR), observations made suggest that conditions could be expressed as poor if people live on a per capita income lower than US $370 at any given time (Maxwell, 1999) or as being extremely poor by living on less than US$ 1 per day, and moderately poor by living on less than US$2 daily (World Bank, 2021). The statement also projects that "about 9.2% of the world, or 719 million people, live on less than $2.15 a day. In the United States, 11.6% of the population — 37.9 million people — lived in poverty as of 2021. Poverty as a condition is not only confined to developing nations, but it's also a universal phenomenon that could be observed in a set of social problems including homelessness and the persistence of "ghetto" housing clusters (World Bank, 2007).

In attempting to summarise the definition of poverty, Adeyeye (1999) asserted that poverty in both relative and absolute terms refers to a circumstance where a person is not able to fend or provide sufficiently for his or her necessities or fundamental human requirements such as clothing and decent accommodation, food, the fulfillment of social and economic responsibilities, non-access to productive employment, lack of skills, resources and confidence; and has restricted admission to economic and social infrastructure. These include access to health, education, potable water, sanitation, and roads. These preclude the person from advancing in welfare which is limited by the

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. A.I. Mteiye [MALAWI]

scarce availability of economic and social infrastructure. They concluded by terming this situation as being subject to a "lack of capabilities" (Adeyeye 1999).

Poverty in Africa

World Poverty Clock (2023) indicate that the 534 million people are living with multidimensional poverty in the sub-saharan African. It further report that the proportion of the populace living in family units with expenditure or income per individual below the poverty line has been on the decrease in the world's regions since 1990. Notwithstanding this decline in poverty, the existence and persistent incidence of poverty in regions like Africa cannot be completely ruled out. By examining the report, it could be identified that the incidence of poverty in Africa is by far greater than that of Europe and Central Asia and others. Even within Africa itself, disparities exist between the Northern and Southern parts of Africa, owing to the availability or non-availability of essential resources to improve development.

Even though poverty situation in Sub-Saharan African countries is marginally reducing it is still precarious given the percentage of people living below $ 1 a day (45 percent), more so, when compared with other regions of the world. The poverty situation also depicts country variations with countries like Uganda, Mali, Nigeria, Zambia, Niger, Madagascar, Zimbabwe, Burundi and Rwanda having more than 50 percent of their population living below $ 1 a day in 2002. The sub-region also records more rural poverty than urban poverty with 37 percent of the population in the rural areas living below two-third of their national mean per capita income in 1999. The country with the highest rural poverty is South Africa with 86 percent, followed by Central African Republic with 77 percent of her rural population living in poverty (World Bank 2005a. 2005b).

The use of socio-economic indicators like per capita income, life expectancy at birth (years), access to health care services, access to safe water, access to education and access to sanitation facilities also depicts the extent of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa (Alkali, 2022).

Causes of Poverty in Africa

Poverty has multiple and complex causes. SIDA (2005) views these multi-dimensional causes as stemming from a lack of information, knowledge about market prices for the goods they deal in, issues related to health, availability of public services, and their rights. There is a political minority which lacks the visibility and voice as regards the institutions that shape their lives. Poor people are also said to lack access to relevant skills and knowledge, education and personal development that could improve their livelihoods.

According to SIDA (2005), Poverty may be caused or exacerbated by: The lack of capacity of the poor to influence social processes, public policy choices and resource allocations. Low capacities through lack of education, vocational skills, entrepreneurial abilities, poor health and poor quality of life. The disadvantaged position of women in society. Exposure to risks through lack of financial, social or physical security. Low levels of consumption through lack of access to capital, social assets, land and market opportunities. Exposure to shocks due to limited use of technology to stem effects of drought, floods, army worms, crop pests, crop diseases, and environmental degradation. Inadequate environmental protection measures. Lack of macro-economic stability that erodes the resources of the poor through inflation and other variables. The inability of the national economy to optimise benefits within the global system. Habits and conventions based

upon superstition and myths giving rise to anti-social behaviour. Other factors leading to vulnerability and exclusion.

Poverty in Africa is caused by corruption and poor governance, poor land utilisation and land tenure system, civil wars and unending political conflicts, poor infrastructure, diseases and poor health facilities, the World Bank and IMF policies, among others. According to the World Bank (1990), and the United Nations (1995), poverty has various manifestations which include the lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihood, hunger, and malnutrition, ill health, limited or lack of access to education and other basic services, increased morbidity and mortality from illness, homelessness, inadequate, unsafe and degraded environment, social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterised by lack of participation in decision making in civil, social and cultural life (World Bank 2001).

In their discussions of the factors that cause poverty, De Haan (2000) and Sindzingre (2000) noted that poverty could also be caused by general exclusion of the people from social life. To them exclusion reflects discrimination, which is a process that denies individuals from full participation in material exchange or interaction. The concept is tied to exclusion from the labour market, long-term unemployment and the destruction of the social links and integration that usually accompany work.

The findings of the study by Obadan (1997) indicated that in Sub-Saharan Africa, the main factors that cause poverty include: inadequate access to employment opportunities; inadequate physical assets such as land, capital and minimal access by the poor to credit even on a small scale; inadequate access to the means of supporting rural development in poor regions; inadequate access to markets where the poor can sell goods and services; low endowment of human capital, destruction of natural resources leading to environmental degradation and reduced productivity; inadequate access to assistance for those living at the margin and those victimised by transitory poverty and lack of participation. That is, failure to draw the poor into the design of development programmes.

Causes of Poverty: Theoretical Explanations

Causes of poverty have also been categorised as cultural or structural. Yahie (1993) believes that the factors that cause poverty include: (i) structural causes that are more permanent and depend on a host of exogenous factors such as limited resources, lack of skills, locational disadvantage and other factors that are inherent in the social and political set-up; and (ii) the transitional causes that are mainly due to structural adjustment reforms and changes in domestic economic policies that may result in price changes, unemployment and so on. Natural calamities such as drought and man-made disasters such as wars, environmental degradation and so on also induce transitional poverty (Narayan et.al. 2000a, 2000b).

According to Aye and Oji (2002), culture tends to be the explanatory variable that theorists and policymakers look to when attempting to explain social dysfunction, particularly due to the sometimes visible connection between cultures and race. This may be why cultural arguments waned from the discussion and why some theorists and policymakers came to link poverty to behaviour (Gaffar & Ijaiya 1997), or to rational calculation (Cece Laki 1985). These scholars argue that poverty is largely the result of social and behavioural deficiencies in individuals that ostensibly make them less economically viable within conventional society. However, due to persistence of poverty in certain areas, the behavioural perspective is reinforced by the culture of poverty thesis,

which suggests that individuals create, sustain, and transmit to future generations a culture that reinforces the various social and behavioural deficiencies (Rodgers, 2000). A corollary to this perspective suggests that government policy perpetuates poverty, and contributes to a variety of other socials ills including rising rates of divorce (Cece Laki 1985).

The "culture of poverty" thesis, which emanated from the anthropological arguments of Lewis (1970), later came to be erroneously associated with laying blame for poverty either on the poor themselves or on a government that keeps them dependent (Patterson 2000).

Along these lines, it is the deficient character of the poor along with their deviant behaviour and the resultant self-reinforcing environment that restrict their access to economic viability and success. Rising rates of divorce, female headed single parent families, teenage pregnancy, drug/alcohol misuse, and criminal activity are said to reflect these dysfunctional attitudes and values, relative to mainstream society, about family, education and work. These attitudes are passed onto subsequent generations leading to a vicious cycle of poverty from which few escape (Rodgers, 2000). Patterson (2000) traces the trajectory of the culture thesis from one based primarily on nuanced sociological and anthropological arguments to a more stereotypical and simplistic version.

The "culture of poverty" perspective must draw its relevance from cultural anthropology. The noted anthropologist McGee and Norton (1999) argued that poverty was "an adaptation to a set of objective conditions of the larger society, but once it comes into existence, it tends to perpetuate itself from generation to generation because of its effect on children" (Patterson 2000). While Lewis argued that poverty was culturally self-reinforcing, its incidence was directly connected to "structural conditions in society" (Massey and Denton, 1993).

Supporters of the "structural" school of thought however argue that most poverty can be traced back to structural factors inherent to either the economy and/or to several interrelated institutional environments that serve to favour certain groups over others, generally based on gender, class, or race. Of the various institutional environments that tend to sustain a multitude of economic barriers to different groups, it is discrimination based on race and gender that create the most insidious obstructions. The disproportionately high rate of poverty among women may be viewed as the consequence of a patriarchal society that continues to resist their inclusion in a part of society that has been historically dominated by men, and as a consequence, welfare programmes have been designed in ways that stigmatise public support for women as opposed to marital support; both arrangements tend to reinforce patriarchy (Abramovitz, 1996). In this regard, the rise in poverty among women is an important structural level variable to consider, but the lack of reliable data going back to 1947 makes testing difficult.

Evidence of the economic disparities caused by historical and contemporary racial discrimination against blacks in USA is seen clearly when one views the data on white and black median income. In 1947, the percentage of black median income relative to white median income was 51 percent. In 2002, the figure had risen to only 62 percent. In 2000, 35.5% of black single parent families were considered low-income while Blacks represented only 12.1% of the general population in that year. Given the over-representation of black Americans among the poor, it stands to reason that closing the gap between black and white median income by working to end racism and discrimination will have positive effects on poverty.

Massey and Denton (1993) argue that institutional racism in general, and residential segregation in particular, is a critical structural level cause of the severe poverty in the black community. However,

they contend that as segregation took hold, the black communities in the inner cities reacted by creating an "oppositional culture that devalues work, schooling, and marriage and stresses attitudes and behaviours that are antithetical and often hostile to success in the larger economy" Wilson (1987) would tend to agree that an "oppositional culture" exists, but takes the analysis a step beyond segregation, citing "social isolation" as the primary culprit. Wilson argues that historical racism against Black Americans erected contemporary barriers to their economic success; their predicament is compounded by factors uniquely associated with American capitalism and demography.

Structural economic factors include the level and variation in unemployment, median income, and measures of income inequality. The effects of unemployment and rises in median income are well documented and their relationship to poverty is intuitive.

Consequences of Poverty

Poverty has several consequences, which can differ in scope for residents of developed and developing countries. The outcome of poverty can be more severe for certain social groups within a society. Socially, poverty is not merely a demographic figure rather it has been viewed as a curse because it does not end with the person affected by it but it gives rise to an array of problems at the individual as well as societal level (Dokun, 2008).

Poverty reduces the social status of the affected person to the minimal level that is, to an extent that for other people of the society they cease to exist as human beings. They are condemned, looked down upon, criticized and blamed with every social evil taking place in the society (Dokun, 2008). But, rarely anybody tries to understand their problem from their point of view. How they become the victim of this 'social evil', what problems do they face in the social sphere, how do they survive all psycho-social atrocities done against them, what livelihood challenges they face and how do they tackle those, etc are few issues which will be explored through this research work. Thus, along with the economic issues, psycho-social issues will be addressed under this heading.

The Federal Government of Nigeria took note of the problem of poverty and since 1970s initiated several programmes, which were aimed at reducing and alleviating poverty and improving the living conditions of its people (Orgi: 2008). Some of these programmes are:

- Operation Feed the Nation,
- Green Revolution,
- Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI),
- Better Life Programme,
- Family Support Programme,
- National Directorate of Employment (NDE),
- National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS),
- Peoples Bank and Community Bank,
- Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP),
- Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), and
- National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)
- N-Power

Though these programmes were initiated with great promises but the success and failure of these programmes is another story, which needs critical evaluation (Justin, Ighodalo, Okpo, & June

2012). In the scenario of psychosocial and socioeconomic framework the issue of the Human Rights becomes so important that poverty eradication has been addressed under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as one of the Goals. Therefore, the issue of poverty is not restricted to an individual or family or a Nation rather it has become a global issue which needs serious attention for the overall sustainable development of a Nation.

Results

Table 1; Respondent Views on the Causes of Poverty in Damaturu, Yobe State, Nigeria.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low or negative economic growth and a lag in human resource development.	12	17.1
Inappropriate macroeconomic policies,	15	21.4
Deficiencies in the labor market	12	17.1
Low productivity and low wages in the informal sector,	8	11.4
All of the Above	23	32.8
Total	70	100

Field Survey: 2023

Table 4.4 above shows that 17.1 percent of the respondents opined that low or negative economic growth and lag in in human development are the causes of poverty in the study area, 20.1 percent maintained that the more pronounce cause of poverty in Damaturu is the inappropriate macroeconomic policies, while 17.1percent believed that deficiency in the labor market and 11.4 are of the opinion that low productivity and low wages in the informal sector. While 32.8 percent of the respondents believed that poverty is caused by collectively through all the above mentioned ways in Yobe state. This indicates that all the factors mentioned above contributed to emergence of poverty in Yobe state. An interviewee also asserts that;

> *Most of the policies introduced by the government are not towards addressing the basic needs of the masses. What we need is employment, fertilizers, improved seeds and irrigation machines to boost our farm production.*

It can be deduced from the above that there are several factors responsible for the emergence of poverty in the study area. Similarly, most of the government incentives are either pro elites or not addressing the expectation of the masses.

Table 2; Respondent Views on Weather Poverty Has Negative on Damaturu, Yobe State, Nigeria.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	34	48.5
Agree	28	40
Disagree	6	8.5
Strongly Disagree	2	2.8
Total	70	100

Field Survey: 2023

Result from table 2 above indicates that 48.5 and 40 percent of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that poverty has negatively affected the people of Damaturu, Yobe state. In comparison, only 8.5 and 2.8 percent disagreed and strongly disagreed with the view that poverty has negatively affected the people of Damaturu, Yobe state. Therefore, it is clear that the poverty has negatively affected the people of Damaturu, Yobe state. An interviewee also described how poverty prevented him from sending his children to school, thus:

> *I have four children but none of them is attending school because my earning cannot even take care of our feeding talk less of sending them to school.*

Table 3; Respondent Views on Weather Poverty Has Negative on Damaturu, Yobe State, Nigeria.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Hunger and Mal-Nutrient	11	15.7
Illiteracy	8	11.4
Morbidity and Mortality	11	15.7
Poor housing Condition	6	8.5
Lack of pipe born Water	9	12.8
All of the Above	25	35.7
Total	70	100

Field Survey: 2023

According to Table 3 above, 15.7 percent of respondents reported that poverty contributed to the study area's hunger and malnutrition, and 11.4 percent believed that poverty was to blame for Damaturu's high rate of out-of-school children (illiteracy). While 15.7 percent thought that morbidity and mortality were the negative effects of poverty, 8.5 percent declared that lack of housing resulted from poverty. While 35.7% of the respondents asserted poverty had a negative influence on Yobe state overall through all of the aforementioned approaches. This suggests that Yobe state's extreme poverty is the root cause of all the aforementioned problems. The qualitative data below provides evidence in favour of this;

A respondent states that;

> *Sometimes we only eat once in a day as the minimum wage is not enough to cater for our needs. I lost one of my child as a result of measles and I don't have money for his treatment. We want the government to subsidize the transport, education and health sectors for the poor.*

Discussion

The study demonstrated that poverty is caused by a number of intricate causes. These include slow or negative economic growth, poor macroeconomic policies, labor market flaws that limit employment creation, low productivity and low salaries in the informal workforce, and a lack of progress in the development of human resources. The study further revealed that poverty contributed to the study area's hunger and malnutrition, high rate of out-of-school children (illiteracy), morbidity and mortality, poor housing condition. These findings contrasts with the findings of a study by Ajakaiye and Adeyeye, 1999 and Ogwumike, 2001; as cited by Olowa, (2012),

which showed that the main causes of poverty in Nigeria are a decline in living standards, an increase in crime and violence, environmental degradation, worker layoffs, a decline in the real value of safety nets, and changes in family structures.

However, the research outcome is in tandem with a study conducted by Obadan (1997) indicated that in Sub-Saharan Africa, the main factors that cause poverty include: inadequate access to employment opportunities; inadequate physical assets such as land, capital and minimal access by the poor to credit even on a small scale; inadequate access to the means of supporting rural development in poor regions; inadequate access to markets where the poor can sell goods and services; low endowment of human capital, destruction of natural resources leading to environmental degradation and reduced productivity; inadequate access to assistance for those living at the margin and those victimised by transitory poverty and lack of participation.

Conclusion

Nigeria's poverty is primarily due to inadequate economic growth, with the economy primarily relying on petroleum crude oil exports. Oyeduntan (2003) highlights the marginalization of the agricultural sector and high unemployment. Factors contributing to poverty include weak governance, income inequality, social conflict, gender, and environmental issues. The poor labor absorption capacity in the nonagricultural sector, coupled with environmental degradation, further exacerbates poverty. Globalization also contributes to poverty, with the debt burden increasing from $27.8 billion in 2012 to $42.7 billion in 2023.

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