

Depth and Dimension of poverty In Nigeria

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ABSTRACT:-This work examine the depth and dimension of poverty in Nigeria; hence, it focus on the various dimension of poverty such as Urban dimension of poverty which manifest itself into hunger, unemployment, underemployment and poor wages for those employed, Rural dimension of poverty which was associated with lack of factors of production (such as land, wives and children) whether or not a rural person is rich depends on the number of his land, wives and children because they are the major instruments of production other dimension of poverty include political, health etc the work shade light on the characteristics of the poor , poverty, theoretical explanation of poverty by different school of thought and scholars, causes as well the poverty situation in Nigeria which the review shows that; there is more intense poverty in the north than in the southern part of the country.

I. INTRODUCTION

The menace and spread of poverty is increasing by the day in Nigeria this assertion is never an exaggeration but is a day light fact as people are strongly battling with basic need to make a living in that direction the argument of Malumfashi (2008) that, "Poverty is a naked reality. It can be assessed objectively and felt subjectively. It is the oldest and yet unresolved social problem" can easily be accepted. The issue of poverty everyone was challenge upon to see how it can be dealt with or how it can be eliminated.

Historically, the problem of poverty started with the early formation of human society. Societies of the past and present are all stratified between the slaves and slaves' owners, feudal lords and serfs or the capitalists and working class. These different forms of social divisions are simply translated into division between the 'haves' and 'have not' or rich and poor.

There are two contrasting explanation as regards the social and economic positions of the poor. The first explanation hinges on the fact that the poor are virtually responsible for their status. The reason is simply that poor are in poverty because they are lazy and unintelligent. The second explanation stressed on the socio-economic structure of the society. According to this argument, poverty is determined by unequal distribution of economic resources and social opportunities between members of society.

However, in this paper, we are going to see in brief theoretical argument in supports of the perspective about the position of the poor and what make one poor and others rich at the same time, we would see the dimensions and depth of poverty in Nigeria as well as the possible remedy for this killer disease.

II. DEFINITIONS OF POVERTY.

The English word "poverty" came from Latin *pauper* = "poor", via Anglo-Norman *povert*. There are many definitions of poverty depending on the context and situation as well as the views of the person giving the definition. Here we defined poverty according to World Bank and United Nation (UN) views respectively; Poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being, and comprises many dimensions. It includes low incomes and the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity. Poverty also encompasses low levels of health and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, lack of voice, and insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one's life. (World Bank, 2011) Fundamentally, poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living in marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation (United Nations, 2011).

III. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE TERM POOR, POVERTY AND RICH

The words 'poverty' and 'poor' came from Latin word "pauper" meaning 'poor', which originally came from pau- and the root of pario, that is, 'giving birth to not much'. From here we may learned that poverty connotes a condition in which a person or community is deprived of, and or lacks the essentials for a minimum

standard of well-being and life; then to be poor means to be hungry, to lack shelter and clothing, to be sick and not cared for, to be illiterate and not schooled, to be deprived of access to common resources. Aliyu (2008).

The rich persons are of course the better off, privileged, educated and sheltered, healthier and secured social groups. While the poor persons are the complete opposite because they are of course the deprived, depressed and diseased social groups. From the above mentioned poverty was broadly conceptualized in four ways: Lack of access to basic needs/goods: this is essentially economic or consumption oriented and conceived the poor as those individuals or households in a particular society, incapable of purchasing a specified basket of basic goods and services such as nutritious food, shelter, water and healthcare.

A result of impaired access to productive resources: this type of poverty includes lack of access to productive resources such as education, working skills and tools and political as well as civil rights to participate in decisions concerning socio-economic conditions. Outcome of inefficient use of common resources: poverty from this angle may result from weak policy environment, inadequate infrastructure, and weak access to technology and credit, etc. Result of 'exclusive mechanism': poverty is instituted through certain groups using certain mechanisms in the system to exclude 'problem groups' from participating in economic development, including the democratic process

IV. TYPES OF POVERTY AND POVERTY LINE GAUGE

Structural poverty: structural poverty (chronic) is defined as persistent or permanent socio-economic deprivation and linked to a host of factors such as limited productive resources, lack of skills for gainful employment, endemic socio-political and cultural factors and gender role segregations, etc.

Transient poverty: transient poverty in contrast is transitory or temporary and is linked to natural and man-made disasters. Transient poverty is more reversible but can become structural if it persists.

Absolute poverty: this is poverty as a result of lack of basic necessities of life or minimum physical requirement of resources for person or household existence.

Relative poverty: is comparable as it refers to a situation, where a person or household are with provision of goods and services, which is lower than that of other persons or group.

It is generally agreed that in conceptualizing poverty, low income or low consumption is its system. This has been used for the construction of poverty lines, that is, values of income necessary to purchase the minimum standard of nutrition and other necessities of life. People are therefore rated poor, when their measured standard of living in terms of income or consumption is below the conceived poverty line.

In Nigeria, the poverty line is defined in terms of the deviation from the mean consumption expenditure. On this basis, households are classified as moderately poor and core poor. A household, whose real per capita consumption expenditure is equivalent to two-third of the mean real per capita expenditure is a moderate poor household. A household, whose real per capita consumption expenditure is equivalent to one-third of the mean real per capita expenditure, is a core poor household. Other households are non-poor. (Ajakaiye, 2002)

V. THEORETICAL EXPLANATION OF POVERTY

Individualistic Theory

This theory contains the following ideas, that the causes of poverty and even inequality are rooted in individual failings of some sort or another. You are, to put it bluntly; poor is poor because he/she deserve to be poor. Individualistic theories were extremely popular in the 19th century and can still be seen in the articles of certain tabloid newspapers. Pick up any newspaper and you will more likely find some letter sent to the Editor about how the poor are a load of lazy spongers who should go out and get some work, or as one Conservative MP put it "Get on their bike". This is very much the basis of the whole individualistic theory of poverty, it is the morality of the individual that is causing their poverty or it is their laziness. Herbert Spencer, one of the early British sociologists (who coined the term survival of the fittest) said of the poor:

"...good for nothings...vagrants and sots (drunks), criminals...men who share the gains of prostitutes; and less visible and less numerous there is a corresponding class of women..."

Spencer believed, very much in keeping with the dominant beliefs of the time, that the poor should be given no assistance whatsoever (*laissez faire*). They were after all engaged in an immoral style of life he argued so why should they be helped. One can't help but wonder that if they were engaged in prostitution and criminal activities why they were so poor in the first place? I will, however, waste no more time and space with this theory as it is so evidently untrue. There is no evidence to back it up in the slightest and is held only by those who are prejudiced or by those who pretend to believe it in order to uphold the capitalist system. Most studies have found that the poor are more than willing to work, also, many of those in work can also said to be in poverty. Blaming the poor for their poverty is like blaming the homeless on being homeless, rather illogical. Poor people no more want to be in poverty than homeless people want to sleep on freezing cold streets or dust Wind Street.

VI. CULTURAL THEORIES

This is slightly more sophisticated version of the individualistic theory. This time it is not the individual that is to blame for their own poverty but the individuals culture. Their culture (beliefs, values, attitudes and general patterns of behaviour and language) are what causes their poverty, or at least, what helps to keep them in their poverty. Perhaps the most famous advocate, and the man who first came up with the idea, was Oscar Lewis who was an anthropologist working in slum areas, shanty towns, in South America. He observed these people in their environment and believed that they exhibited a different culture, a sub culture, to that of the rest of society. This he called a culture of poverty. The main characteristics of this culture of poverty were as follows: people held an attitude of fatality (they believed that it was hopeless to try and improve their situation) and a present time orientation (they lived for today instead of for tomorrow). As a result they were less likely to see school and education as a way out of their poverty; also, they were less likely to see the point in saving money. This he argued helped to keep the poor in their state of poverty. It's something of a teleological argument. The poor are poor because of their culture yet how did they become poor in the first place, how did they get this culture? Also, is not their culture an accurate reflection of the situation in which they find themselves? Perhaps they do not do things like save money because they have no money to save. Perhaps they think it is hopeless to try and get out of their poverty through education because the chances of them doing so are quite small. Lastly, some would argue that this culture of poverty simply does not exist and that those in poverty by and large share the same culture as the wider society.

VII. MARXIST THEORY

The Marxist theory of poverty and inequality is a radical departure from the theories we have so far discussed. Marxists do not blame the poor for their poverty nor do they blame their culture. Ralph Miliband writes:

The basic fact is that the poor are an integral part of the working class - its poorest and most disadvantaged stratum. They need to be seen as such, as part of a continuum, the more so as many workers who are not deprived in the official sense live in permanent danger of entering the ranks of the deprived; and that they share...many of the disadvantages which afflict the deprived..."

Instead Marxists look for explanations in the structure of the society in question, in the economic arrangements present and in the functions that poverty performs for capitalism and the capitalist class. To put it short the reason for poverty and inequality lies in the market based capitalist economy and the fluctuation that all such economies periodically go through.

VIII. CULTURE OF POVERTY THESIS

The 'culture of poverty' thesis opined that the poor are poor because they have values and ways of life different from the rest of society, that is a culture of their own, which is instrumental to their being poor and prevent them from achieving success and material progress. One of the proponents of this thesis is of course Lewis, (Giddens, 1981). Lewis identified such way of life, which is identical to the poor as 'mother centred families, a male' obsession of masculinity, fatalism, inability to differ gratification, and a narrow conception of the world, fixation to immediate environment and conditions. These features according to Lewis comprise a unique culture of poverty, preventing the poor from aspiring to a better position in society.

IX. CRITIQUE OF LEWIS CULTURE OF POVERTY THESIS

The culture of poverty thesis is criticized for being too narrow and inadequate. Some of the features constituting the 'culture of poverty' are also found among non-poor working class. Again, the 'culture of poverty' is not a chosen way of life but a subjected reality for being poor.

X. THE NEO-MARXIST EXPLANATION OF POVERTY

According to Neo-Marxist, poverty results from the economic arrangements and relationships of society, which shape the distribution of material resources and power; in a society relationships are not based on equal equanimity nor on functional complementarities, where employers lower wages for overloaded and inhuman work, where political decision further socially excluded the disadvantage group, poverty will inevitably be a perpetual fact of life.

XI. DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY

The economic dimension of poverty: refers to poverty as a situation of inadequate income or low consumption. Osumubi (2003) argues that people are referred to as poor, when their estimated standard of living in terms of income or consumption is below poverty line.

Urban dimension of poverty: manifest itself into hunger, unemployment, underemployment and poor wages for those employed. Urban poverty and poor environmental conditions are mutually connected.

Rural dimension of poverty: rural areas poverty is associated with lack of factors of production (such as land, wives and children) whether or not a rural person is rich depends on the number of his land, wives and children because they are the major instruments of production.

Political dimension of poverty: the poor are excluded from union membership, fraternal organisations, political parties or corporate bodies they are nowhere to influence their interest or make their concern counts. As they are socially marginal, the poor are also politically powerless. The poor are unable to speak or voice out their demands because they are unemployed and mostly uneducated.

Health dimension of poverty: improved health is more attributed to improve nutrition and wealth. The poor people have poor balance diet and have little resources to improve on their social and environmental conditions, which are the major determinant of good health. Material conditions of a person impact considerably on his health status and entire quality of his life.

Race and gender dimension of poverty: in multi-racial societies as in the U. S. A. And South Africa wealth and opportunities are unevenly distributed. More blacks in those societies are poorer than whites people, the blacks are less educated opportune, privilege than the white counterparts. The sex role segregation is such that women play the culturally prescribed role of taking care of, looking after the, attending to and comforting the husband and children. Their role is basically domestic and economically obscured. Women are undoubtedly the vulnerable group in relation to poverty because they are less free than men to own properties. This explains why of the 70% Nigerian poor majority are women.

XII. CAUSES OF POVERTY

There is no single cause or determinant of poverty. A combination of several complex factors contributes to poverty. On the basis of the various survey carried out on poverty and findings from a study on 'the voice of the poor', the main causes of poverty in Nigeria are unemployment, ignorance, high level of inflation, poor governance, corruption and environmental degradation.

Among others; inadequate access to employment opportunities for the poor and lack of adequate access to assets such as land and capital by the poor are particularly serious problems. There are inadequate access to means of fostering rural development in poor regions and strong urban bias in the design of development programmes. Moreover, inadequate access to market for goods and services and the deplorable condition of social services such as education, health, water and sanitation further compound the problem of the poor. The destruction of natural resources endowment, which has potential for enhanced productivity especially in the agricultural sector, is a major cause of ecological poverty. Ajakaiye (2002).

Other causes of poverty include historical factors, for example imperialism and colonialism, brain drain, war including civil war or Boko Haram insurgency in the north east, genocide and over-population and lack of access to birth control methods etc. All these bulk of reasons and factors contribute either directly or indirectly to the cause and spread of poverty in society and Nigeria in particular.

XIII. POVERTY MEASUREMENT AND INDICATORS

Poverty may be measured in absolute or relative sense. However, according to Paudel (2004) poverty measurement is undertaken to achieve the following objectives:

Determine a yardstick for measuring standard of living.

Choose a cut-off poverty line, which separates the poor from the non-poor, take account of the distribution of standard of living among the poor, comparison of poverty overtime, among individual group or nations and Guide policy on poverty alleviation.

Paudel further observes that poverty analysis become polarized between the 'objective-quantitative' school and 'subjective-qualitative' schools. Quantitative poverty line measure relies on the use of statistics to anchor the reference utility level necessary to attain basic capabilities for a healthy and active living.

Sen (1985 and 1987) identifies two methods of measuring objective poverty line and these are the Food Energy Intake (FEI), which involves finding the consumption expenditure or income level at which food energy requirements and Cost of Basic Needs (CBN), which stipulates a consumption bundle adequate for basic consumption needs. Subjective poverty lines on the other hand are based on subjective answers to the 'Minimum Income Question' (MIQ), which according to Kapteyn et al. (1988) include questions like: 'what income level do you personally consider to be absolutely minimal? That is to say that with less you could not make ends meet'. One defines as poor everyone whose actual income is less than the amount the sample respondents give as an answer to this question.

According to the World Bank (2007) extreme poverty can be measure using Purchasing Power Parity approach (PPP), which is when people live on less than US \$1 per day, and moderate poverty when they live on less than \$2 a day. For example on the basis of these criteria, the report discovers that in 2001, 1.1 billion people had consumption levels below \$2 a day.

Non-income poverty indicators, popularly called ‘**conventional indicators**’ of poverty are the social indicators such as health and education status; the most common being life expectancy, illiteracy rate, number of patients per physician and per hospital bed, and a lot more. The usual child specific indicators are infant and child mortality (a key measure of ill-being), and school enrolments. Other poverty indices include Food Security Index (FSI), Integrated Poverty Index (IPI) and Basic Needs Index (BNI)

Food Security Index: it gives an indication of the composite food security situation.

Basic Needs Index: it uses education and health data to indicate social development.

Integrated Poverty Index: this combines the percentage of the population below the poverty line with income gap ratio, the distribution of income among the poor and the annual rate of growth of the GPN per capita.

XIV. POVERTY SITUATION IN NIGERIA

Although poverty is a worldwide phenomenon, it has been observed that Nigeria is one of the poorest countries in the world. The situation has reached an alarming stage as more than 45% of the population lives below the poverty line, while 67% of the poor are extremely poor. The spatial distribution of poverty in Nigeria in 1996 as presented by FOS (1999) shows that the North West region had the highest incidence of poverty, with 69.3% of the population in poverty while the South East region had the lowest incidence. The North West region accounted for about 40% of the poor in Nigeria. This was followed by the South West, which contributed 18.7% to the national incidence of poverty. The North East region had the highest depth of poverty while the North Central had the highest severity of poverty Obayelu and Awoyemi (2010).

The depths of poverty in Nigeria reaches its maximum scales as majority of Nigerians have less than enough income to feed themselves well, educate their children and enhance their physical and mental wellbeing. The Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) report for the periods 1980-1996 indicate that about 67 million Nigerians are living below the poverty level. The report also indicate that during 1980-1985, the percentage of rural dwellers and urban inhabitants in the core poverty bracket rose from 6.5 and 3.0 percent to 14.8 and 7.5 percent respectively. Within the same periods, the percentage of moderately poor in the rural areas rose from 21.8 to 36.6 percent and 14.2 to 30.3 percent respectively. To further buttress this situation, the HDI value for Nigeria was 0.400 and 0.394 in 1996 and 1997 respectively.

The 2008 HDI of Nigeria in life expectancy at birth was 46.6 years, adult literacy rate percentage ages 15 and above was 71.0%, combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio percentage was 52.5%. GDP per capita (PPP US\$) was \$1,852, people without access to an improved water source was 53% (statistical update 2008/2009. Country fact sheets-Nigeria)

The obvious deduction from the above scenario is that Nigerians in general are becoming increasingly impoverished. This is anchored on their lack of basic choices and opportunities to live a long and healthy life and to enjoy a decent standard of living. This situation is vividly reflected in variables such as shortness of life span, lack of basic education and lack of access to health services, safe water and reasonable nutrition. However, the paradox of this issues, which is baffling to development observers in Nigeria is, how this situation was allowed to germinate in the midst of abundance human and natural resources.

XV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The essence of examining every situation is to see the good in it and establish more concrete ways of continuing the right things and to see the bad and suggest a strategy to halt its menace. Poverty problem in Nigeria can best be addressed in the following ways: Government should heavily invest in the revitalization of basic infrastructure in the country because they are the bedrock of small and medium scale informal sectors of the economic activities and growth which are directly anti-poverty.

Rural poverty could be tackled by investment in agriculture sector through improved access to capital inputs, credits, markets and better farming practices. Evidence has shown that there is no country in Europe or the United States that do not give support to agricultural production through subsidies and other market incentives. The Nigerian government should emulate this good gesture and develop a good package of subsidies to our rural farmers since now we no longer have petroleum subsidy which was formally removed by the government of President Muhammadu Buhari in the early month of May, 2016. Government should intensify effort in corruption reduction because corruption breeds serious poverty although President Buhari have said all when he said “Nigerian we should kill corruption or corruption will kill us all”. Poverty could equally be defeated with the provision of quality education, stable electricity and good roads in our country.

At the community level, we suggest that people with means and vital skills should give helping hand to the needy by teaching them the skills and giving them the small businesses. By so doing, we have two things increase in social cohesion and improved social security.

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