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Poverty and Its Intractability in Nigeria: Causes and Consequences

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Abstract: Poverty is a disease that has continued to influence insecurity and other forms of social vices in the country which has, in turn, affected the growth and development of the nation. This study however examines poverty and its intractability in Nigeria: causes and consequences. The study uses Ordinary least square techniques to analyze the data collected for the study. The data was obtained from Federal Reserve Economic Data and NBS. The result shows a unit increase in UMP and POP will lead to an increase in the poverty rate by 0.035375 and 2.564296 respectively. Furthermore, the result shows that a unit increase in HDI will lead to a -4.347621 decrease in the poverty rate in Nigeria. The framework affirms that poverty is intractability in Nigeria. The study, therefore, recommends that Government, Non-governmental organizations, and private individuals should prioritize investing in human development.

Keywords: Poverty, Insecurity, Social Vices, Intractability, Unemployment, Population.

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INTRODUCTION

Poverty amidst plenty is the world's greatest challenge and it's expected to be fought with passion and professionalism by all nations (Sule & Sambo, 2020). Billions of people across the globe live in dehumanizing unclean conditions enriched with hunger, disease, desperation, and degradation (Aderounmu *et al.*, 2021).

The most affected region in the world by poverty incidence is Sub-Saharan Africa. The pervasive and chronic nature of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa created a wider vacuum for infrastructure and human development projects (Estache & Wodon, 2014). World Bank (2020) estimates show that 88 – 115 million people are extremely poor, with at least half of this number residing in Sub-Sahara Africa alone. It is also projected that an astonishing 87 percent of the world's poorest people will reside in SSA by 2030 if current economic challenges are not tackled.

Nigeria is one of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa which is paradoxically poor despite being rich with abundant natural mineral resources endowment and human resource availability (Sule & Sambo, 2020). In recent times, based on the poverty line of \$1.90 per day, 46.5% of Nigerians are extremely poor, with the World Poverty Clock naming Nigeria, 'the poverty capital of the world'. According to the World Poverty Clock (2019), as cited in Iheonu & Urama (2019), extreme poverty in Nigeria is increasing by almost six persons per minute.

According to the official figures published by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the incidence of poverty in Nigeria between 1980 and 2010 rose from 27.2 percent to 69.0 percent. Recently, NBS (2019), reported that 40 percent of people in Nigeria lived below its poverty line of 137,430 nairas (\$381.75) a year and this represents 82.9 million people. The World Bank (2018), revealed that almost half of the Nigerian population is living below the international poverty line of (\$2 per day) while unemployment peaked at 23.1% (Abiodun *et al.*, 2020).

Africa has the highest proportion of people living in extreme poverty, comprising about 413.3 million in 2015 (Beegle *et al.*, 2016). The high population growth rate has resulted in an increased level of unemployment. Unemployment is believed to be one of the major causes of poverty. For Nigeria, about 86.9 million people are living in absolute poverty, which represents almost 60% of its estimated over 200 million population (Kazeem, 2021). Nigeria is experiencing a huge population increase, and it is projected to be the world's third-largest country by 2050 (Osabohien *et al.*, 2021).

Unfortunately, while the population of extremely poor people has reduced at the global level, it remains regionally uneven and on the increase in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2020) with Nigeria being the worst hit (Sulaimon, 2020). According to UNICEF, one in every five out-of-school children in the world is in Nigeria, with the situation looking more severe in Northern Nigeria. This invariably creates the poverty

problem due to a lack of human capital development (Iheonu & Urama, 2019). However, the study seeks to investigate poverty and its intractability in Nigeria: Causes and consequences.

Given the above statement of the problem, this study seeks to provide answers to the following research questions: Does unemployment cause the poverty rate to increase in Nigeria? What is the impact of the human development index on the poverty rate in Nigeria? Does the increase in population a factor influencing the poverty rate in Nigeria? The main objective is therefore to analyze poverty and its intractability in Nigeria: Causes and consequences, while the specific objectives are to examine whether unemployment causes the poverty rate to increase in Nigeria; investigate the impact of the human development index on the poverty rate in Nigeria and examine if the population is a factor influencing poverty rate in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of poverty

Poverty is defined by many scholars in different ways because what is observed as poverty in one society may not be poverty in another society. According to the World Bank (1990, 2014), poverty is the inability to attain the minimum standards of living. Magaji & Aliyu (2007) defines poverty as a lack of employment.

According to Obadan (1997), poverty is multi-dimensional; it is characterized by a lack of purchasing power, exposure to risk, malnutrition, high mortality rate, low life expectancy, insufficient access to social and economic services, etc. Poverty has various manifestations which include among others: 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, and inadequate, unsafe and degraded environment and social discrimination and exclusion (Shaba *et al.*, 2018).

Poverty is seen as a constraint that leads to deterioration in peoples' purchasing power and living conditions resulting mainly from a lack of economic growth; permanent structural imbalances; weak growth of GDP and high growth rate of the population; underdevelopment of sectors and factors of production; degradation of natural resources; barriers to rural development as the engine of the economy; limited access of the majority of the population to basic social services; weak human institutions and governance capacity (Aluko & Magaji, 2020).

Chen *et al.* (2019) perceived poverty as a set of interrelated forces which are limited resources, need, the pattern of deprivation, lack of entitlement and basic security, exclusion, dependency, social class, inequality, economic position, and unacceptable hardship.

ToMagaji & Adamu (2010), poverty refers to a noticeable deprivation in well-being: the lack of basic capacity, resources, access, and security to participate effectively in society.

Causes and Consequences of Poverty

Literature shows that the causes of poverty are the consequences of poverty, this is evidenced in the study carried out by Yahie (1993) who reiterates 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 and unemployment.

Obadan (1997) identifies some factors as the causes of poverty among which are; inadequate access to employment opportunities, inadequate physical assets, inadequate access to markets, destruction of natural resources, lack of power to participate in the design of development programs, and inadequate access to assistance for those living at the margin.

De Haan (2000), notes that poverty could also be caused by the general exclusion of the people from social life. Education is regarded as one of the central components of human development and is built into the computation of the UNDP human development index as well as the multidimensional poverty index. The lack of education has been strongly associated with poverty and seems to be one of the causes and consequences of poverty which tends to further entrench the cycle of poverty (Kambon & Busby, 2000).

On the consequences of poverty, Aku *et al.* (1997) opine that there is a general loss of confidence in a society stricken by poverty and this renders government policies ineffective. Poverty also results in increasing the fragility and vulnerability of members of society to external influences. Furthermore, poverty makes production remain largely subsistence due to the lack of capital needed for expansion. Labor becomes intensive and marginal productivity remains low.

According to Adepaju (2018), one of the consequences of poverty is that it increases insecurity. In his words, 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 necessities.

The consequences of poverty can also lead to an increase in the crime rate; an increase in famine, an

increase in child labor; an increase in child trafficking, and other forms of socio vices which will in turn hinder the growth and development of the country.

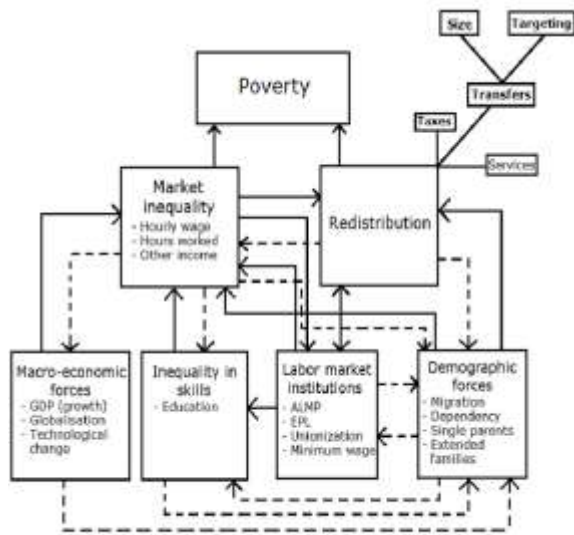


Figure 1: Poverty and its intractability
Source: Researchgate.net, (2022)

The above chart shows that consequences reinforce the causes of poverty in Nigeria. Hence there is poverty interactivity. Poverty is not restricted to any particular sector of the economy. It is a major development problem; and to the extent that it has economy-wide causes and consequences, it cannot be eradicated through hastily implemented ad hoc programs.

Empirical Review

Adepoju (2018) examines the determinant of multidimensional poverty transitions in rural Nigeria, employing the Alkire and Foster Measure of Multidimensional Poverty, Markov Model of Poverty Transitions, and the Multinomial Logistic Regression Model for analysis. Results showed that multidimensional poverty among rural households in Nigeria is mainly chronic (46.5%) while education and assets dimensions contributed most to the incidence and severity of multidimensional poverty among the households. Educational status, household size, number of assets owned, and ownership of land influenced transient poverty while marital status, household size, land ownership, and number of assets owned influenced chronic poverty. The study recommends the enactment and implementation of relevant laws against the marginalization of rural women in ownership of assets and intensification of efforts and incentives aimed at encouraging human capital development in rural areas.

Evans & Kelikume (2019) examine the impact of poverty, unemployment, inequality, corruption, and poor governance on Niger Delta militancy, Boko Haram terrorism, and Fulani herdsmen attacks in Nigeria. Using

annual data over the period 1980-to 2017, this study applied a fully modified OLS (FMOLS) method of estimation. The outcomes of the estimations showed that poverty, unemployment, inequality, corruption, and poor governance were significant causes of Niger Delta militancy, Boko Haram terrorism, and Fulani herdsmen attacks in Nigeria. In line with theories of deprivation, the study found that the various deprivations in the country led to violence and conflicts in the form of Niger Delta militancy, Boko Haram terrorism, and Fulani herdsmen attacks. Thus, violence was a result of the prevailing unpleasant socio-material conditions regarding survival, economic deprivation, structural inequities, environmental degradation, and governance deficits.

Osobohien *et al.* (2021) examine the impact of youth participation in agriculture as a primary occupation on income and poverty in Nigeria. With data from 683 systematically selected households, the study employed the Heckman two-stage model and the propensity score matching method (PSM). The results indicate that the gender of the youth and their determination to stay in agriculture significantly increases the probability that youth will participate in agriculture as a primary occupation. In addition, youth participation in agriculture as a main occupation contributes significantly to per capita household income and has the likelihood to reduce poverty by 17%. The daily wage rate of hired labor and the total farmland owned are the variables that positively explained the per capita income. Poverty was reduced by market access, having agriculture as a primary occupation, income from agricultural production, the total monetary value of all the household assets, determination to remain in agriculture, and the square of the respondents’ age. These results imply that creating employment for youth by engaging them in agriculture as a full-time occupation can increase their income and reduce poverty.

Aderounmu *et al.* (2021) used data from World Development Indicators (WDI) from 1992–to 2016 and examine the key principles influencing the poverty rate in Nigeria and their implications for policy interventions. The study used Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) model to analyze the data. The result showed that unemployment increases poverty by approximately 1.4, 1.5, and 3.3 percent in the short run while inflation reduces poverty by approximately 0.08 percent in the short run.

Nwosa & Ehinomen (2020) examine the relationship between income inequality, poverty, and economic growth in Nigeria over the period 1981 to 2018. The study used the autoregressive distributed lag technique. The findings revealed that inequality had a positive and significant impact on economic growth while poverty had an insignificant impact on economic growth. More so, it shows that poverty is insignificant in the relationship between income inequality and

economic growth while income inequality played a significant role in the relationship between poverty and economic growth.

Sule & Sambo (2020) examine the issues and perspectives of poverty in Gombe State particularly the causes, manifestations, and strategies of reduction. The study used primary and secondary sources of data. The data obtained were presented and analyzed using statistical tools such as tables and charts where applicable. The study found out that poverty is caused mainly due to poor government's macro and microeconomic policies and that the poverty level in Gombe State has reached an unbearable index of 74.6 %.

Abiodun *et al.* (2020) analyze the poverty status among smallholder arable farm households in southwestern Nigeria. The study used a well-structured questionnaire to elicit information from 120 selected farm household heads through a multi-stage sampling procedure. The data were analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics and Foster-Greer-Thorbecke (FGT) indices. The result is indicative of the failure of government at all levels to decisively root out poverty in the country.

Sulaimon (2020) evaluates the determinants of multidimensional poverty in Nigeria using 2016 cross-sectional data. Multidimensional poverty is proxied with Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). The data were analyzed using analysis of variance (ANOVA), Tukey's test, and ordinary least squares (OLS). The ANOVA results show significant variations in multidimensional poverty between geopolitical regions. Tukey's test reveals significant variations in multidimensional poverty between regions in the south and the north and most sub-regions in the north. There are no significant variations in multidimensional poverty between sub-regions in the south.

Human Capital Theory of Poverty

This study premises its framework on the Human Capital Theory of Poverty. The theory of human capital is rooted in the field of macroeconomic development theory (Schultz, 1993). Becker's (1993) classic book, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with special reference to education*, illustrates this domain. Human capital refers to the knowledge, expertise, and skill one accumulates through education and training.

Emphasizing the social and economic importance of human capital theory, Becker (1993) noted the most valuable of all capital is that investment in human beings. Becker distinguishes firm-specific human capital from general-purpose human capital. Human capital is knowledge gained through education and training in areas of value to a variety of firms such as generic skills in human resource development. Regardless of the application, Becker considers

education and training to be the most important investment in human capital. This study is linked to the human capital theory of poverty

METHODOLOGY

To analyze poverty and its intractability in Nigeria: Causes and consequences, a multiple regression model was built. The study adopted the work of Aderounmu *et al.* (2021) with modification. Their model was given as:

$$POVT = f (UNEMT, INFT, LNPRAP)$$

The functional model for this study is written as:

$$POV = f (UMP, POP, HDI)$$

The econometrics model is written as:

$$POV = \beta_0 + \beta_1 UMP + \beta_2 POP + \beta_3 HDI + U_t, \dots \dots \dots 3.2$$

Where:

POV = Poverty Rate, UMP= Unemployment Rate, POP= Population and HCD= Human capital Development Index

β_0 = Constant term, $\beta_1 - \beta_3$ = Set of parameters to be estimated and U_t = Error term

A priori expectation

Economic a-priori which is used to explain the sign and size of the parameters in the model and as well as explain the movement of variables (independent and dependent variables) in the models will be checked whether they conform to economic theory. The a-priori expectations are: $\beta_1 < 0$; $\beta_2 < 0$; $\beta_3 > 0$

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

	POV	UMP	HDI	POP
Mean	57.499 13	10.028 7	1.6616	1.49E+0 8
Median	55.21	9.61	1.67409 1	1.46E+0 8
Maximum	66.9	15.8	1.94907	1.96E+0
Minimum	52.99	7.81	1.35963 4	1.11E+0 8
Std. Dev.	4.6966 33	1.7358 19	0.18686 3	263415 45
Skewness	0.7195 82	2.2004 57	- 0.09213 5	0.23381 3
Kurtosis	1.9726 25	7.3562 06	1.71397 7	1.83990 7
Jarque-Bera	2.9964 11	36.746 88	1.61748 6	1.49930 4
Probabilit y	0.2235 31	0	0.44541 8	0.47253 1
Sum	1322.4 8	230.66	38.2168 1	3.43E+0 9

Sum Sq.	485.28	66.287	0.76819	1.53E+1
Dev.	4	46		6
	23	23	23	23
Observations				

Source: Authors' computation, 2021

The result of the descriptive statistics indicated that the mean POV for the period under study is 57.49913 while the mean value of HDI is 1.6616. It also indicates that the mean values of UMP and POP for the period under study are 10.0287 and 1.49E+08 respectively. The result of Skewness shows that the variables in the model are positively skewed. The result also showed that all the variables have a value greater than one for Kurtosis.

On the other hand, the result of the descriptive statistics indicates that POP has the highest variability among other variables given the value of the standard deviation of 26341545 which is larger than the standard deviation of the rest variables included in the model. The result of the Jarque-Bera test indicates that all the variables included in the model are normally distributed.

Table 1. Regression Estimate

Variab le	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	41.90894	14.05671	2.98142	0.0077
UMP	0.035375	0.097788	0.361749	0.7215
HDI	-4.347621	1.193476	-3.642821	0.0017
POP	2.564296	0.785964	3.262613	0.0041
R-square	0.614261			
Adjusted R-square	0.553355			
F-statistic	10.08536			
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000342		Durbin-Watson stat	
			1.787088	

Source: Authors' computation, 2021

The above result in table 1 shows that the coefficient of multiple determination (R^2) shows that about 61% of the variation in the dependent variable (POV) was explained by the change in the explanatory variables of the estimated model. This implies that the estimated model has a good fit. The adjusted coefficient of determination (R^2) also shows that after taking into

account the loss in the degree of freedom given additional entry of explanatory variables in the model, the estimated model has a good fit (that is: adjusted $R^2=55\%$). The high values of the F-statistic (that is: $F=10.08536$) indicate that the parameters of the estimated model are jointly or simultaneously statistically significant. This implies that the estimated model is good for forecasting, predicting, policy formulation, and analysis purposes. The values of the Durbin-Watson (d) statistic (i.e. $d=2$), suggest the presence of autocorrelation in the estimated model. This is based on the decision rule which states that the Durbin-Watson value close to 2 or 2 indicates the absence of autocorrelation. The forecasting power of the estimated model is more reliable in the absence of autocorrelation supported by the good explanatory power of the explanatory variables as evidenced by the high value of the adjusted R^2 .

The result also shows that a unit increase in the unemployment (UMP) rate will bring about 0.035375 increases in the poverty rate in Nigeria, thus the probability value shows that UMP has a significant impact on the poverty rate in Nigeria. Similarly, a unit increase in population will lead to 2.564296 increases in the poverty rate in Nigeria; the probability value shows that POP has a significant impact on the poverty rate in Nigeria. However, the result shows that a unit increase in the human development index will bring about a -4.347621 decrease in the poverty rate in Nigeria; the probability value shows that HDI has a significant impact on the poverty rate in Nigeria.

The implication of the above result is that increase in population and unemployment have a huge impact on the poverty rate in Nigeria. However, the reverse is the case for HDI, an increase in human development will reduce the poverty rate in Nigeria. The above result affirms that population growth and unemployment are major causes of the poverty rate in Nigeria. Also, negligence on the part of the government for not adequately investing in human development contributed to the increase in the poverty rate in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The objectives of the study were to examine whether unemployment causes the poverty rate to increase in Nigeria; to investigate the impact of the human development index on the poverty rate in Nigeria and to examine if the population is a factor influencing the poverty rate in Nigeria. To achieve these set objectives, the study estimated the variables underpinning the poverty rate in Nigeria with the use of OLS multiple regression. The findings show that population and unemployment have a significant impact on the poverty rate in Nigeria. The study affirms that the causes and consequences of poverty in Nigeria are intractable.

Recommendation

Based on findings, the study recommends the following

- Government, Non-governmental organizations, and private individuals should prioritize investing in human development this will in turn help to reduce poverty in the country.
- The Nigerian Government should adopt the policies of China in utilizing their population growth to increase the productivity growth of the country.
- Government should adopt a good expansionary policy to boost productivity thereby reducing the unemployment rate in Nigeria.

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