

Critical Review of Poverty Reduction Programme in Nigeria: Evidence from South-East Zone.

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Abstract: *This study is aimed at determining the impact of government poverty alleviation programmes in the south east zone of Nigeria, taking into consideration that poverty profile in Nigeria displays zonal differences, which of course is a reflection of the different agro-climatic conditions, economic zones and natural resource endowments. Despite the huge funds earmarked by Government for the various poverty alleviation programmes in the zone, poverty still abounds. The study employed primary data which was collected using questionnaire of the alternative response form. The researcher employed chi-square statistic to analyze data generated in the survey. The study revealed that poverty alleviation programmes of government have no significant impact in the south east zone. Hence, the study concludes among others that, the government poverty alleviation programmes did not have significant impact on the poverty needs of the south-east zone. The study recommended among others that sustainable poverty reduction strategy should not focus narrowly on social welfare measures, rather assets redistribution and creation of incentive structures that can enhance the rate and pattern of economic growth should be seen as essential component.*

Keywords: *Poverty, Poverty alleviation programmes, Human development index, economic development and income-poverty.*

I. Introduction

The phenomenon of poverty and its various alleviation strategies by the government have been quite noticeable in Nigeria especially since the second Republic. Various Governments have made deliberate efforts in reducing poverty, earmarking huge funds from the nation's coffers without any appreciable result. Official statistics show that poverty has continued to deepen over the years since 1980.

Although, poverty is a global phenomenon, its incidence in Nigeria has been increasingly high since 1980. Data from the federal office of statistics (2004) on poverty profile for Nigeria revealed that the incidence of poverty rose from 27.2% in 1980 to 46.3% in 1985 and then dropped slightly to 42.7% in 1992 and rose sharply to 65.6% in 1996 and then dropped again to 54.4% in 2004. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2013) a staggering 112.519 million Nigerians (that is, 69 percent of the country's population) live in poverty conditions in 2010 and by 2011 the figure rose to 71.5 percent of Nigerians living in poverty conditions. Ironically, the poverty incidence is rising at a time the GDP growth rate is put at 7.75 percent. Nigeria was ranked 142nd among 174 countries surveyed in 1997 by the United Nations Development program- Human Development index (HDI). In 1998, she fell to 146th position and fell among the 40 poorest nations in the world despite her being the sixth largest oil producing country in the world. More than a decade later, the United Nations Development Program – human development index (HDI) ranked Nigeria 154 out of 187 countries surveyed in 2012, 153 out of 186 countries surveyed in 2013, and 152 out of 187 countries surveyed in 2014, thus ranking Nigeria among the forty (40) poorest nations in the world.

These rankings contradicts the enormous revenue generated by the Nigerian government from crude oil price surge during this period, and further contradicts the bogus statistics often paraded by government and its agencies on the economy's growth trajectory. The HDI report on Nigeria for the period under review seem to collaborate the Mo Ibrahim index for African Governance which ranked Nigeria 41st position out of 52 African countries surveyed in 2013. The Mo Ibrahim index is rated according to performance across four categories of governance: Safety & Rule of law, Participation & Human Rights, Sustainable Economic Opportunity, and Human Development. Participation & Human Rights measures the protection of human rights, civil and political participation, and gender issues. Nigeria ranking in this category have continued to drop over the years and remained at 33rd out of 52 African countries surveyed in 2013.

Participation must be given attention in the issue of poverty alleviation programmes in that achieving success in the poverty alleviation programmes required all stakeholders (especially the poor for whom the programmes exist) must be carried along from planning to implementation stages as is the case with NGOs and international organizations poverty alleviation programmes. This gap in participation not only accounts for major failure of the programmes, but also explains the perceived apathy among the general public towards government poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria.

The description of Nigeria as a paradox by the World Bank has continued to be confirmed by events and official statistics in the country. The poverty level in Nigeria contradicts the country's immense wealth. Among other things, the country is enormously endowed with human, and natural resources. Particularly worrisome is that the country earned over US\$300 billion from petroleum alone during the last three decades of the twentieth century. Rather than record remarkable progress in the nation's socio-economic development, Nigeria retrogressed to become one of the 25th poorest countries in the world at the threshold of twenty-first century whereas she was among the richest 50 countries in the world in the early 1970s.

Economic development continues to be the determining factor to success in reducing poverty, but that poverty is also an outcome of economic, social and political process that interacts with and reinforces each other in ways that can ease or exacerbate the state of deprivation in which the poor people live. Furthermore, to conquer poverty requires comprehensive action at the local, state, national and global levels, to expand people's opportunities, empower them and increase their security.

Though it is generally believed that when there is economic growth, the benefits will trickle down to the poor, CBN Enugu zonal research department in 1998 concluded that the economic growth and basic needs approach to poverty alleviation so far adopted in Nigeria have not been effective in the south-east zone. As targeting approach through community based organizations was advocated in order to reach the core poor. They emphasized that since the causes of poverty in Nigeria are multi-dimensional, poverty alleviation programmes should also be multi-dimensional in approach, and hence they highlighted the three basic approaches that are usually employed. These are, the economic growth approach, which works through the trickle-down effect, the basic needs approach which tries to enhance economic growth, create employment and income generating opportunities for both the poor and non-poor, and the targeting/safety nest approach which work according to the Enugu zonal research department by providing specifically for the poor rather than spreading benefits thinly over the population. This provides an insight into the irreconcilable contradiction between economic growth trajectory and the high poverty incidence in Nigeria, particularly in the south-east zone in Nigeria. Hence this study seeks to investigate whether change in poverty alleviation programmes will bring about any predictive information on poverty incidence in the south-east zone in Nigeria.

II. Objective of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to critically review the poverty alleviation programmes of government in the south-east zone of Nigeria, while the specific objectives include:

1. To determine the extent of government poverty alleviation programmes have reduced poverty incidence in the south east zone of Nigeria.
2. To determine the impact of government poverty alleviation programmes on job creation in the south east zone.
3. To determine the impact of government poverty alleviation programmes on the reduction of rural poverty in the south-east zone of Nigeria.

III. Research Hypothesis

H₀: The Government poverty alleviation programme has no significant impact on the reduction of poverty in the South-East zone of Nigeria.

H₀: The Government poverty alleviation programme has no significant impact on job creation in the South-East zone of Nigeria.

H₀: The Government poverty alleviation programme has no significant impact on the reduction of rural poverty in the south-east zone of Nigeria.

IV. Conceptual Framework

A concise and universally accepted definition of poverty is elusive. Largely because it affects many aspects of the human conditions; including physical, moral and psychological. Different criteria have therefore been used to conceptualize poverty. Most analysis follows the conventional view of poverty as a result of insufficient income for securing basic goods and services. Others view poverty in part as a function of education, health, Life expectancy, child mortality etc.

An extensive study into the concept of poverty was first emphasized on relative deprivation by Runciman and Townsend. Townsend in particular helped redefined poverty not just as a failure to meet minimum nutrition or subsistence levels, but rather as a failure to keep up with the standard prevalent in a given society. The second shift was to broaden the concept of income-poverty, to a wider set of 'basic need'. Thus, poverty was further defined not just as lack of income, but also as lack of access to health services, education and other social services.

Poverty conceptualization gathered fresh momentum in 1980s. These include; the incorporation of non-monetary aspects, particularly as a result of Robert Chambers work on powerlessness and isolation, this helped to inspire greater attention to participation. The other was the new interest in vulnerability and security; association with better understanding of seasonality and of the impact of shock, pointing to the importance of assets and to social relations. Third was the broadening of the concept of poverty to a wider construct; livelihood. Fourth and perhaps more innovative is the theoretical work by Amartya Sen, which introduced the notion of food entitlement or access. He emphasized that income was only valuable in so far as it increases the capabilities of individuals and thereby permitted "functioning in society. Finally, was rapid in the study of gender. The debate moved from a focus on women alone i.e. women in development (WID) to gender relations i.e. gender and development (GAD). Policies to empower women and re-address gender poverty gap were given greater attention.

The 1990s saw further development of the poverty concept. The idea of well-being tends to act as metaphor for absence of poverty with emphasis on how poor people themselves view their situation; 'The voice of the poor'. Inspired by Sen (1984), UNDP developed 'the idea of human development; the denial of opportunities and choice ... to lead a long, healthy, creative life and to enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, dignity, self-esteem and the respect of others ...'

The hallmark in tracing the evolution of poverty conceptualization, measurement and determinants provide insight into the fault lines in poverty analysis and conceptual debate. These include:

Individual or household measures: Early measurement of poverty was based on the household levels, so as to capture intra-household factors and different types and causes of deprivation affecting men, women, children and old people.

Poverty perception as actual or potential: Some analyses conclude that the poor are those who are highly sensitive to shocks or not resilient. This group for example includes; small-scale farmers exposed to the risk of drought, the elderly etc.

Absolute or relative poverty: The World Bank currently uses a figure of US\$1 per day for absolute poverty. The alternative has been to define poverty as relative deprivation, for example as half mean income, or as exclusion from participation in society. Thus the European Union has decided that 'the poor shall be taken to mean persons, families and group of persons whose resources (material, culture and social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life'.

Thus, different criteria have therefore been used to conceptualize poverty. However, current thinking does allow some simplification. First, poverty needs to be understood as a problem at the individual rather than the household level. Second, the use of income or food measure of poverty. Third, the settled consensus that people move in and out of poverty and that seasonal, cyclical or stochastic stock are important in poverty conceptualization. Sen (1983) relates poverty to entitlement which are taken to be the various bundles of goods and services over which one has command, taking into cognizance the means by which such goods are acquired for example, money or coupons and the availability of the needed goods. Others see poverty in very broad terms, such as been unable to meet 'basic needs' (physical; food, healthcare, education, shelter etc and non-physical; participation, etc) requirements for a meaningful life (World Bank, 1996).

Broadly, poverty can be conceptualized in four ways; these are lack of access to basic needs; a result of lack of, or impaired access to productive resources; outcome of inefficient use of common resources; and result of: "exclusion mechanisms". Poverty as lack of access to basic needs is essentially economic or consumption oriented. It explains poverty in material terms and specifically employs consumption-based categories to explain the extent and depth of poverty, and establish who is and who is not poor. Thus, the poor are conceived as those individuals or households in a particular society incapable of purchasing a specified basket of basic goods and services. Basic goods are nutrition, housing, water, healthcare, and access to productive resources including education, working skills, tools, political and civil rights to participate in decisions concerning socio-economic condition (Streeten and Burki, 1978). The first three are the basic needs/goods necessary for survival. Impaired access to productive resources (agricultural land, physical capital and financial assets) leads to absolute low income, unemployment, under nourishment etc. Inadequate endowment of human capital is also a major cause of poverty. Generally, impaired access to resources shift the focus on poverty and it curtails the capability of individual to convert available productive resources to a higher quality of life (Sen, 1977) and (Adeyeye, 1987)

Poverty can also be the outcome of inefficient use of common resources. This may result from weak policy environment, inadequate infrastructure, weak access to technology, credit etc. Also, it can be due to certain groups using certain mechanisms in the system to exclude "problem group" from participating in economic development, including democratic process. In urban sub-Saharan Africa, Silver (1994) suggests three paradigms of exclusion; the individual's specialization that cannot be accommodated in the factor market (specialization paradigm); the various interest groups that establish control over the input of available resources, for example, on goods and labour markets and simultaneously foster solidarity within the respective interest groups (monopoly paradigm); and the individual which has a troubled relationship with the community

(solidarity paradigm). In many third world countries and indeed Nigeria, those in the control of state power, simply expropriate to themselves the lion share of the nation's wealth, which they squander, therefore, poverty has been described as a characteristic feature of socio-political structure.

At the third United Nations conference on least developed countries Obasanjo (2001) enumerated what poverty means to the people of the developing world as:

Lack of material well-being among our citizens expressed in terms of a daily struggle to meet the most basic need for food, water and shelter.

Lack of access to healthcare delivery

Lack of employment or lack of productive land or other income earning assets.

Lack of power and voice in the affairs of the state by those for whom the state clearly exists.

Is the absence of infrastructure and other social services.

Is the physical pain that comes from too little food and long hours of work.

Is the emotional pain stemming from daily humiliation of dependency.

Is the moral pain of being forced to make critical choices within severe limits of frugality.

V. Government Adopted Strategies over the Years

Poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria dated back to the 1970's during the pre-SAP era, the era of National development plans. During this era most of the programmes put in place by the Government though had some slight effects on poverty reduction; the target population was not specified as poor people or sector. These programmes include among others, the River basin Development Authorities (RBDA), the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), the Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS), the Rural Electrification Scheme (RES), and the Rural Banking Program (RBP). These programmes were designed to take care of such objectives as employment generation; enhancing agricultural output and income; and stemming the tide of rural-urban drift, which no doubt affected poverty reduction. Despite some significant degree of success made by some of these programmes most of them were abandoned mid-way. The rural banking program (RBP) and the Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS) failed to deliver the desired credits for agricultural and rural transformation because a lot of savings mobilized in the rural areas were diverted to urban areas in form of credits/investment (Ogwunike, 2002).

Other notable poverty reduction programmes that were put in place in Nigeria before the advent of SAP include, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) set up in 1976, Free and Compulsory Primary Education (FCPE) set up in 1977 by the Obasanjo led military junta, Green Revolution (GR) established in 1980, and Low cost Housing Scheme (LCHS). Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) and Green Revolution (GR) programmes were established primarily to boost agricultural production and improve the general performance of the agricultural sector. But as we well know, OFN ended up in a private farm in Otta, owned by Olusagun Obasanjo, the then military head of State, and so ended the lofty dreams of emancipation of the poor farmers the program was designed to benefit. Taken clue from the experience of OFN, the Green Revolution established in 1980 was also hijacked and circumvented by the self-serving politicians of the second republic.

The era of structural adjustment program (SAP) in Nigeria, saw the Government make conscious policy efforts toward poverty alleviation. Although, the implementation of SAP further worsened the living conditions of many Nigerians especially the poor. Other programmes such as National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) and Strategic Grains Reserves Program (SGRP) have impacted positively on the agricultural sector and by implication reduced poverty. Also is the Primary Healthcare Scheme (PHCS), the Guinea Worm Eradication program (GWEP) also recorded tremendous success, but the gains of these poverty reduction programmes (NALDA, SGRP, PHCS and GWEP) could not be sustained due to lack of funding, structural deficiencies, bribery and corruption. The various programmes that were introduced over the years could be categorized into two groups: multi - sectoral programmes and sectoral programmes.

VI. Multi -Sectoral

The Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI): The programme had a broad coverage and saw all rural areas in Nigeria as its constituency. It was a major programme established by the Federal Government with the aim of not only opening up rural areas, but also improving the living conditions of the vulnerable poor CBN (1998). Both State and local Governments were expected to be involved in the execution of the programme. The programme was however criticized by the Enugu zonal Research department of CBN (1998) because it had no special design to meet the needs of most vulnerable poor. It had two major shortcomings. First, there was no effective coordinating mechanism among the three tiers of government, and secondly, between DFRRI and the three tiers of governments.

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE): Employment creation is one way of reducing poverty, malnutrition and increased earnings. To achieve these objectives, the Federal Government launched the NDE

programme in March 1987 to combat unemployment in the country. The measures evolved to achieve this include; training schemes for self-employment; self -enhancement as well as the use of labour intensive projects. The NDE instituted four well-articulated programmes namely: Rural Employment promotion (REP); Small Scale Enterprises (SSE); vocational skill Development (VSD); and special public works (SPW) for the realization of its set objectives.

The Rural Employment promotion (REP):This was designed to provide self-employment for graduates and non-graduates who wish to make career in agriculture. Beneficiaries under this scheme were granted loans to set-up their own arable or livestock or agro - allied projects.

The Small Scale Enterprises Scheme (SSES):This programme as the name implies was designed to promote self-employment among Nigerian Youths by inculcating in them the spirit of self-employment, creativity and self-reliance. The programme provides training for beneficiaries who were later granted loans to set up own-managed small scale business.

The Vocational Skill Development (VSD):The programme was introduced on the realization that large proportions of unemployed Nigerians are youths who lack marketable skills. Under this programme, youths are trained in one of the many available trades, and on completion some of them are provided with resettlement loans with which they could set up their own businesses.

The Special Public Works (SPW):This programme was established as a stop-gap measure for graduate and school leavers who are actively seeking for employment. Participants in this programme are engaged in construction works involving labour intensive techniques

The Better life programme (BLP):This was a gender specific programme which was meant to improve the life of rural women. The major objective of the programme was to harness the potentials of the rural women in order to boost their economic activities and improve their incomes. Large sums of money were voted for this programme. However, the goals of this programme were not achieved.

Family Support Programme (FSP):The family support programme (FSP) came into being in 1994 as a replacement for Better life for rural women programme (BLRWP). The programme aimed at improving the social and economic standard of the Nigeria family and the eradication/ reduction of destabilizing factors such as poverty, infant mortality, unemployment and rural urban drift. It also focused attention on contemporary social vices such as drug abuses, cultism, marital crisis, indiscipline and harmful traditional practices. It aims at effectively utilizing the institution of the family to enhance national development.

Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP):As an off shoot of FSP, the Family Economic Advancement programme (FEAP) was introduced in the 1997 Federal Government budget to provide the poor with an additional opportunity to source credits for productive ventures at affordable terms. In 1998 Federal Government budget, huge sums were allocated for this programme, unfortunately, it did not go beyond official launching of the programme in all the south east states.

VII. Sectoral Programme

In 1986, some sectoral programmes that will help to alleviate poverty were established in the areas of agriculture, finance, education etc. These programmes include among others; Agricultural Development programme (ADP), National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA), Peoples Bank (PB), Community Banks (CB), etc.

Agricultural Development Programme (ADP):The purpose of this programme was to stimulate increased food production and enhance the income of the rural population by providing greater and improved assistances to rural farmers. Some activities of ADP from 1995-1997 include the provision of water pumps and drilling of boreholes for the rural communities, other objectives of the programme include; planning, monitoring and evaluation of project activities as they affected agricultural production, income and well-being of small holders in the agricultural sector.

National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA):Established in 1991 to execute the national agricultural land development programme, and moderate the chronic problems of low levels of utilization of abundant farm land and rural labour as well as address the problem of high cost of land development in Nigeria.

The main target of the program is to develop 30,000 - 50,000 hectares of land yearly in each state of the Federation, but unfortunately, the presences of NALDA is not being felt at all in the south east states.

Peoples Bank:In order to provide access to credit to the poor who would not obtain loan from the conventional banks to engage in productive activities, the peoples Bank was established The bank was to give out loans to petty traders, food sellers, tailors, weavers, electricians, etc. this was to empower the poor to pull out of poverty.

Community Banks:These were established to address the peculiar but significant needs of the economy of a particular community in terms of catering for the credits and savings needs of small producers where ordinarily they would be neglected by the conventional bank, CBN (1990). These banks promote rural activities in areas such as agriculture, commerce, arts/crafts, agro and mineral based cottage and small scale industries, vocational and skills, transportation and other rural economic activities.

Theoretical Framework

Until recently, little attempts were made to formalize theories on poverty. Social scientists, including Karl Marx, had been primarily concerned with the evolution of economic, political and social inequality. Economists had devoted much interest to the factor shares of production and distribution rather than to the unequal distribution of resources, and where they had studied the latter, they had confined themselves to studies of wages. However, some emerging theories of poverty will be discussed as follows:

Minority Group Theory

This theory is associated with Rowntree (1901), it classified the society into categories and then identifies a cycle of poverty. Children, young married couples with children and old people are very susceptible and run the highest risk of descending into poverty. The division of the society into different social categories and the allocation to some of relatively low resources and status is considered the primary concern of poverty studies. Systemic mechanisms are put in place by which some groups are allocated low resources and of course low status as the outcome of action on behalf of other privileged groups. If these minority groups are disqualified from receiving new services established by the state, or new kinds or amounts of resources made possible by a growing economy, they can experience a gradual fall into deprivation and poverty without there being any explicit discrimination against them.

Classical Economic Theory of Poverty

Only in recent years has economic theory begun to be applied to the phenomenon of poverty. In classical theory, attention was concentrated on the aggregate distribution of profits, rent and wages. Ricardo, for example, described the principal problem of political economy as the division of the earth's produce 'among three classes, namely; the proprietor of the land, the owner of the stock or capital necessary for its cultivation, and the labourers by whose industry it is cultivate'. Little or no attention was devoted to the explanation of the distribution of personal incomes and the relationship between personal incomes and aggregate shares of profits, rents and wages. However classical economists that came later began to give increasing attention to inequality in the distribution of earnings and then what happens to factors affecting individual earnings rather than family incomes in explaining inequality.

Simultaneous Multiplicative' Theories of Poverty

This theory was put forward by Lydall (1968) state that the empirical basis for stochastic process theories is inadequate and not enough depend on the underlying socio-economic factors known to influence the distributions in these stochastic models. Therefore to take into account both of the widening variance of income in successive cohorts and of the constancy of variance of income of the whole population it is imperative to capture a large number of different factors to apply at any single time rather than operating multiplicatively over long periods.

Dual Labour Market and Radical Theories

A large number of economists have now begun to adopt approaches which depart from orthodox assumptions. Some of them direct attention to the nature of the demand for labour and to forces other than individual characteristics which determine wage levels. Others direct attention to 'aspects of the labour market such as trade unions, employers' monopoly power and government intervention, which mean that there is no longer perfect competition'.

Studies of local conditions have favoured adoption of a concept of a segmented labour market. Evidence had accumulated in favour of there being an internal labour market within an established firm or plant, which appeared in many respects to be insulated from the outside labour market. This observation

had further led to the conception of a dual labour market. On the one hand, attention was called to a 'primary' sector in which employment was stable, where pay was good and where there were strong unions. On the other, attention was called to a 'secondary' sector in which employment was unstable, where pay tended to be low, prospects of promotion poor and unions of small importance. In explaining poverty, then, emphasis was placed as much on the disadvantageous characteristics of the secondary labour market as upon the characteristics of the individuals holding such jobs.

Elites Theory of Poverty

The elite theory of poverty was based on the principle of 'conditional welfare for the few' and took its root in the early nineteenth century when leading elites was of the view that poverty was necessary for industry and the overall growth in output. They argued that the laboring poor would not be motivated to work if they are not hungry and poor. The elite theory of poverty argues that the structure of political power in a society determines the extent and distribution of poverty in that society. The ruling minority elites, establishes and legitimizes the processes of allocation of opportunities and resources for which the societal structure depends. Therefore, poverty is a socio-economic phenomenon whereby the resources available to society are appropriated by the few elites in power to the detriment of the larger population who are in constant struggle to meet their basic needs. So people are poor because certain political, economic and social structures have been imposed on them.

VIII. Empirical Framework

Bello et al, (2010) examine poverty situation in Nigeria by employing the data of economic growth and millennium development goals (MDGs) expenditure. The methodology employed was panel data analysis consisting of pooled model, fixed-effects, random-effects and weighted least square. The results revealed that, a unit increase in per capita GDP led to 0.6 percent increase in poverty. Similarly, a unit increase in MDG expenditure resulted in 11.56 units increase in relative poverty in the pooled model. The study concluded that economic growth and MDG spending has not substantially reduced poverty over the sample period.

Atoloye (1997) in the study "Strategy for growth -led poverty alleviation in Nigeria." asserts that rapid and sustained economic growth utilizing a new industrial strategy calls for proficient use of the natural advantages of modern infrastructure, which further serves as a poverty reducing strategy, noting that economic growth can only progress in a stable macroeconomic environment and with the right combination of factors of production. According to the study, economic growth cannot be sustained if it gives rise to trade deficit that cannot be financed. Thus, "poverty becomes accentuated when current resources are being used to finance obligations. The study tries to establish link between heavily indebted countries and high poverty level, suggesting further that income that would have been spent on the provision of basic infrastructure are used to service external debts.

Ibrahim et al, (2008) assess the determinants of poverty as well the poverty coping strategies among farming households in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The study employed simple random sampling to select 150 farming households and used Costs of Calorie method and Discriminant Analysis to determine the incidence of poverty as well as its determinants respectively. The incidence of poverty among the sampled households was found to be high and the major determinants of poverty include household size, number of income sources of the household head, number of household members employed outside agriculture and the number of literate adult males and females in the household. The major poverty coping strategies include skipping of meals, reduction in the quantity of meals served and engaging in wage labour. The study recommends that the farming households should be effectively involved in the formulation of strategies for imparting knowledge on family planning to the farming households.

Maduagwu (2000) in the study "Alleviating poverty in Nigeria" were of the view that both foreign and domestic investment will enhance economic growth and development, but other essentials are required to achieve the goal of economic growth and development such as rule of law, and provision of infrastructure. The study stressed that rule of law is essential because "it ensures life and personal security, it also provides a stable framework of rights and obligations which can help to reduce political risks to investors and to cut down transportation costs". According to the study, business does not thrive in an environment of unchecked abuses of political power, unchecked violence by security personnel, and unchecked corruption (official and non-official corruption)". Corroborating 1997, World Development report which concluded that no market can exist without effective property rights, and that effective property rights depends on fulfilling the following three conditions; protection from theft, violence and other acts of perditions; protection from arbitrary government actions-ranging from unpredictable, ad hoc regulations and taxes to outright corruption that disrupt business activities; and a reasonable fair and predictable judiciary.

Bakare (2010) examines the determinants of the urban unemployment in Nigeria. The variables for include level of unemployment and demand for labour, supply of labour, population, inflation, capacity utilization, gross capital formation and nominal wage rate. Using time series secondary data and parsimonious error correction mechanism, the study found that the rising nominal wages and the accelerated growth of population which affected the supply side through a high and rapid increase in labour force relative to the absorptive capacity of the economy appear to be the main determinant of high unemployment in Nigeria.

Evbuomwan (1997) in the study "Poverty Alleviation through Agricultural projects: A Review of world Bank Assisted Agricultural Development Projects in Nigeria" suggested that poverty alleviation goes beyond short term relief and the satisfaction of basic human needs, but also the development strategies of increasing the long-term productive potential and therefore the incomes of the poor. According to the study, it is necessary to integrate macroeconomic policies, sector planning and sound project interventions. The study suggests that in an agrarian economy like Nigeria, one of the best means available to governments for alleviating poverty is agricultural projects, the study emphasized that despite the fact Nigeria has launched various schemes, programmes and projects in order to increase output and well-being of the masses, most of them did not stand the test of time due to poor planning.

Okunmadewa (1998) in the study "Domestic and international response to poverty alleviation in Nigeria" was of the view that in Nigeria, international agencies such as European Union, Department for international Development (DFID), Food Foundation and the UN group are very active in poverty reduction activities. The UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, ILO, WHO, and the role of NGOs in poverty alleviation in Nigeria has been observed to be a veritable and effective channels to ensure programme implementation effectiveness, particularly in poverty reduction projects in view of on-the-ground presence and first-hand knowledge of the needs and interest of the poor.

IX. Research Methodology

This study adopts the political economy approach. The researcher considered this research design most appropriate for reviewing a subject such as poverty, lacking in theoretical depth. According to Ake (1981) "this method based on dialectical materialism assures the material conditions, particularly the economic system, as the decisive formative system, the decisive influences on social life, and constituted the essential point of departure for discovering the laws of motions of a society and for explaining it."

Sample and Sampling Technique

The researcher sampled 267 as true representative of the target population. In selecting samples for this research, the researcher adopted the stratified sampling technique as the most suitable. The samples were drawn from the five states in the south-east with the help of research assistants on the categories of urban settlements; rural settlements; town unions; and Youth Associations. Then, within each group the simple random sampling (SRS) technique using balloting was then applied.

Data Treatment Technique

Data obtained through the research instrument were analyzed using Chi-square (X^2) statistics. The choice of Chi-square (X^2) statistic was inform by the nature of the data obtained which are basically in nominal scale, also the ease of manipulation of data using the Chi-square (X^2) underscores its use. The Chi-square (X^2) formula is given as:

$$X^2 = \frac{(F_o - F_e)^2}{F_e}$$

Where: X^2 = chi- square

F_o = observation frequency

F_e = Expect frequency

Decision Rule

The null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted if the chi-square calculated is less than the critical value, otherwise, it is rejected and the alternative hypotheses accepted.

X. Analysis of Results and Discussion of Findings

Data Analysis

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by State of Residence

State of Residence	Actual Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaire Returned	Percentage Returned
Abia	60	50	18.7
Anambra	60	46	17.2
Ebonyi	50	42	15.7

Enugu	60	60	22.5
Imo	70	69	25.8
Total	300	267	100.0

SOURCE: Field survey 2015.

Table 2: Government's poverty alleviation programmes are performing?

Response	Wage Earners	% Response	Self-employed	% Response
Yes	50	30	31	30
No	115	70	71	70
Total	165	100	102	100

Source: Field survey 2015.

Quite a number of the respondents agreed that government have been trying to reduce poverty as majority of the respondents are not aware of the poverty alleviation programmes (PAP) in their states. Table 2 shows that not much has been achieved in reducing poverty in the south east.

Table 3: PAP of the Government have created job opportunities in the state?

Response	Wage Earners	% Response	Self-employed	% Response
Yes	50	33.3	31	26.5
No	100	66.7	86	73.5
Total	150	100.0	117	100.0

Source: Field survey 2015.

The table above shows that total respondents of 190 for both groups of wage and Self-employed, constituting 71.75% total respondents do not agree that the various poverty alleviation programmes of governments have created the expected job opportunities.

Table 4: PAP of the Government have reduced rural-poverty in the state

Response	Wage Earners	% Response	Self-employed	% Response
Yes	50	38.5	40	29.2
No	80	61.5	97	70.8
Total	130	100.0	137	100.0

Source: field survey 2015.

It was observed that a total of 212 respondents representing 79.4% of the respondents do not agree that government poverty reduction programmes have made any impact in reducing rural poverty in the South East zone.

Table 5: PAP have reduced poverty in the state

Response	Wage Earners	% Response	Self-employed	% Response
Yes	45	27	26	25.5
No	120	73	76	74.5
Total	165	100.0	102	100.0

Source: field survey 2015.

It was observed that a total of 196 respondents do not agree that poverty reduction has taken place in any reasonable form in their states of residence within the South East. Out of these 196 respondents, 120 are wage earners while 76 are non-wage earners representing 73% and 74.5% respectively.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis I

H₀: The Government poverty alleviation programmes have no significant impact on the reduction of poverty in the South-Eastern states in Nigeria.

Table 5: Observation Frequency (Fo)

Response	Wage Earners	Self-employed	Total
Yes	45	26	71
No	120	76	196
Total	165	102	267

Table 6: Expected Frequency (Fe)

Response	Wage Earners	Self-employed	Total
Yes	44	27	71
No	121	75	196
Total	165	102	267

Using $X^2_c = \frac{\sum(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$

E_i

With $(r - 1)(c - 1) = 1$ Degree of freedom (df) at 5% level of significance.

$$X^2_c = \frac{(45 - 44)^2}{44} + \frac{(26 - 27)^2}{27} + \frac{(120 - 121)^2}{121} + \frac{(76 - 75)^2}{75}$$

$$X^2_c = 0.023 + 0.037 + 0.008 + 0.013 = 0.081$$

$$X^2_{0.05}(1) = 3.841$$

KEY

X^2_c = Chi Square calculated

$X^2_{0.05}(1)$ = Chi-square table value at 5% level of significance, and $df = 1$

Inference

Since $X^2_c = 0.08 < X^2_{0.05}(1) = 3.841$, we therefore accept H_0 , and conclude that the Governments poverty alleviation programmes have not significantly reduced poverty in the south east zone.

Hypothesis II

H_0 : The Government poverty alleviation programmes have no significant impact on job creation in the South-Eastern states in Nigeria.

Table 7: Observation Frequency (Fo)

Response	Wage Earners	Self-employed	Total
Yes	50	31	81
No	100	86	186
Total	150	117	267

Table 8: Expected Frequency (Fe)

Response	Wage Earners	Self-employed	Total
Yes	46	35	81
No	104	87	186
Total	150	117	267

Using $X^2_c = \frac{\sum(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$

E_i

With $(r - 1)(c - 1) = 1$ Degree of freedom (df) at 5% level of significance.

$$X^2_c = \frac{(50 - 46)^2}{46} + \frac{(31 - 35)^2}{35} + \frac{(100 - 104)^2}{104} + \frac{(86 - 87)^2}{87}$$

$$X^2_c = 0.37 + 0.46 + 0.15 + 0.01 = 0.97$$

Critical Chi-square value at 0.05 level of significance $df = 1$. $\chi^2 = 3.841$

Inference

Since $X^2_c = 0.97 < X^2_{0.05}(1) = 3.841$, we therefore accept H_0 , "Government poverty alleviation programmes have no significant impact on job creation in the South-Eastern states in Nigeria".

Hypothesis III

H_0 : The Government poverty alleviation programmes have no significant impact on the reduction of rural poverty in the south-east zone of Nigeria.

Table 9: Observation Frequency (Fo)

Response	Wage Earners	Self-employed	Total
Yes	50	40	90
No	80	97	177
Total	130	137	267

Table 10: Expected Frequency (Fe)

Response	Wage Earners	Self-employed	Total
Yes	44	46	90
No	86	91	177
Total	130	137	267

$$\text{Using } X^2_c = \frac{\sum(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$$

E_i

With $(r - 1)(c - 1) = 1$ Degree of freedom (df) at 5% level of significance.

$$X^2_c = \frac{(50-44)^2 + (40-46)^2 + (80-86)^2 + (97-91)^2}{44+46+86+91}$$

$$X^2_c = 0.82 + 0.78 + 0.42 + 0.40 = 2.42$$

Critical Chi-square value at 0.05 level of significance $df = 1$. $\chi^2 = 3.841$

Inference

Since $X^2_c = 2.42 < X^2_{0.05}(1) = 3.841$, we therefore accept H_0 "The Government poverty alleviation programmes have no significant impact on the reduction of rural poverty in the south-east zone of Nigeria".

XI. Conclusion

This study concludes that the Governments poverty alleviation programmes Nigeria:

- i. The government poverty alleviation programmes did not have significant impact on the poverty needs of the south-east zone in Nigeria.
- ii. Have not created the much needed stimuli for empowering the rural poor.
- iii. Government's poverty alleviation programmes did not create the much needed job opportunities for the teeming army of unemployed in the south-east.
- iv. Poverty alleviation programmes in the south-east operated as political settlement among top politicians of the ruling political parties, and so the poor whom the programme exists in the first place were completely alienated.

Thus, poverty alleviation programmes have not reduced poverty in the south east, though it has not been stated here that the south-east is the worst of the six geo-political zone of the country. The scourge has been found to have more effect on the rural areas where majority of the people live.

XII. Recommendations

The researcher therefore recommends as following:

- Sustainable poverty reduction strategy should not focus narrowly on social welfare measures, rather assets redistribution and creation of incentive structures that can enhance the rate and pattern of economic growth should be seen as essential component.
- Governments poverty alleviation programmes (PAP) must pay adequate attention to agriculture, especially rural farmers. These farmers should be reached through cooperatives at ward levels in the rural in order to effectively reduce the high rural-poverty, and subsequently reduce the prevailing 'contractor-farmers' syndrome in the south east whose acres and plantations are only seen on letter headed papers. These 'contractor-farmers' use their positions in governments to hijack state allocations and incentives made for the (unorganized and uninformed) rural poor as is the case with fertilizers and micro - credits.
- Targeted, and participatory poverty reduction programmes should be emphasized for the beneficiaries to participate effectively in the implementation, monitoring and maintenance of projects.
- The proposed poverty alleviation Trust fund is a welcome idea, and also very important in the poverty reduction process and should be decentralized so as to serve as a veritable source for states and local government councils to obtain conditional grants that can enable them alleviate poverty in their respective areas through effective social expenditure programs under the supervision of this agency.

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