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Sociological Approach to Poverty Alleviation Programme in Nigeria

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Abstract- Poverty is a worldwide phenomenon, it has been observed that Nigeria is also among the poorest countries in the world despite having the highest GDP base in Africa, Nigeria is still among the top five poorest countries in the world. At the IMF/world spring meetings, Jim Yong Kim stated that Nigeria is among one of the top five countries with the largest number of poor people. The World Bank president said Nigeria ranked third in the world while India ranked number one with 33percent of the world poor, china is ranked second with 13percent of the world poor, followed by Nigeria where 7percent of the world poor live in, Bangladesh 6percent, Indonesia, Pakistan, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Kenya would encompass almost 80percent of the extreme poor. (power, 2014).

On this bases the writer focuses on the definition of poverty in sociological context, also the core causes of poverty Corruption in Nigeria include Low Income, Laziness, Lack of Human Resources, Social Economic Problems, and Illiteracy. The paper thus applied sociological methodology as a paradigm in solving the menace of poverty in Nigeria.

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I. INTRODUCTION

It is alarming to discover that the platform in which the federal government of Nigeria lunch for job seekers which is N-Power which aims to employ 5000 graduates in the nation crashed on 12th of June, 2016; been the next day the website was launched, due to massive applications by interested candidates. (Adoyi, 2016). This suggests that the level of poverty in our society can be referred as social ethical, religious and a political problem which needs to be alleviated with a proper method.

Also in recent time we are alerted of a global warming in other country which we believe poverty in the country is a contributing factor too. According to Awojobi who believe that some quarters contribute to climate change through deforestation, (the cutting of trees in our forest) to make charcoal for domestic and industrial use, and because of the menace of poverty many people who cannot afford gas or kerosene now

use charcoal or wood, so as poverty is eating up individual in the society so also the climate change is moving toward global warming. (Awojobi, 2015).

The term poverty imply undesirable states. People suffering from poverty need to be helped so that their situation can be changed. In other word, poverty has been seen as social problems? These are the salient questions these paper will answer from social perspective: the definition of poverty, the causes, effects and also social ethical approach in alleviating poverty in Nigeria.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK IN DEFINING POVERTY

How we define poverty is critical to political, policy and academic debates about the concept, since the 19th century. When rigorous studies of poverty first began, researchers tried to establish a fixed standard against which to measure poverty. There have been three main areas of controversy over the basic principles on which such a standard can be based.

1. Absolute or Relative poverty

First, researchers have disputed whether poverty should be measured in absolute or relative terms. Some writers have argued that there is a common minimum standard that can be applied to all societies, below which individuals can be said to be in poverty. Measures of absolute poverty are usually based upon the idea of subsistence which means people are in poverty if they do not have the resources to remain in human life.

2. Materials and Multiple Deprivation and Social Exclusion

The second area of controversy concern whether poverty can be defined purely in materials terms, or whether the definition should be wide. Some sociologists assume that poverty consists of a lack of material resources, other scholars believe poverty involves more than material deprivation. They see poverty as multiple deprivation which can have many facets. For example inadequate education opportunities, unpleasant working conditions, or powerlessness can all be regarded as aspects of poverty.

3. Inequality and Poverty

The third area is concerned with the relationship between inequality and poverty. From one point of view

any society in which there is inequality is bound to have poverty, in other words, if all those individuals with below average income were defined as poor, then the only way the poverty will be eradicated would be to abolish all inequality in income. This is because if some people have higher than average incomes, inevitably others must fall below the average.

The poor within the society can then be defined as those whose income or resources fall so far short of the average that they do not have an acceptable standard of living. In 1995 Copenhagen world summit on development, the definition had two tiers; one was an absolute definition and the other was an overall definition. Power Brand defined poverty as:

A condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to services. (Nation, 1994/95).

Overall poverty was seen as a border concept incorporating absolute poverty but also including 'lack of participation in decision-making and civil, social and cultural life'. This is close to definitions of relative poverty and social exclusion.

According to the vice president of Nigeria Yemi Osinbajo, he stated that about 110 million Nigerian were still living below poverty level despite the policies of past government to improve their welfare. (Nwabughio, August 20, 2015). Furthermore G.K. Oshitelu in his articles, Orita Journals, Vol 33 believes that poverty is more vividly recognized than defined. He believes that poverty transcends economic description and analysis. And According to the Dictionary, poverty is the state or condition of having little or no money, goods, or means of support, condition of being poor or deficiency of necessary or desirable ingredients. (Galbraith, 2010). If this is true then there is need to critically look into the causes of poverty and proffer social ethical solution to the concept.

a) *Causes of Poverty in Nigeria*

The causes of poverty will be listed below and each will be explained accordingly.

- A. Corruption
- B. Low income
- C. Laziness
- D. Lack of Human Resources (leaving agriculture to urban area)
- E. Social economic problems
- F. Illiteracy

A. *Corruption*

According to President Buhari through his vice Yemi Osinbajo, he said "Corruption in our country is so endemic that it constitutes a parallel system. It is the primary reason for poor policy choices, waste and of course, bare-faced theft of public resources. "It is the

main reason why a potentially prosperous country struggle to feed itself and provide jobs for millions. (Onoyume & Nwabughio, 2015). According to (Michael Haralambos, Martin Holborn, Steve Chapman, Stephen Moore, 2013), expanded the work of Karl Marx which believed there are two major social groups: a Ruling class and Subject class, the power of the ruling class comes from its ownership and control of the means of production (land, capital, labour power, buildings and machinery).

The ruling class exploits and oppresses the subject class. As a result, there is a basic conflict between the two classes. In Nigeria today the various institution of society, such as the legal and political systems, are instruments of the ruling class so the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. (P, 30).

Michael Egbosiuba (2016) describes poverty as a result of.

Corruption which has inflicted incalculable harm to Nigeria. It has destroyed the morale and economic fabric of the nation. Development of Nigeria has been stunted by rampant, wholesale diversion and embezzlement of public fund. This unspeakable crime is happening in all sectors of the economy millions and billions of Naira allocated for various project just disappears in the thin air. The money are basically funneled into private accounts. (Para. 1).

It is alarming that despite the slogan of re-branding, Nigeria still found herself wallowing and struggling under poverty, this has also brought about low self-esteem because it is possible you work for more than 12 hours and still earn nothing. Michael Egbosiuba was right when he said most of the ruling class diverts our money to their own private account; this made things get more worsen in the sense that things will not be done at the right time. It is pathetic when you ask a young or average citizen that what he/she will offer when given a notable position in our country, the answer you will here will be shocking because an average Nigerian now believes corruption is a way of live.

B. *Low Income*

Due to the fact that the ruling class dominates every sector in the country and they are likely to change or pass the leadership mantle to their children in public sector, it is very hard to have a beneficial return for the public, because the right person is not in the right place. Thus, there is a continuum of mass embezzlement of public funds, unjustifiably reducing and delaying the salaries of the public sector workers. We must also believe that even if the right person is chosen, he or she is usually susceptible to obliging to bribery, an amount that is illegally garnered and must terminate one day.

C. *Laziness*

It should be noted here that some people are simply poor because of gross laziness, some rely on the other before he or she could be feed, a situation when

you see a young person without any form of disability asking and begging for money and through these extorts, so many people become lazy to work. More unfortunately is that laziness will definitely bring about weakness to the mind and soul, laziness in one way or the other will affect the growth of the country and it will also tag the country an irresponsible society.

D. Poor Infrastructures and Lack of Quality Human Resources

Poor road network, bad roads, lack of infrastructure, poor electricity, incessant retrenchment of staffs in the banking sectors because they can't afford their salary, reduced interest and attention on agriculture, importation of domestic things that we can otherwise produce here, rural-urban migration, and when they cannot meet the financial expenditures of the urban area, they engage in some mysterious and criminal vices; these and many more have contributed to the improvishness of our society. Similarly, the educational sectors also contribute to the lack of human resources as they train graduates to seek for jobs instead of providing solutions and becoming employers of labour. Also, our academic curriculum is focused on theory and not practically oriented. What is taught in the classroom is usually two (2) decades behind the current realities of what is obtainable in the workplace.

E. Social Economic Problems

There is no gain saying that the world economy is not the same for the past few years, foreign exchange and some other means of generating a strong economy depreciates every other day. Some of the causes of social problems have to do with privatization of public enterprises, non-payment of salaries, poor education, poor housing. One of the major aspects under the socio economic problems in Nigeria is the lack of inconsistency in government administration policies in that every administration that comes on board will neglect and take on a new policy instead of building on the previous ones. As a result, Nigeria has toyed with many series of ineffective, inefficiency and poorly implemented policies. Example President Jonathan administration inherited and adopted the vision 2020 transformation agenda from late Umaru Musa Yarardua with the focus of turning Nigeria to one of the first 20 largest global economics by the year 2020. As at now the program now appears dead with huge sum of capital which could have been used to resolve some of the social economic problem facing our society.

F. Illiteracy

Illiteracy here does not mean the inability to read nor write, but the ability not to really know what to do at the right time, the ability not to be skillful in a knowledge acquired. Many people want to be a graduate simply because they want to be called a graduate; many are not prepared for the socio

transformation of the country because they have zeroed their mind in seeking for an inexistent white collar job.

b) Poverty Alleviation Program in Nigeria

According to the 2009 human development report, the human poverty index (HPI-I), focuses on the proportion of people below certain threshold levels in each of the dimension of the human development index- living a long and healthy life, having access to education, and a decent standard of living. By looking beyond income deprivation, the HPI-I represent a multi-dimension alternative to the \$1.25 a day poverty measure. The HPI-I value for Nigeria is 36.2%. According to this report, the probability of not surviving to age 40% is 37. 4%, Adult literacy rate 1% age is above 28.0% while the percentage of children under weight/form the age under 5 is 29%.

Government at every sector has tried to curb poverty through the establishment of several related programmes but the fact remains, yet; our poverty rate is on the increase instead of reducing. It should be noted here that the first of such programme is "Operation feed the Nation" (OFN) which was introduced in 1979 by Gen Olusegun Obasanjo. Shagari in 1979-1983 shared almost the same idea in curbing poverty with "The Green Revolution", which also emphasized on food production. (Bank & Projects, 1999)

The Military regime of Gen. Muhammad Buhari 1983-1985 did not have a specific poverty alleviation programme as it clearly focused on fighting corruption. (Ekong, 1991). Gen Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993) introduced a welter of poverty alleviation programmes which includes "peoples bank" which aims to provide loans for entrepreneurs without stringent requirement of collaterals.

Another programme was the Directorate of Food Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI) which aim to open rural areas via construction of federal roads and provision of basic amenities that would turn them into production centers for national economy. Another programme that tried to head-off the scourge of poverty by targeting the agricultural sector was the "Nigeria Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA). The authority was intended to reduce the prevalence of subsistence agriculture in the country and in its place infused large scale commercial farming by assisting farmers with inputs and developing land for them to the point of planting, at subsidized rates.

The regime of Late Gen. Sani Abacha 1993-1998 was known as the midwife of the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) in Nigeria's quest for a way out of debilitating poverty, as this was the period that marked Nigeria's relapse into the global bracket of 25 poorest nations. Significantly FEAP existed for about two years (1998-2000) during which it received funding to the tune of N7billion out of which about N3.3billion

was disbursed as loan to about 21,000 cooperative societies nationwide that were production oriented. (Olaitan, 2008) Such projects targeted for assistance include poultry production, garri making, soap making and animal husbandry.

It should be noted here that all the poverty alleviation programmes introduced over the years in the country, it must be recalled that spouses of Head of state also joined in the fray with novel programmes that not only elevated the status of these first ladies but also focused on issues of poverty.

The regime of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo introduced poverty alleviation programme (PAP) in 2006 but later changed to National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) a central coordination point for all anti-poverty efforts from the local government level to the national level which schemes would be executed with sole purpose of eradicating absolute poverty. Such schemes already identified include: Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS); Social Welfare Service Scheme (SOWESS) and National Resources Development and Conservation scheme (NRDCS) etc.

One could imagine how the government came about different names of eradicating poverty and up till now we hardly see the impact of the alleviation programme coming to reality, the fact remains that poverty is yet to be dealt with in Nigeria.

c) *Social Ethical Approach to Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria*

1. Creating an atmosphere for Entrepreneurship.
2. Early and affordable child education.
3. Constant electricity.
4. Clean and affordable water.
5. Low interest loan.
6. Reform the agricultural programme.
7. Skill acquisition for secondary school leavers and awaiting students.
8. Youth empowerment skills (YES).

III. CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

There is no gain saying that the population of Nigeria as of today is higher than the available white collar jobs nor the governmental jobs which many unemployed graduate are seeking and looking for nowadays, one of the greatest way to reduce poverty in Nigeria is for the government to institute an amiable atmosphere for entrepreneurship, although the NUC as introduced entrepreneurship course to the curriculum in the tertiary institution but it should be noted here that it should be more practical than theoretical which is the order of the day in our schools.

a) *Early and Affordable Child Education*

In every modern society it is believed that education is the key to national development and there

is a need to maintain every level of education especially the pre-primary stage, because it is the bedrock upon which all other educational levels build. And once a child misses that early stage it is usually difficult for the learner to get back to the basics. It should be noted here that some localities do not have enough helping hand in these primary schools that are mostly in the villages of the country, also some teachers who are over labored due to lack of teachers are not getting there stipulated salary, some state owe up to six month salary of the teachers, this in turn hampers the delivery and effectiveness of the teachers. Also, the government needs to build more schools in the villages because a number of some villages don't have primary health care centers not to talk of primary schools.

b) *Constant electricity*

The issue regarding electricity in Nigeria as not only chased away foreign investors but it has also destabilized the social economic development in our society. The importance of electricity cannot be over-emphasized both in our lives as individual and in our country at large. One of the vital roles of electricity is that it makes goods and services to be easier to produced, electricity is efficient, faster and smoothen the total wellbeing of industries and companies in any giving society. Many people are of the view that when they pay visits to other countries in Africa, the way they enjoy stable electricity will make citizens in Nigeria to believe that our leaders have nothing to offer. It is also disappointing to see that some of our leaders are into plant and generator suppliers, therefore handicapping the reforms in the power sector. The drastic solution that we must consider now is the ban of generator suppliers in Nigeria, this will not only quicken our government to reviving and restoring power, it will also minimize the negative effects of generators. Other alternative ways of generating electricity such as solar, nuclear, wind, coal, etc should also be explored to reduce the load on hydro-power and to ensure circulation of the generated power.

c) *Clean and Affordable water*

One of the endemic factors contributing to poverty in our society is the inadequacy in providing clean, portable and affordable water in the rural areas; some have to trek from a particular community to another community over a long distance in order to get clean and portable water. The government needs to understand the fact that rural areas are a part of the country. Portable and clean water has a ripple effect on the natural wellbeing of the people living in the rural communities. Clean and available water will increase the ease of doing domestic chores; reduce water related diseases amongst several other benefits that are better imagined than described.

d) *Low Interest Loan*

One of the easiest ways to motivate an individual who is into business and entrepreneurship is the ability to empower such an individual with low interest loan; this will go a long way to help him/her realize his or her dreams. It is believed that as Africans, we appreciate being our brother's keeper in that a loan given to a particular person in one way or the other is solving family problem, crises, and starvation. Government also needs to look in-depth to such individuals before allocating the loan too and proper management of the funds will strengthen not only the society but the economic situation of the country will be better.

e) *Reform the Agricultural Programme*

The agricultural sector needs to be improved, easier and efficient. Government needs to look into mechanized ways in improving the agricultural sectors. Tertiary institution graduates should also be encouraged and educated on how to improve their living through agricultural business.

f) *Skill Acquisition for Secondary School Leavers and Awaiting Students*

Government can also establish developmental and skill acquisition programmes for secondary school leavers and students awaiting admission into tertiary institutions. This will further equip the students with useful skills and make such a child a problem solver in the society rather than being a problem creator.

g) *Youth empowerment skills (YES)*

Empowerment is a process where children and young people are encouraged to take charge of their lives. It is done by addressing their situation then necessary step to improve their access to resources that will transform their lives. It's should be noted here that youth empowerment examine six interdependent dimension: psychological, community, organizational, economic, social and cultural. Psychology empowerment enhances individual's consciousness, belief in self-efficacy, awareness and knowledge of problems and solutions and of individuals can address problems that harm their quality of life. This dimension aims to create self-confidence and give youth the skills to acquire knowledge. Community empowerment focuses' on enhancing the community through leadership development, improving communication, and creating a networking of support to mobilize the community to address concerns. Organization empowerment aims to create a base of resources for a community, including voluntary organizations that aims to protect, promote and advocate for powerless. Economic empowerment teaches entrepreneurial skills, how to take ownership of their assets and how to have income security. Social empowerment teaches youth about social inclusion and literacy as well as helping

kids find the resources to be proactive their communities. Cultural empowerment aims to recreate cultural practices and redefine cultural rules and norms for youth. Through these dimensions of empowerment youth will be more active in the development of the society.

IV. CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATION

The danger behind poverty is endemic and needs to be drastically analyzed and solved in a proper method and application. In this research work, the researcher have been able to explore the definition of poverty, the causes has also been explored, also the method in which both the military regime and civilian government used in curbing poverty and lastly socio ethical ways in eradicating poverty in our society is been analyzed using descriptive method.

Hence, by way of recommendation; government can never succeed without the support of the citizen, and vice versa. So there is need for support from the government as well as a complementing support from the people, by creating massive employment for job seekers. This will not only help the citizens to grow but the socio and ethical values of the society will be stronger in that individual will be encouraged to contribute immensely to the development of the economy and poverty will reduce drastically and to a minimum bearable measure. Do not seek for what Nigeria benefit u, rather seek for what you ought to do in moving the society forward!

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