

# The Dimensions of Poverty and its Effects on Nigeria's National Development

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## Abstract

This paper examines the dimensions of poverty and how it affects national development in Nigeria. It therefore, views poverty as a phenomenon that affects the socio-economic and political conditions of its victims in both developed, developing and underdeveloped countries. Relying on qualitative data, this paper used the political economy approach to argue that the underdevelopment of the productive forces occasioned by politics of primitiveness orchestrated by the political class is largely the cause of the poverty in Nigeria. It is against this analytical angle that the paper reveals that poverty in Nigeria has resulted to inequality, social injustice, conflict, crime and consequently leading to political apathy and sometime vote buying during elections. With these dimensions, it concludes that the nature and character of poverty in the country pose challenges to Nigeria's national development. Because sustainable national development cannot be achieved in a poverty ridden nation hence, the menaces of poverty are recipes for anti-nation building culture. It recommends among others that the poor should be involved in the designing and implementation of policies that concern them due to the fact that they know better the challenges facing them in their various communities.

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*Index terms*— poverty, national development, dimensions, effects, challenges.

## 1 Introduction

overty is a global phenomenon that affects the socio-economic and political conditions of its people be it in developed, developing and underdeveloped countries. Therefore, it is a dynamic process of socio economic, political or other deprivations which affect individual households or communities and usually results in lack of access to basic necessities of life. It affects many aspects of the human conditions, including the physical, moral and the psychological.

Worthy of note is that available statistics have shown that poverty in poor countries is absolute and majorly witnessed in the rural areas. In Nigeria for instance, the rural population that constitute about 73% of the country's population (Presidential Report, 1999) are backward and underdeveloped. According to Aderonmu cited in akubu & Jonathan, (2010), a visit to any rural settlement in Nigeria will reveal dirt and unmotorable roads, women and children walking barefooted and trekking long distance to get water and firewood, pupil studying under trees, a dilapidated and ill equipped health centers and scores of poverty driven problems. Suffice it to say that the category of people that suffers most and are confronted with many challenges and have no power to improve their situation because of ill-health, poor education and lack of access to many opportunities available to them are the rural dwellers. They are extremely poor in almost all aspects of life and cannot contribute positively towards meaningful development in spite of the fact that they constitute the majority in terms of population.

Thus, the above conceptualization of poverty suggests that it could be a recipe for depression, frustration, low consciousness, jingoism, conflict and crime among people. If poverty in Nigeria is actually a product of political primitiveness (Ochoga, 2012) then a country with low patriotism and lack of consciousness among citizens is likely to face poor national development frontiers. Therefore, the problematic analytical angle of this paper is predicated on the extent to which the dimensions of poverty in Nigeria as permeated by political primitivism

## 4 B) NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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45 impacted on Nigeria's national development. This is because it is uncertain whether dimension of poverty affects  
46 national development.

### 47 2 II.

### 48 3 Conceptualizing Poverty and National Development a) 49 Poverty

50 A universal definition of poverty is elusive, largely because it affects many aspects of human conception including  
51 physical, moral and psychological. Different criteria have therefore, been used to conceptualize poverty. Some  
52 analyses follow the conventional views of poverty as a result of insufficient income for securing basic goods and  
53 services. Others view poverty in part, as a function of education, health, life efficacy, child mortality lack of food  
54 etc. Lynch (1994); identify the poor, using the criteria of the levels of consumption and expenditure.

55 It became more prominent in 1975 when the Nigeria Economic Society Annual Conference focused on the  
56 subject matter. Much concern about poverty came into focus when the international oil price crashed in 1986 and  
57 there was an international slump with all these phenomenon mentioned above, poverty became severe between  
58 late 1980s and 90s which attracted a number of scholars who have written a lot of literature on the subject  
59 matter. Balogun (1999) considered poverty in absolute terms as a situation where the population or section  
60 of the population is able to meet only its subsistence food, clothing and shelter in order to maintain minimum  
61 standard of living. Olowononi (1997) defined poverty as living in a substandard environment characterized by  
62 slump, squalor, and grossly inadequate social amenities such as medical facilities, school and recreational facilities.  
63 He further added that it implies low calories intakes, poor housing conditions, and inadequate health facilities,  
64 poor quality of educational facilities, low life expectancy, unemployment and underdevelopment. Onimode (1995)  
65 went further to identify poverty with people's inability to influence their environment which manifests itself in  
66 form of little or no education and inadequate access to land.

67 According to the World Bank (1999), poverty is hunger; lack of shelter; being sick and being unable to go to  
68 school; not knowing how to read; not being able to speak properly; not having a job; fear for the future; losing a  
69 child to illness brought about by unclean water; powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom.

70 Aku, Ibrahim and Bulus (1997) analyzed poverty from five dimensions of deprivation: i). Personal and physical  
71 deprivation experienced as a result of health, literacy, nutritional and educational disability and lack of self-  
72 confidence. ii). Economic deprivation drawn from lack of access to property income, asserts, factors of production  
73 and finance. iii). Cultural deprivation in terms of lack of access to values, beliefs, knowledge, information and  
74 attitudes which deprives the people of control of their own destinies, and iv). Political deprivation in terms of  
75 lack of political voice to participate in decision making affects their lives.

76 From the Marxist perspective, Ochoga (2012:17) conceptualize poverty as a 'situation where individuals are  
77 unable to afford calorie-intake, standard accommodation, quality education, health care services, and other basic  
78 needs as a result of lack of substantive income arising from the underdevelopment of the productive forces'.  
79 However, the conceptualization of poverty in this paper is defined as the inability to provide or secure basic  
80 needs such as food, shelter, clothing etc. This inability might be due to lack of development of content ability or  
81 mismanagement which in turn affects national development. What then is national development?

### 82 4 b) National Development

83 The definition of development is complex. Sometimes, scholars end up describing instead of defining the term  
84 development. Development can be defined as "collective activities by any human society directed at reducing  
85 the totality of perceived obstacles to a higher standard of living; thus maximizing the quality of lives of its  
86 citizen" (Sen cited in Ahmed 2013:87). Development is objectively to give the people a comfortable and better  
87 life. According to ??Ahmed, 2013:87), Development is conceptualized as a gradual advance or growth through  
88 progressive change. He asserts further that, it is a gradual differentiation of an ecological community. The term  
89 is also used to describe the process of economic and social transformation within a country. Development entails  
90 a progressive prosperity, and progressive changes in political, social and economic life of a country for the better  
91 life of all.

92 For Rodney, development is a many sided process. He asserts that;

93 Development in human society is many sided process. At the level of individual, it implies increased skill and  
94 capacity, selfdiscipline and responsibility and material well-being... while at the level of social group therefore,  
95 development implies an increased capacity to regulate both internal and external relationship ??Rodney, 1973:1)  
96 If the above postulation by Rodney is anything to go by, it can then be argued that increased skills and capacity,  
97 self-discipline and responsibility and material well-being are indicators for development at the individual level.  
98 While at the social group level, increasing capacity to control internal and external relationship is development.  
99 In order words, with the notion of increase, advance, progress and growth from above conceptualization of  
100 development, development is not and should not be limited to time, periods or context. For example, what might  
101 have been considered as development in the 1980s might not be development in the 21st century, because what  
102 was considered as development over two or three decades ago might be seen as traditional, not modern, outdated  
103 or incompatible with the contemporary situation, events or phenomena, what citizens of a particular country

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104 anticipate is continuous progressive changes. As time changes the ideology, perspective, tools and methods of  
105 development should also change to meet up with peoples' demands and needs because development is a continuous  
106 improvement in the quality life of the citizens, (Adamu, Haruna & Ibrahim 2017: 433-434).

107 In the opinion of (Adamu & Rasheed 2016:49), national development therefore, refers to the ability of a country  
108 or countries to improve the social welfare of the people, for example, by providing social amenities like quality  
109 education, infrastructure, medical care and social services. They asserted further that national development  
110 could also be seen as the ability of a government of a country to ensure justice, equity and equality, promote  
111 the application of rule of law and propagate the notion of fundamental human rights which are indicators or  
112 prospects to increased and enhanced living condition, income of the citizens, availability of opportunities of every  
113 kind to its citizens etc. This is because, without justice and equity, no nation can progress and become advanced.  
114 Therefore, Volume XXII Issue II Version I 74 ( ) national development is "Quality life for all" and quality life  
115 is attainable only where justice, equity and appropriate procedures are practiced which will further stimulate  
116 development in a country.

## 117 5 c) Theorizing the problematic

118 For the purpose of this study, Political Economy approach was adopted as a theoretical framework for the  
119 analysis. According to Hoogvelt (2001:3) 'political economy' was first coined by Montecretien de Watteville, a  
120 French writer, in 1615 (See also ??nimode, 1985). De Watteville himself saw political economy as 'the science  
121 of wealth acquisition common to the state as well as the family. But de Watteville wrote in the mercantilist  
122 period when the economy was meant to serve the power needs of the augment revenue for the other states.  
123 Thus, accumulation was meant to augment revenue for the authorities to effectively prosecute wars against their  
124 enemies. The import of this is that national welfare was defined as national security if not national warfare.

125 In 1776, Adams Smith wrote his treatise: An Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations.  
126 This treatise redefined political economy. By his analysis, wealth accumulation was no longer exclusively for  
127 the state and its authorities. National wealth was indeed the people's wealth. National wealth was in the first  
128 place, the product of individual labour. His main thesis was that the pursuit of individual self-interest would  
129 lead to public or collective good. So, men were supposed to freely express their economic potentials (the ability  
130 to produce materials and service) in order to optimally achieve that public good, through it was never the  
131 original goal of each individual producer. Yet it must be acknowledged that Smith focused mainly on political  
132 territorial acquisition or accumulation of wealth rather than on individual accumulation. The individual was  
133 only a source of labour for the wealth that was available for accumulation. If man exchanged, he did so only  
134 as for the benefits to him-so the invisible hand, the best, regulator of the economy. Man's natural propensity  
135 'to truck, barter, and exchange' which alone sets the economy working is captured in the following argument by  
136 Smith: ??Skinner,1970"117-8).

137 **6 But man has almost constant occasion for the help of his**  
138 **brethren and it is in vain for him to expect it from their**  
139 **benevolence only. He will be more likely to prevail if he can**  
140 **interest them it is self-love in his favour and show them what**  
141 **he requires of them. Whoever offers to another a bargain of**  
142 **the any kind, and you shall have this which you want, is the**  
143 **meaning of every such offer; and it is this manner that we**  
144 **obtain from one another the far greater part of those good**  
145 **offices which we in need of**

146 But apparently, Smith was a true son of his age, the age of enlightenment when human liberty knew no bounds,  
147 at least intellectually. So, he idealistically envisaged an exchange system where the labourer produced mainly  
148 what he was at liberty to produce for what he subsistently and socially needed. He thus overlooked the social  
149 implications especially the contradictions resultant from the system of production and contribution that could  
150 possibly obstruct the 'invisible hands'.

151 If Adams Smith is reckoned to be the father of liberal economics which emphasizes the markets over and above  
152 the state whose role is only to ensure that the market is obstructed in its operation, he can equally be said to  
153 be a precursor of Marx also. He was the originator of surplus value, which he saw as what was left over of one's  
154 produce from labour after consuming what is needed to be consumed. Smith spotted the cradle of accumulation  
155 in this surplus; Marx traces the origin of capital to this surplus from product of labour.

156 The entry of Karl Marx into the debate has dramatically transformed the discourse of political economy.  
157 To Marx, the state is an economic system where the struggle for accumulation takes place between individuals  
158 and between groups. The groups, the class, are however more critical to the struggle. The individual is only

## 7 D) POVERTY IN NIGERIA AND ITS CAUSES

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159 important as a source of labour for production or for ownership of the means of production. Marx used the logic  
160 of dialectic to argue the thesis for historical materialism. Which holds that through the times history has been  
161 made of struggles and resolution of struggles between classes? However each resolution, while instituting a new  
162 order, ushers in contradiction inherent in that new order. Thus another struggle begins. The selection citation  
163 below provides so much regarding Marx's thought on this matter:

164 In the social production of their lives, men enter into definite relations that are in dispensation and independent of  
165 their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive  
166 forces? At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of the society come in conflict  
167 with the existing relations of production? From the development of the productive forces these relations turn  
168 into their fetters, then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the  
169 entire immense superstructure is the more or less rapidly transformed? In broad outline Asiatic, ancient, feudal,  
170 and modern bourgeois mode of production can be designated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of  
171 society. The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production  
172 ??Marx, 1972:138).

173 So, history has assumed a notion of its own which however shall terminate in the attainment of communism, an  
174 economic system where there shall no longer be the exploitation of man by man. Marx's major point of departure  
175 is that accumulation of wealth has never been and cannot be in public interest as suggested by Adam Smith.  
176 The exploitation of labour supplied by individual workers is never so free such as to achieve the public good. In  
177 the existent social relations of production, the labourer is not better than the slave, the serf or the bondman of  
178 yore. In other words, labour is made to produce for the good of the class in control-the dominant?.but not for  
179 the toiling lot whose only possession is their labour, but for it is unpaid to ensure profit. He further submits:

180 ?capita and the capitalist is merely personified and functions in the process of production solely as the agent  
181 of capital, in its corresponding social process of production, pumps a definite quantity of surplus-labour without  
182 an equivalent, and in essence it always remains forced labour no matter how much it may seem to result from  
183 free contractual agreement. This surplus-labour appears as surplus-value, and this surplus value exists as a  
184 surplusproduct ??Marx, 1972:152). This is the origin of capital accumulation as envisaged by Marx. On the  
185 whole, Marx wrote the bourgeois class that has just overthrown the feudal system to establish the industrial  
186 society, and of the proletariat that was also a product of kind of society. To him, neither the state nor the market  
187 was capable of offering the public goods under capitalist economics, contrary to what Smith expected.

188 The analytical angle of the foregoing is that, it is in the nature of capitalism to operate in a zero-sum manner  
189 in its process of accumulation, which loses at the other end. It produces wealth for the one but peonage for the  
190 other. So as an economic system, from mercantilism to globalization, capitalism logically accounts for wealth  
191 and poverty from the opposite ends of accumulation. It can only be inferred. 'The parallel existence and mutual  
192 interaction of the state and market in the modern world create political economy' ??Gilpin, 1987:8). He has  
193 been able to see the link between 'exchange' and 'authority', 'power' and 'wealth', 'power' and 'money', etc.  
194 Though he does not talk of accumulation so directly, he has not missed the point concerning 'how the state  
195 and its associated political processes affect the production and distribution of wealth?' ??Gilpin, 1987: 9). To  
196 Spero (1977: 32), only liberalism has been responsible for separating politics from economics at mercantilism,  
197 but Ochoa (2012:345) counteract this notion by arguing that politics and economy have an inseparable link  
198 and as such, the nature and character of the interface could determine the rate of poverty and other indices  
199 of development in a state. Therefore, the foregoing conceptualization of the political economy approach serves  
200 as a guide in this paper to establish the dimensions of poverty in Nigeria and its effects on Nigeria's national  
201 development. What then are the causes of poverty in Nigeria?

### 7 d) Poverty in Nigeria and its Causes

203 As an overview, poverty is a worldwide phenomenon; it has been observed that Nigeria is one of the poorest  
204 countries in the world. The situation has reached an unpredictable level while shows that more than 49% of the  
205 population lives below the line, which 67% of the poor are extremely poor ??Obi, 2011). The cause of poverty  
206 in Nigeria however is paradoxical as asserted by Odusola (1997:4) that Nigeria is a rich country inhibited by  
207 poor people-poverty in the midst of plenty. Odusola's statement is predicated on the fact that Nigeria is richly  
208 endowed in human, physical and natural resources, land, oil and gas, forest, a virile and versatile population.  
209 In spite of all these notwithstanding the incidence of poverty in the country is very high. The advent of oil in  
210 the economy in early 1970s contributed immensely to the economic development plan and increase in government  
211 revenue.

212 The glut on the oil prices at the international oil market and the consequent drop in oil prices in the early  
213 1980s marked the beginning of serious deterioration in welfare and an increase in absolute poverty in Nigeria  
214 with the oil boom fizzling out and government revenue levels dwindling, average per capita income fell, private  
215 consumption per capita as well as wages both agricultural and nonagricultural ventures in real terms fell; welfare,  
216 needless to say, was on a downward trend; life expectancy at birth was 4% compared to the world average of  
217 66% infant mortality was 96 per 1000 live birth, average calorie intake was far below what is recommended as  
218 minimum by Food and Agricultural Organization (CBN, 2018:7).

219 In 2005, there was a study by the CBN and World Bank on poverty assessment in Nigeria for poor rural  
220 householders. According to the report, the food intakes of the surveyed rural householders indicated an extreme

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221 poverty situation as high calorie food items such as "gari" dominated the householder's nutritional types. There  
222 is generally low and inadequate provision of basic infrastructures such as energy, portable water supply, housing  
223 and transportation in rural areas. Majority of the householders in the rural areas were living in low quality mud-  
224 bunch-housing types, made up of mud and corrugated iron roofing sheets. Generally, the mud-bacha houses lacked  
225 basic conveniences such as toilets and bathrooms, which such householders used pit/pail latrines, and bush/dung  
226 hills, majority of the householders trekked long distance because of nonavailability of public transportation and  
227 lack of money to assist them, (CBN, 2018).

228 Olowononi (1997:9) argues that, hazards such as incidence of diarrhea and the malnourished children in urban  
229 and rural areas, the use of contaminated water and poor sanitary condition are associated with the increasingly  
230 high rates of diseases. Uniamikagbo (2013:7) sharing the same view with Olowononi, said in terms of safe water,  
231 those in the rural areas only have unsafe sources of water like streams, wells, ponds, etc. This has caused a lot  
232 of anxiety when considered that large proportion of Nigerians live in the rural areas. Nigeria's poverty situation  
233 on geographical basis could be in inequality emanating from unequal access to 21%, 40% of the populations  
234 were poor in the (1) southern, (2) middle belt and (3) northern states respectively. This could be as a result of  
235 differences in resource endowment. Experience has shown that the incidence of poverty could be found among  
236 the following groups in the urban areas in descending order as follows: Farmers 35%, apprentice and students  
237 25%, junior wage earner like factory worker, clerks and messengers 22% and others 18%. Also, the degree of  
238 poverty has increased with the age of the heads of household. People whose age group falls between 56 and 68  
239 years are mostly illiterate households. It was found that 68% of the poor households in rural areas had no formal  
240 education, while 42% of those households residing in urban arrears had no formal education.

241 The degree of prostitution also increased among illiterates and unemployed women. Anyanwie (2009) and  
242 (Ochoga 2012:347) added that "poverty is either moderate or extreme", the order of ranking is north, south and  
243 middle agro-climatic zones. In summary therefore, this paper agrees with the late political economist Oshimode  
244 (1995:34) that 'the statistics of rising poverty are flaring on the streets. This rising number of able-bodied beggars  
245 of all ages among males and females is simply deplorable. Scavenging for food in dustbins and at refuse dump is  
246 regular sighted in major towns and cities.' All these features are concrete evidence of the prevalence and severity  
247 of poverty in our society. With the current global rating, the poverty condition in the country is not better off  
248 (Global Poverty Index, 2019).

249 With the magnitude and spread of poverty and the desire to reduce its size and curb the spread, there is need  
250 to identify the causes of poverty. Identifying this will facilitate the process of poverty planning and management.  
251 Although, the basic causes of poverty can be easily explained, even with causal observation. However, specific  
252 theories have been adopted in the analysis of the causes of poverty. According to the United Nations (1995), and  
253 the World Bank (1990), poverty is manifested in various ways, including lack of sustainable livelihood, hunger  
254 and malnutrition, ill health, and basic needs. Yahiel (1993:9) reiterates that the causes of poverty include: i).  
255 Structural causes that are more permanent and defendant on a host of exogenous factors such as limited resources,  
256 lack of skills, location disadvantage and other social and political factors. ii). Transitional causes occasioned  
257 by structural adjustment reforms and changes in domestic economic policies that may result in price changes  
258 and unemployment. Natural calamities such as droughts and man-made disaster such as wars, environmental  
259 degradation and so on, also includes transitional poverty.

260 As observed by Oshimode (1997:8), the main factors that cause poverty in Nigeria include: inadequate access  
261 to employment opportunities, inadequate access to means of supporting rural development in poor regions; poor  
262 access to markets where goods and services can be sold, low endowment of human capital and destruction  
263 of material resources leading to environmental degradation. On their parts, Afonja and Ogwumike (1995:32)  
264 observed that "several factors act and react upon one another to limit the upward mobility of individuals in  
265 the society and keep them perpetually in vicious cycle of abject poverty". The forces according to them can  
266 be categorized under two broad groupings, those that can be attributed to the low level and rate of economic  
267 growth and the distribution of the national income and those that arise from market imperfection in its entire  
268 ramification. The interaction of the above variables places a large segment of Nigeria in the vicious circle of  
269 poverty which is characterized by low productivity that leads to low per capita income. Low capita income  
270 result in low level of saving per head. The low level of saving leads to low level of capital accumulation per  
271 head which further leads to low productivity (Todaro, 1992). To Ochoga (2012:278) the disarticulation of the  
272 productive forces is responsible for poverty in Nigeria. He further contend that "the causes of poverty in Nigeria  
273 is rooted in two analytical angle, first, the poverty has its root from the premature incorporation of the Nigerian  
274 economy into the global economy without having sustainable industrial base to withstand the contradictions of  
275 capitalism. Therefore, the government becomes the highest employer of labour as most industries have collapsed  
276 and as such unemployment is prevalent in the country. Secondly, since the productive forces are underdeveloped,  
277 many Nigerians (politicians) seen politics as a means to an end and as such allocation of authoritative resources  
278 are permeated by primitive accumulation, patrimonial consideration and primordial sentiment, these to a large  
279 extent contribute the causes of poverty in Nigeria.

280 Ochoga's (2012) thesis of linking collapsed productive forces and political primitiveness is an analytic angle  
281 upon which this paper seeks to x-ray the dimensions of poverty and its effects on Nigeria's national development.

282 **8 III. Dimensions of Poverty in Nigeria and its Effect on**  
283 **National Development**

284 The preceding sections have established that the nature and character of poverty in Nigeria is a product of  
285 unproductive and anti-peoples interface between politics and economy in the country. Against is this backdrop,  
286 some dimensions of poverty have been identified by Adamu (2008) which include the following: a. Poverty of  
287 material well-being: This is conceived as lack of basic necessities for the sustenance of life. This comprises of food,  
288 clothing and shelter. In Nigeria and even in Africa, majority of people are living below the level of subsistence.  
289 The economic strangulation in the country has also made the material well-being of the majority of the people  
290 a very serious affair.

291 b. Poverty of ideas: This approach is divided into two levels, that of the leader and the subjects. For the  
292 leaders, there is always an avalanche of good ideas at the disposal of leaders. Most often than not, however,  
293 leaders tend to act in manners suggestive of their inability to assess what are good ideas. The result is that of  
294 different and uninspiring manner. Most of them have sailed the ship of state administration. On the part of  
295 the subjects, the poverty of ideas is exemplified here as lack of good judgment in supporting good policies and  
296 programmes that can lead to national development.

297 **9 c. Poverty of courage:**

298 This dimension of poverty is typified by situation where there is a timid citizenry, very apprehensive and cautious  
299 in standing against lapses on the part of those in power or telling the government what it has done wrong. Rather,  
300 the citizenry down on to the leaders become sycophants with the attendant danger that the perception of leaders  
301 as to the acceptability of their policies and programmes become distorted, ??Adamu, 2008:42-43).

302 It is worthy of note that of all the facets of poverty identified above, the poverty of material wellbeing ranked  
303 the most prominent, precious and almost all embarrassing. It is observed that in Nigeria, material poverty has  
304 greatly impeded the national development. It should be borne in mind that the perpetual struggle for existence  
305 has always been on how to conquer poverty. Consequently, such major concern of matters of mere survival,  
306 a party set into practice in a given country, the masses are usually and easily brain washed and left with the  
307 inability of choosing the right representatives, objective choice is seldom a consideration. More often than not,  
308 various forms of inducements and gratifications, which provide very temporal relief from the scourge of poverty,  
309 are given central attention in making their democratic choice. From the foregoing, each of the dimensions of  
310 poverty is capable of posing challenges to national development.

311 **10 IV. Challenges of Poverty to Nigeria's National Development**

312 There is no gainsaying the fact that poverty has impeded national development in many ways since Nigeria  
313 returned to civil rule in 1999 after many years of military rule. The above fact could be seen as a result of  
314 the implementation of Structural Adjustment programmes in the 1980s which gave a leverage to confirm the  
315 statement put forward by some scholars that poverty is as a result of lack of meaningful development.

316 It is fundamental to note that expectations that greeted Nigeria's recommencement of another lap of democratic  
317 governance in 1999 was very high but was dashed as the expectations placed on the new democratic regime to  
318 alleviate the extreme level of poverty in the country has remained an illusion with the continuous inability of  
319 successive governments to deliver dividends of democracy to the people. It is interesting to note that the first  
320 noticeable sign of challenge that poverty posed to the Nigeria's democracy was the rise in crisis of legitimacy  
321 on the new government. Consequently, this created the room for the citizens not only to openly challenge the  
322 authority of the ruling elite and the viability of the Nigerian state, but also opened up the space for expression  
323 of suppressed ethnic demands bottled up by years of repressive military rule ??Metumara, 2010:92).

324 It is worthy of note that when poverty is severe, it creates unwarranted socio-economic and political competition  
325 and the negative impact of this competition is insecurity associated with limited job opportunities and social  
326 services" ??Metumara, 2010:96). It is on record that since Nigeria got her political independence in 1960, its  
327 economy has remained largely dualistic and monolithic, depending on one primary product for export ??Ogunlela,  
328 and Ogungbile, 2006:2). This situation has in no small way halted the development of productive forces occasioned  
329 by economic wastage, mismanagement and lack of judicious use of available resources by the political elite. Due to  
330 the country's mono-culturalism and the predominant role of the state in development, the competitive advantage  
331 has reduced minimally when compared to other countries of the Western nations. The increasing rents and  
332 revenues of over \$231 billion which accrued to the Nigerian state from 1970-1999 (Ross, 2003:2; Nna and Igwe,  
333 2010:133) as well as the predominance of the state as the "main employer, provider and distributor of resources"  
334 ??Akopari, 2008:90) made the control of state power a highly lucrative enterprise. The above is responsible for  
335 the politics of kleptocracy and prebendalism which emanated from the struggle for the control of state's scarce  
336 resources. It is imperative to stress here that in the presence of all the identified issues and challenges artificially  
337 created by poverty are capable of hindering the attainment of national development in Nigeria.

338 It is not an exaggeration to conclude that the current spate of poverty in Nigeria has given prominence to  
339 inequality, social injustice and consequently resulted to political apathy. The rising profile of poverty in Nigeria  
340 as observed by the National Bureau of ??tatistics (2007:38) states that the number of Volume XXII Issue II  
341 Version I 78 ( ) people living in poverty increased from 39.07 million in 1992 to 70million in 2004. Similarly,

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342 the UNDP states that about 83.9 per cent of Nigerians live below two US Dollars a day (Nna & Igwe, 2010:  
343 133). This poverty profile is further complicated by staggering and alarming levels of inequality as highlighted by  
344 (Oshewolo 2010:267) that 70.2 percent of the Nigerian population lives on less than \$1 a day, while 90.8 percent  
345 lives on less than \$2 a day. The total income earned by the richest 20 percent of the population is 55.7 percent,  
346 while the total income earned by the poorest 20 percent is 4.4 percent.

347 Another worrisome dimension of poverty situation in Nigeria in this republic is that of powerlessness which is  
348 characterized by dependence on others thereby having no voice and choice. In line with the above, Attas, et al,  
349 (2003:35) asserts that the poor "are regularly victimized by public officials and encounter higher levels of crime.  
350 As a consequence, they are forced to rely on informal networks and associations" for survival. Meanwhile, as the  
351 state constantly violates the right of the citizen and deprive them social justice and economic opportunity, the  
352 people have come to perceive the state as predatory and evil that should be avoided and feared and consequently,  
353 they (citizens) are not concerned about working in any way towards national development.

354 Suffice it to say that poverty in Nigeria has contributed in no small way to corruption which adversely  
355 affects the country's national development. It is important to note that politics in Nigeria has become a "Zero  
356 Sum Game" which simply means-winner takes all. This statement cannot be divorced from the deepening  
357 contradictions perpetuated by the Structural Adjustment Programme which to many, contributed to worsening  
358 poverty, unemployment, starvation and hunger and have forced the people to seek for the need to go and search  
359 for their daily needs via all other available means apart from the societal designated means.

360 Fundamentally, it is public knowledge that the rate of corruption and abuse of public office in Nigeria is  
361 quite embarrassing looking at the degree it has now reached. This is why scholars such as (Olorode, 2006:??5,  
362 (Oko, 2008:33) have argued that corruption and the desire for self-advantage have overwhelmed the ideal of  
363 public service and turned public institutions into crucibles of sloth, avarice and mediocrity. Poor leadership,  
364 shaggy government policies and poverty continue to expose public servants to control, manipulation and corrupt  
365 practices). Since the dominant source of private wealth is public treasury, looting public treasury will be, and  
366 had become, a major way of promoting privatization (Olorode, 2006:5).

367 From the above proposition, this paper holds that one of the factors responsible for extreme poverty, hunger  
368 and starvation in Nigeria in spite of its huge resources is the challenge of responsible and responsive leadership.  
369 According to former President of Nigeria (Olusegun Obasanjo, cited in Alechenu, 2013), leadership deficit in  
370 Nigeria had robbed it of meaningful development and has become a clog on the nation's wheel of progress.  
371 This is to say that most of the challenges befalling Nigeria can be traced largely to poor and lack competent and  
372 purposeful leadership be it political, traditional and even at the family level. The above statement is unconnected  
373 with the fact that most leaders that have emerged in the history of Nigeria have been ill equipped and have not  
374 been able to identify the actual problems facing the nation.

375 V.

## 376 11 Concluding Remarks

377 This paper has interrogated the dimensions of poverty and how it affects national development in Nigeria. It  
378 views poverty as a phenomenon that affects the socio-economic and political conditions of nations and their  
379 citizenry. It has been established that poverty is a recipe for social injustice and crime. And as such, the  
380 worsening dimensions of poverty in the country pose threat to Nigeria's national development in moral, economic  
381 and political ramifications. Based on the analysis and findings of this paper, the following recommendations are  
382 hereby made:

383 There is need for government to device strategy for eliminating poverty. It should focus sharply on and regard  
384 as its primary responsibility to the challenge of seeing the development of the country as essentially a human  
385 development.

386 The poor should be involved in the design and implementation of policies and programmes that concern them  
387 because they know better the challenges facing them in their various communities. This should be seen as a  
388 task because as poverty increases in level so it increases the chances of posing direct challenge to the nation's  
389 economic stability.

390 There is also urgent need for Nigerian government to give credence to technological advancement as the world  
391 today has become a global village as a result of the development of Information and Communication Technology.  
392 By so doing, there could be partnership among the people so as to enhance sustainable development via the  
393 people's ownership of productive resources or assets. <sup>1</sup>

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